Perfect Interpretation of the Influence of Color Background on Animation Art in *My Neighbor Totoro* Directed by Miyazaki Hayao

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**Abstract**

Depending on the strong sense of tableau, film can bring audiences huge visual impact and shock. Not only the story in animated films but also the application of color background, they are all of vital importance, both of which also plays a significant role in the structure of scene in animated films. Among animated films made by Miyazaki Hayao, there is a common characteristics——color application. Proper use of color can make film frame full of harmony and grace, and the theme of film can thus be reinforced. This paper, through analyzing the feature of color background in animated film *My Neighbor Totoro* by Miyazaki Hayao, provides a reference for better understanding of Miyazaki Hayao’s animated film.

**Keywords:** Miyazaki Hayao; *My Neighbor Totoro*; color background; animation art; application

1. **INTRODUCTION**

*My Neighbor Totoro* is an animated film with colorful plots directed by Miyazaki Hayao, telling audiences a beautiful and pure fairy tale with warm story. In the film, what is the most impressive is the application of color background that plays a crucial role in promoting the development of story plot.

2. **The application of light and shadow in Miyazaki Hayao’s *My Neighbor Totoro***

2.1 Highlight figures’ characters by utilizing film frame

In animated film, the color of roles and color of scenes are two important and indivisible elements, with close relations. The design of color of scenes provides effective reference for the color of roles, so as to make the roles’ characteristics of personality prominent. Therefore, in the design of film frame, Miyazaki Hayao well coordinates the color of scenes and the color of figures, with the color of figures set off by the color scenes, achieving the purpose of highlighting the main characters. In the film, different colors of scenes are connected to become the main color of whole film, with figures’ color integrating in it to form an entirety by inter-coordination. The frame in film is mainly blue and green, unfolding beautiful idyllic scenery for audiences, with white cloud in blue sky, pink flowers dotted in green field. How fresh the feeling is! The color of Totoro is gray, deep blue and green, which not only makes it full of mystery but also attracts people’s affection. Mei and Yue’s clothes belong to

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warm tone. Along with green countryside, there is a striking contract in color, making the film harmonious, vivid and energetic.

2.2 Highlight affective characteristics by utilizing film frame

Light and shadow, as a soundless visual language, can not only describe the characteristics of film frame but also reflect figures’ sentiment features. The application of light, shadow and color can arouse emotional resonance, enrich people’s imagination and replenish figures’ emotional experience. Light application can create a harmonious and relaxing scene, making people arouse various emotions, and can works as a foreshadowing for human’s sentiments. Different application methods of light and shadow can express different feelings for the same objects. In My Neighbor Totoro, when Totoro is happy, sunshine on his body presents a warm frame and peaceful feelings. The front lighting is used here. However, when Totoro is lonely, back lighting is adopted to stretch his shadow for quite long, creating a sense of sadness and dreariness.

2.3 Promote the story plot and creation intention

Smart color application can effectively promote the development of plots, delivering delicate sentiment in the film. The development of plot in animated film is based on the change of color and the structure of story plot, echoing film frame so as to promote plot development. In the beginning of the story, the frame is bright and soft, color is not gorgeous, and color purity will reach the climax with the promotion of plot. Along with the influence of background music, audiences’ visual experience is shocked and promoted, with the best visual and audio enjoyment. Color can take effect of implying in animated films. With the development of plot, the color in the film will come to the climax. The color of every clip will coordinate with the overall film frame to promote the development of play and develop stable film color and frame. In the beginning of My Neighbor Totoro, it is about beautiful idyllic scenery, with color in warm and soft tone. However, with development of story, there is striking contrast in color. Mei and Yue wear light-colored clothes in station to wait for bus, in contrast with deep blue background. The function is to highlight that with the change of story plot, background color will also change. The sharp contrast between blue and yellow appeasing many times in the film promotes color saturation to the climax. At the end of story, the frame color is common. Mei and Yue chat happily in Totoro’s bus, presenting warm and soft frame. Color contrast also changes dramatically to draw a happy ending for the story.

3. Analysis of roles in Miyazaki Hayao’s My Neighbor Totoro

3.1 Soft color

In My Neighbor Totoro, there isn’t strong or clear difference of color, yet with a subtle feeling. When describing idyllic scenery, it is in light color, with white cloud in light-blue sky, as well as simple and elegant gardens in countryside, making the whole film frame seemingly quite soft. It seems that the whole film is enveloped with layers of white. In Miyazaki Hayao’s film, there is no gorgeous and strong color, only with simple and silent frame and color which actually can deliver special sentiment in the film. Color contrast is weak[1]. In My Neighbor Totoro, film frame bring people a sense of freshness and elegance, without any colorful picture, therefore, leaving no dazzling feeling to audiences[7]. Although there is no strong color,
there are idyllic sentiments and rich emotion expression. Miyazaki Hayao’s painting style draws lesson from western oil painting’s features and realistic style, and combines with fresh style, leaving audiences the sense of desiring for pastoral life and expectation for the beauty of life. The description of figures and animals look like quite ideal. The color of Totoro is light gray, bringing people a sense of simplicity, with cute appearance. Idyllic scenery looks quite ideal, with clean river, pure and beautiful sky. The figures of film seem to live in a dreamlike kingdom and everything is peaceful and tranquil.

3.2 Unified color tone

For an excellent animated movie, the outstanding feature is the perfect unification and integration of color tone and film frame. In Miyazaki Hayao’s film, although there are many kinds of color, they are in high harmony, forming a perfect entirety. In color application, the main color is clear and specific, leaving audiences a sense of clearness. In My Neighbor Totoro, the color tone is mainly composed by cyan, blue and white, which are mixed into an entirety, making the film frame of harmony and unification. Besides unified color tone, each color tone also has common characteristics: sky is blue, cloud is white and sea is clean blue; two sisters’ clothes are yellow and white and father’s clothes is blue gray and dark red. Gray is still the main color in this film, which looks uniformly and harmoniously, with great charm.

3.3 Splendid visual effect

In My Neighbor Totoro, the color tone is unified but not monotonous. Although the color is not magnificent enough, every color can bring audiences an idyllic feeling, which is quite harmonious. Miyazaki Hayao integrates the realistic style of western oil painting with eastern color, creating a special picture. With real and sensible frame, clear and soft color, audiences are left with a fresh and brisk feeling. In Miyazaki Hayao’s film, the frame is harmonious and color is ideal.

3.4 Express deep symbolic significance with color

Color is the essential attribute of an object, shining special charm of the object. Color always exists in real life. However, in animated films, color application has subjective intention, representing author’s certain emotion delivered by film or figures’ certain emotion. In My Neighbor Totoro, every frame has profound symbolic meaning. Green represents idyllic scenery. The beautiful and delicacy frame bring people a vivifying feeling. There is no gorgeous color for the whole film, only with warm color tone, expressing beautiful theme and leaving audience a warm sense.

4. Conclusion

Throughout the application of color, light and shadow in animated film My Neighbor Totoro by Miyazaki Hayao, he integrates story plot, figure emotion and characteristics into the description of color, his aesthetic features into the film, creating a warm and harmonious film frame, perfectly integrating the art style of animated film.
References

