

Visual Narrative as a Color Storytelling in DISNEY and GIBLI Studios

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국문초록

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ABSTRACT

Visual narrative or storytelling involve two important aspects of the cognitive perception: the conscious and subconscious. Color is one of the cognitive storytelling elements, its interpretation is captured by the subconscious and it is considered an emotional resource due to its psychological background. On the other hand, the character is also part of cognitive perception and storytelling tool, but this is interpreted consciously, character is considered as a logical resource. Ghibli and Disney have organized their cinematographic techniques in different ways, so it would be unfair to say that one narrative style is better than the other, it depends of perception of beauty which varies according to society. However the present study seeks to determine the differences between Ghibli and Disney narrative style, taking as reference color. Ghibli and Disney are perfect example about color effects as a storytelling agent, It can be classified in two aspects: dynamics of color and color as a narrative sequence. The dynamics of color analyzes how color acts and is perceived into a stage, its meaning and symbolism regardless of the character's actions. The narrative sequence studies how color thermologic evolves in scene's development.

keyword : Color, Narrative, Animation, Ghibli, Disney

I . OVERVIEW

1. Study background

The fantastic world of cinema, to be able to exist, needs to be worked carefully, as we know: all movies, without exception, have a similar objective: to transmit emotions to viewers, regardless of the story to tell, argument, and character design. To achieve that goal, cinematographic resources also should be incorporated, such as: movements of camera, shot, color, and sound, best known as elements of montage, however, these elements are at the same time part of the narration, consequently it would be "narrative montage", because the elements participate in the development of history and act as agents of tension. Brian Dunnigan mentioned,

“The storytelling now refracted through framing, light, and shade, color, texture, objects, sounds, movement, - the shot/counter-shot and mise en scene of cinema (staging)”¹⁾

Western animation is influenced mostly by the model that emerged with the development of animation created by Fleischer and Walt Disney²⁾, many animated studies try to imitate this model both technical and aesthetic, which have fallen into what is commonly known as "Disney movie." However, there are others who resist this approach and,

1) Brian Dunnigan. Storytelling and Film, Fairy Tales, Myth and Happy Endings. Danish journal, December 2004

2) Jeffrey Katzenberg and Bill Plymton, editor Jerry Beek. Animation Art “from pencil to pixel, illustration history of cartoon, anime” . Flame tree publishing

although they take it as a reference, seek to differentiate themselves, so that their animations have used folk elements to create a different type of storytelling, as in the case of Ghibli, a Japanese animation company, also known as the Japanese Disney. Both animation studios, whose main objective is to convey an emotional message, use their own narrative styles, which differ from each other in several ways: from the plot structure, narrative editing and elements of the narrative. Color being the main exponent of narrative montage due to its psychological quality (subconscious), is very important in the development of a film. It's an emotional resource and its variation of tonalities and/or evolution generates deeper emotions that only the subconscious is capable of perceiving. This project will analyze the narrative styles of Disney and Ghibli, taking the following as a reference: (1)the role of color as a narrative agent. For this study, female characters will be used as references because more than 50% of animation films made by Disney and Ghibli have a female character as the main actor. Furthermore, many stereotypes have been created that are related to the physical beauty of women.

2. Proposal Statement

Storytelling is a general word used to refer to visual elements involved in story development in order to convey a message. Color and character design are parts of this process, which plays a key role in the film's success. Both Ghibli and Disney developed their own narrative styles. This research project examines three main aspects as follows:

- 1) Color as a storytelling agent: Analyzes the function

of color as a narrative agent in films produced by Disney and Ghibli studios based on two aspects: dynamics of color and narrative medium of a scene, including the climax.

2) Narrative Style: Establishes similarities and differences related to narrative style based on color and female character design between Disney and Ghibli animation movies.

3. Study Range and Object

The type of investigation project is documentary and field; documentary because it enables data collection that supports the theories of the study, and field because it will directly consult the population, about the perception of colors in animation's films and character design. The data collected in both processes will be subjected to comparative analysis. The method used for this project is observational and analytical.

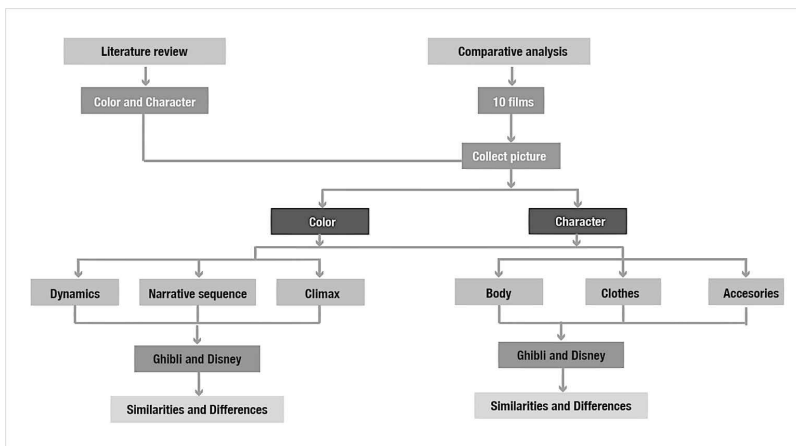


Figure 1. Investigative process diagram

In order to analyze, each variable was researched through secondary sources of specialized information in order to process and generate knowledge to adequately interpret the observed situation and generate an alternative that meets the case expectations. Secondary sources topics were: color theory, meaning of colors, elements, perception, sensation, color psychology, and character design. When concepts that allow full understanding of the subject were obtained, each variable was analyzed in detail. The realization of this project will be supported in several books and papers that convey narrative, color influences and character design. The criteria for selection as population samples were that the movies be 2D animation movies with female leading characters.

DISNEY MOVIES		GHIBLE MOVIES	
NAME	YEAR	NAME	YEAR
The Little Mermaid	1989	Castle in the Sky	1986
Beauty and the Beast	1991	My Neighbor Totoro	1988
Aladdin	1992	Porco Rosso	1992
The Lion King	1994	Princess Mononoke	1997
Pocahontas	1995	Spirited Away	2001
Mulan	1998	Howl's Moving Castle	2004
Atlantis: The Lost Empire	2001	Arrietty	2010
The Princess and the Frog	2009	When Marnie Was There	2014

Figure 2. List of movies selected

4. Significance of the study

This study is important because it will try to describe the relationship or difference between Ghibli and Disney

narrative styles, taking as a reference color and female character design. The study will describe how color acts as a storytelling agent during the movies. Furthermore, it will attempt to get a better understanding of the influence of color as a narrative medium in the perception of viewers. Additionally, it will show a pattern between Ghibli and Disney studios for future research about color and female character design. Thereby this study will be the base for further research concerning differences in narrative styles between American and Asian film storytelling.

II . LITERATURE RESEARCH

1. Narrative structure

Narrative structure refers to the different parts in which a narration is structured. Teresa Day³⁾ considers that in any type of structure must exist the three fundamental moments of the narrative tension: The approach, the climax, and the outcome. According to José Luis Orihuela and Maria Luisa Santos.⁴⁾ The three basic dimensions of the narration (history, structure, and action) presuppose a linear communication model, unidirectional and driven by the narrator, who selects the information, arranges it in a single sequence and enunciates it, keeping control of the story time and provoking the emotional responses of its audience. Nevertheless, this scheme is not the only one that

3) Teresa Dey, Estructuras narrativas en el cuento. Published on april 2012. Digital blog, recovered on november 2016.

4) Taking from book: José Luis Orihuela y Maria Luisa Santos. Anaya Multimedia - 1999

actually exists; with the appearance of digital media and audiovisual storytelling, new narrative schemes are emerging.

2. Non-Linear Structure

A non-linear narrative is a type of narration in which the narrator does not follow the chronological order of a story. The order is broken by various processes. These can be a flashback, flash forward, media in res, among others. (See figure 3). Olimpia, Master in communication in UNED, argues that what characterizes this type of narrative is the deconstruction of linear narrative, not only using some flashbacks, otherwise creating a puzzle that the viewer must recompose or compose.⁵⁾

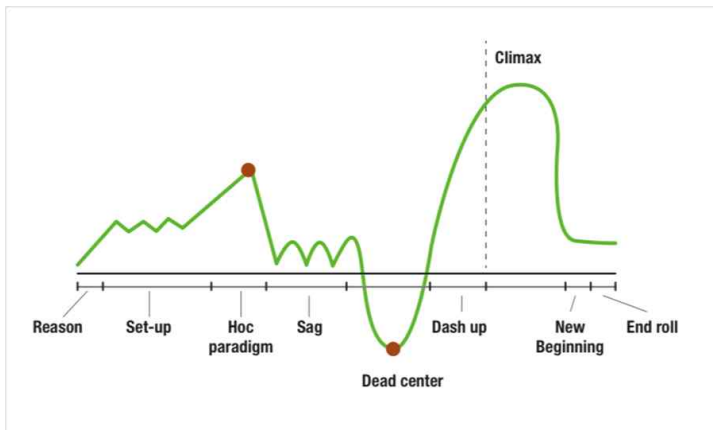


Figure 3. non- Linear structure graphic line example

5) Olimpia. Cine, narrativa no lineal e hipertextual. May 4th 2010. Paper was written for Master Communication and Education digital network UNED 2010.

3. Color Theory And Principles

Stockman and Brainard⁶⁾ point out that color vision's purposes begins with light (Vision begins with light) and its physical property: wavelength and their power. Light sources emit visible energy in pulses (waves) which travel at the same speed. Waves of light energy are emitted at different frequencies.⁷⁾ The human eye is capable of perceiving wavelengths of light ranging from about 380 nm to about 720 nm. However, some authors argue that the visible spectrum can be considered approximately 390 nm and 730 nm. In spite of this, the standard wavelength ranging is between 400 and 700 nm (see figure 4).

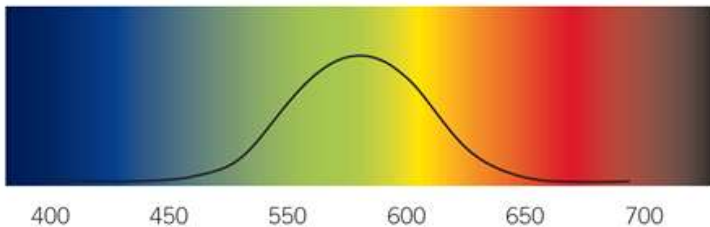


Figure 4. standard wavelength ranging is 400 and 700 nm

4. Dynamics of Color

Color has three dimensions: hue, also known as dye or tint, is the color's quality; the value, which is the

6) Andrew Stockman and David Brainard. Fundamentals Of Color Vision I: Color Processing In The Eye. University College London. To appear in: Handbook of Color Psychology, Andrew J. Elliot and Mark D. Fairchild, editors. Cambridge University Press.

7) The distance between the peaks of energy emissions is called wavelength. Wavelengths of light are measured in nanometers(nm).

color' s brightness level; and saturation or intensity, which is the color' s purity.

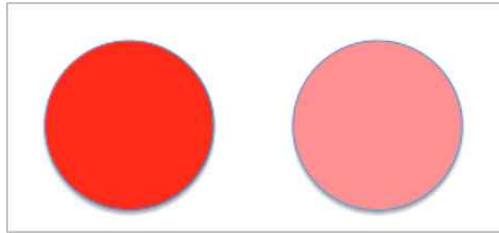


Figure 5. Different colors value

Figure 5 shows that a different tint or shade applied to the base color changes what the color are saying about itself. Red conveys more anger, passion, happiness, whereas pink conveys a softness, charm, or courtesy. Moreover, in the world of animation, the color is usually used to emphasize certain objects or people in order to convey stronger feelings to the viewer. The main role played by the color within an animation is to convey emotions and feelings; however, they depend on the physical values of each individual, their social context and subjectivity of the observer. Josef Albers⁸⁾, in his book *Interaction of Color* (1963), stressed the instability and relativity of perceived colors and the power of visual training. At the same time, he thought that even within the unstable idea of color, predictable effects exist and can be controlled.

III. VISUAL NARRATIVE ANALYSIS IN ANIMATION MOVIES

8) Josef Albers. *Interaction of color* (1963)

1. Research method and procedures

The research project will be divided into three stages according to the hypotheses: The first stage discusses whether color is linked to character actions throughout the narrative structure of Ghibli and Disney movies. The second stage discusses whether the color acts as an independent resource (dynamic of color) in Ghibli and Disney movies. The third stage discusses whether character design is markedly different between Disney and Ghibli.

2. Narrative structure in Disney and Ghibli movies

Watching the Disney and Ghibli films, we can see that they are very different. However, often we can not explain exactly how they differ. For this point, the plot structure of the 16 selected films was analyzed, taking as reference the linear and nonlinear narrative structures. The following table shows the narrative structure of each film.⁹⁾

MOVIES			
Disney		Ghibli	
The Little Mermaid	L	Castle in the Sky	L
Beauty and the Beast	L	My Neighbor Totoro	L
Aladdin	L	Porco Rosso	NL
The Lion King	L	Princess Mononoke	NL
Pocahontas	L	Spirited Away	NL
Mulan	L	Howl's Moving Castle	NL
Atlantis: The Lost Empire	L	Arrietty	NL
The Princess and the Frog	L	When Marnie Was There	NL

Table 1. List of movies and narrative structure styles

9) L = Linear structure and NL = non linear structure

3. Color thermological evolution in Disney

For the analysis of this point, we will take as reference the color waves mentioned in chapter two, the time of the film and/or scene and the narrative structure of the same

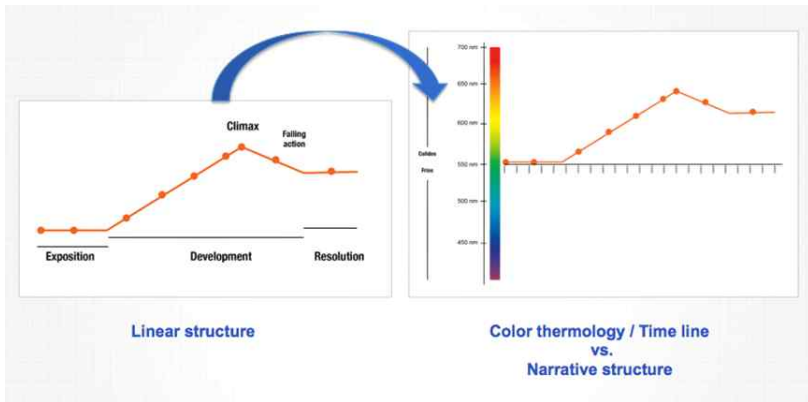


Figure 6. Linear structure vs Color thermology time line

1) Case A : Pocahontas

For the analysis of Pocahontas two variables were taken: narrative sequence of the film in total, and the development of the romance between Pocahontas and Smith.

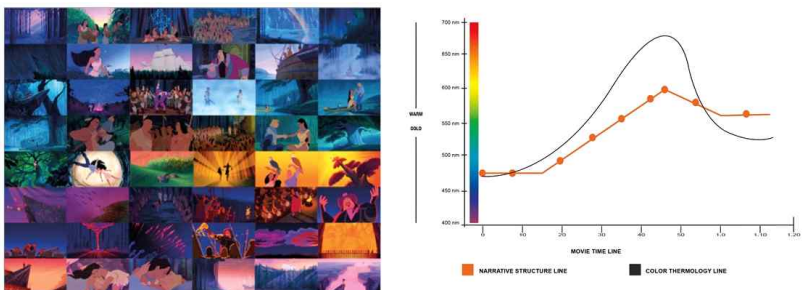


Figure 7. Pocahontas screen shot and color time line vs structure

The above image (figure 7) shows small pictures of the scenes from the movie "Pocahontas," from set-up to resolution. There is a noticeable change or evolution in color temperature from cold to warm tones, concluding with an average temperature. If we compare the linear narrative structure with the evolution of color, we can notice that the shapes of both are very similar, suggesting that the actions of the characters and narrative structure are tied to the evolution of color.

2) Case B : Little Mermaid

For the analysis of the film, Little Mermaid, the scene involving Ariel's father destroying her treasures (0:34 - 0:38) was taken as a reference point.

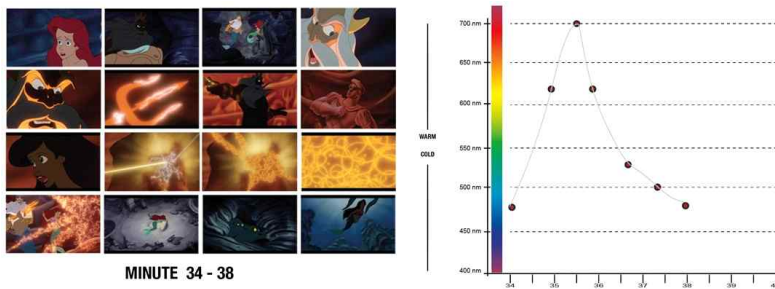


Figure 8. Scene (Ariel's dad destroyed her treasures) and color thermology

In the above graphic (figure 8), we can see that the narrative structure line and color thermology have a similar line. The color evolves according to the development of character's actions, starting from a cold tone, building to warmest tones at the climax, and finally returning to cool tones.

3) Case C : Aladdin

For the analysis of the film Aladdin, the scene “looking for the lamp” (0:29 - 0:32) was used as a reference.

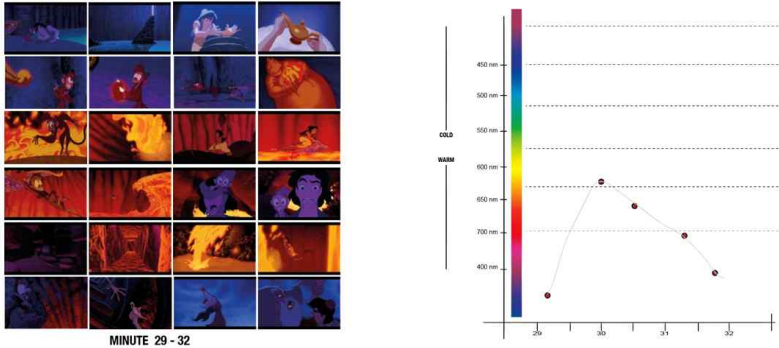


Figure 9. Scene, Looking for the lamp and color thermology line

Thus, as the character passes from tranquility to the moment of highest tension and finally finds the exit, the colors change according to each stage of the plot development.

4) Case D : The Lion King

For the analysis of the Lion King movie, the scene in which Simba escapes after his father dies (0:16 - 0:21) was used as a reference.

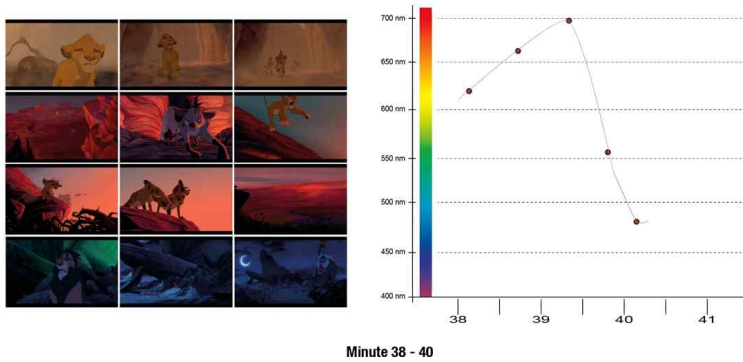


Figure 10. Screen shot of Scene, Simba escape after his father die and color thermology line

In the above graphic (figure 3.10), we can see that the narrative structure line and color thermology have similar lines. The Lion King relates the thermal evolution of color with the actions of the characters in the narrative structure. The color develops as the character's actions grow along the narrative structure of the scene, starting from a cold tone, reaching the climax with the warmest tone and finally returning to the cold tones.

4. Color thermological evolution in Ghibli

For the analysis of this point, the color waves listed in chapter two, the time of the film and/or scene, and the narrative structure of it will all be used as references (figure 3.18).

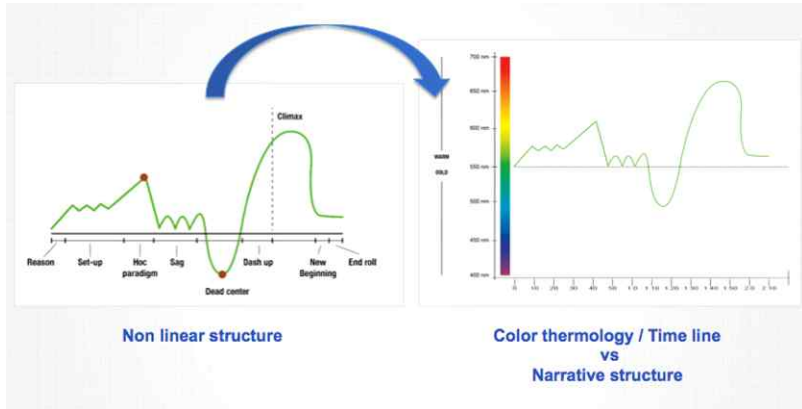


Figure 11. Non linear structure vs color thermology evolution time-line

Previously, the analysis of the narrative structure of the Ghibli films was performed, which showed that 2 of the 8 films had a linear structure and 6 had a nonlinear structure. To obtain the color sample, we used the program Adobe Color, which shows a palette of colors of the image attached.

1) Case A : Castle In The Sky

For the analysis of the film Castle In The Sky, the scene involving the set-up and escape from the battleship (0:00 - 0:04) was used as a reference. This film is one of the few cinematographic works of Ghibli with a linear narrative structure.

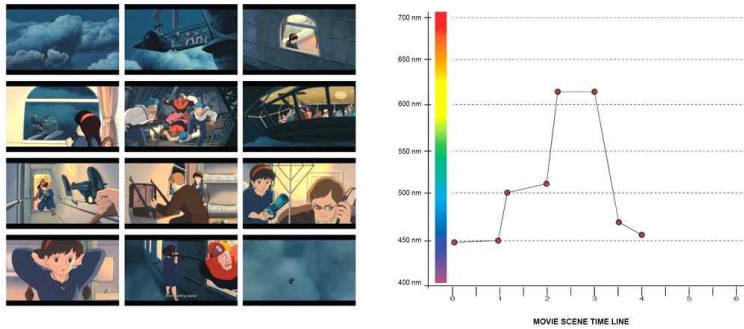


Figure 12. Scene, (Set-up) Escape from the battleship

The scene begins with Sheeta being kidnapped by the army led by Muska, who wants to find Laputa (Island in the sky). Then, the airship in which they are traveling is assaulted by thieves and Sheeta takes advantage of that opportunity to escape, falling towards the earth. In the technical aspect, the scene develops mainly in blue tones, having small hot tone frames. However, this one is not due to an evolution of the color related to the actions of the characters, but rather to the change of scenario (that is, exterior and interior) and the time at which this scene occurs (that is, nighttime).

2) Case B : My Neighbor Totoro

For the analysis of the film My Neighbor Totoro, we took as a reference the scene "Mei at the bus stop with Totoro," from 0:48 to 0:54 in the film.

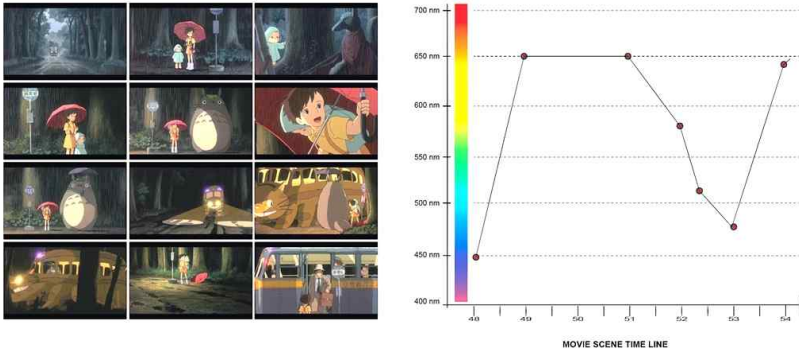


Figure 13. Scene, May at the bus stop with Totoro and CTL

If we place the main colors of the scene on a graph (figure 13), a curve can be obtained that is different from its narrative structure. The scene has a drastic change of color, which then remains constant before descending in a discontinuous way. Finally, the color returns to a dramatic high point. We must remember that the narrative structure of the film *My Neighbor Totoro* is linear.

3) Case C : Porco Rosso

For the analysis of the film *Porco Rosso*, the scene “Porco escaping from the police in his airplane” (0:43 - 0:47) was used as a reference

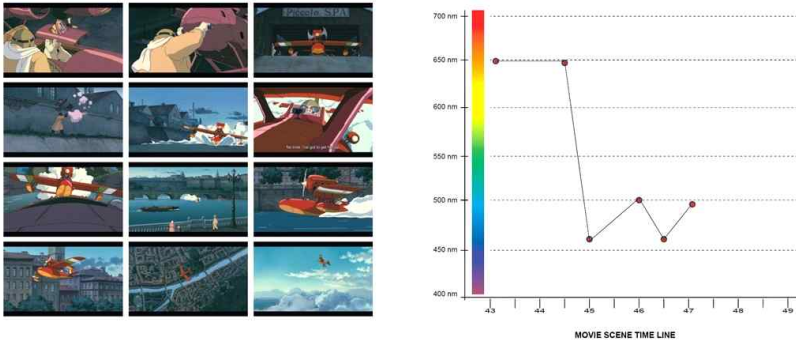


Figure 14. Scene, Porco escaping from the police on His airplane

Porco Rosso is a quite interesting film in its thematic; the scene selected for this analysis is when Porco, after fixing his plane, must escape from the detectives. The family of Fio (a designer and mechanic who helped in the reconstruction of Porco's plane) helps him in his escape. Most of the sequence is developed with cold tones, its main color being blue. However, there are contrasts of light and shadows, as well as light and dark colors.

4) Case D : Spirited Away

For the analysis of the film Spirited Away, the scene in which Chihiro helps a spirit take a bath in the sauna (1:00 - 1:07) was used as a reference.

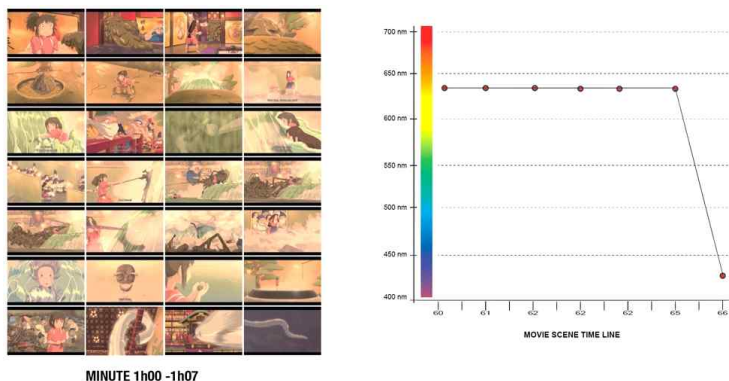


Figure 15. Scene, Chihiro helps the spirit to take a bath in the sauna and color thermology line

The scene selected for the present study is the scene in which Chihiro helps the spirit to take a bath in the sauna. The whole scene is marked by a layer of warm color in pastel tones; in fact, the film frequently uses this resource. In the graphic, it is noticeable that there is no relation of the color with the actions of the characters through the plot structure. However, it contains many contrasts between colors, lights, and shades, harmonies that make it very attractive visually.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The curves obtained in the analysis of 8 Disney films have a very similar pattern to the linear narrative structure (beginning, development and outcome), excluding Mulan, The Princess and the Frog, and Atlantis, all of which are special cases.

“Color vision is an integrated process that involves

physical, chemical, physiological and psychological aspects. It starts with the generation of signals in retinal receptors, involves comparisons and evaluations of the information that is transmitted to the brain and terminates with the declaration of particular hues in order to describe a scene.” *John Gage*¹⁰⁾

However, the curves obtained in the study of the 8 films of Studio Ghibli do not have an identifiable pattern. There is no significant similarity between them. This result is not only because of the nonlinear plot of these films, but also because the actions of the characters are not tied to the color thermology the way they are with Disney films. When comparing the graphs (figure 16) curves obtained from the previous analysis of Disney and Ghibli films, we can see that they are completely different. There is no coincidence or a mean between them, even though two of the films produced by Ghibli have a linear narrative structure. In Ghibli, the treatment of color is not tied to the actions of the characters as it is in most Disney films.

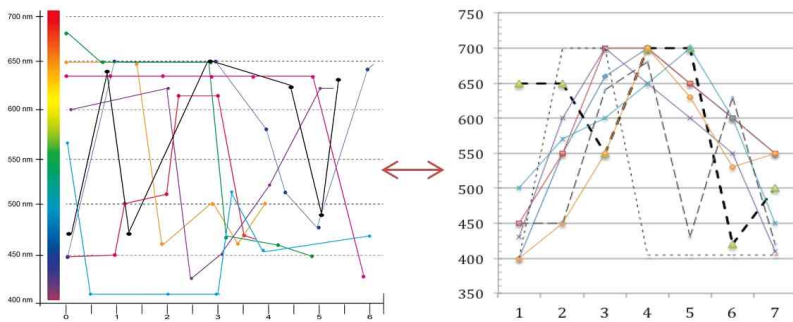


Figure 16. Color thermology curves from Ghibli and Disney analysis

10) John Gage. *Color and Meaning: Art, Science, and Symbolism*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, U.S.A., 2000. 320 pp

On the other hand, the use of color in the last three Disney films changed significantly starting with *Mulan*. In these films, color acts as an independent tool. It could even be said that it resembles the style of Ghibli while maintaining its own personality and originality.

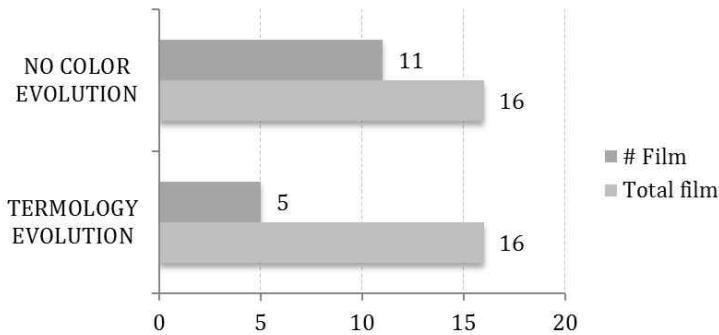


Figure 17. Movies with color and no-color evolutions connected to characters actions.

Of the 16 films analyzed (figure 17), 69%, or 11, of them do not connect the thermological evolution of color with the actions of the character during the plot structure, while 5 films if they do, which gives a total of 31%.

The dynamics of color is the most often-used resource by Studio Ghibli. The harmony of color in its visual compositions magnify the actions of the character and history. Its wonderful contrasts of colors, light and shadow, and above all brightness and contrast darkness make each film an artwork. Even Jeremy Mark Robinson¹¹⁾ points out: “Miyazaki’s movies are among the most exquisite in the history of cinema in terms of colour.” Meanwhile,

11) Jeremy Mark Robinson. 2011. *The Cinema of Hayao Miyazaki*. Crescent Moon Publishing. Kent

Disney maintains its visual composition with the help of the different contrast. The most often-used types of contrast by Disney are tint color contrast, light and shadow, and complementary colors. There are special cases of color behavior in certain Disney and Ghibli films.

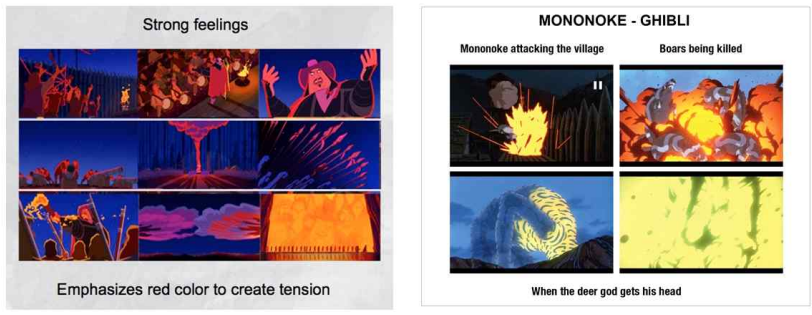


Figure 18. Color’ s focalization linked to object in a scene, Pocahontas and Mononoke

As shown in the above picture 18, in the Pocahontas film produced by Disney studios, the scene before the war between natives and colonizers is a clear example of the emphasis of color on objects: as picture 5 shows, the red color is predominant on the surfaces of weapons or acts like a shadow over the characters, emotions intensify unconsciously, concentrating all the attention on what is going to happen. This is how the animators prepare us for the climax of the film. On the other hand, Studio Ghibli’ s Mononoke does not use this resource. In the film, even if color is used to focalize certain objects in a scene, they do not belong to the same scene. See picture 18. Another peculiarity observed in the cases analyzed was that Ghibli’ s films tend to alter between light and dark, particularly within the same scene. Robinson argues: “Miyazaki’ s movies love to show lamps

being switched on or off. Colour-wise, this means adding grays and blacks to colors, to take out the warmth and saturation. In Ghibli movies the light often becomes atmosphere rather than illumination. This gives the sensation that it comes naturally from some window or lamp that illuminates the composition, but it also creates an intense shadow that expresses the emotion of the scene. Contrary to that, in Disney it still films, light retains its function of simply illuminating the scene, losing depth in the composition. However, its color contrast helps keep viewers in the main action. Ghibli, to produce a greater depth impression, uses selective lighting by outlining figures in light, keeping viewers in the main narrative action.

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디즈니와 지브리 애니메이션 비주얼 서사구조에 관한 비교 연구

야헤이라 모레노 · 조동민

영화 제작자들은 오랫동안 영화 전반에 걸쳐 개발 될 모티프를 제공 할 수 있는 중요한 측면으로 색상을 고려해 왔다. Faber Birren 은 색깔은 표현, 효과, 감각 및 상징성의 운반체이며 자신의 언어와 의미를 부여한다고 믿고 있다. 이러한 의미에서 지브리와 디즈니는 스토리텔링 agent로서, 컬러 효과에 대한 완벽한 예이며 두 가지 측면으로 분류 할 수 있다. 색상의 역동성과 서사 시퀀스로서의 색상이 바로 그것이다. 색상의 역동성은 색상이 어떻게 작용 하는지를 분석하고 캐릭터의 행동에 관계없이 무대, 의미 및 상징성으로 인식된다.

따라서 본 연구에서는 서사 시퀀스 장면이 전개상에서 효율적으로 Thermology가 어떻게 전개되는지 연구한다. 또한 캐릭터 archetype과 디자인은 항상 스토리에 대한 우선순위 중 하나였기 때문에, 캐릭터 부재상에는 즐거운 이야기도 없다. 모든 내러티브는 인물의 갈등과 그것을 해결하기 위한 행동을 기반으로 한다. 즉, 색상과 캐릭터 디자인은 스토리텔링에서 올바른 균형을 유지하는 데 필수적이며 시청자의 마음(의식, 잠재의식)의 두 인지 수준에 직접적인 영향을 미쳐 메시지와 감정을 전하는 강력한 도구로써 활용된다.

주제어: 컬러, 내러티브, 애니메이션, 지브리, 디즈니

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