

A Study on the Design of the Main and Secondary Characters in Domestic Animation under the Concept of “From Small to Big”

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Abstract:

The Yin-Yang theory of I Ching (Zhouyi) has been widely applied in film and television animation. This study explores the specific ways it achieves the balance between contrast and harmony in film and television animation. Emphasizing the unity of opposites and mutual transformation, the Yin-Yang theory is reflected in various aspects of animation creation, such as visual expression, character shaping, plot development, and scene design. For instance, the contrast between warm and cool colors in images creates distinct atmospheres; differences in character personalities form contrasts while achieving harmonious coexistence; plots reach a Yin-Yang balanced happy ending after conflicts; and animation scene design integrates Fengshui culture to embody Yin-Yang layout. In summary, the Yin-Yang theory of I Ching provides abundant inspiration and theoretical support for the artistic design of film and television animation, enhancing the artistic quality and cultural connotation of works.

Keywords:

The Theory of Yin and Yang in *the Book of Changes*, Film and Animation, Comparison and Harmony

1. Introduction

The Book of Changes, as an ancient Chinese philosophical classic, contains profound wisdom in its yin-yang theory. In today's art and design field, especially in film and animation, the yin-yang theory of the Book of Changes holds immense application potential. With the continuous development of the film and animation industry, audiences' aesthetic demands for works are increasingly elevated. Film and animation not only require captivating plots and exquisite visuals but also need to possess unique charm and depth in artistic expression. The contrast and harmony concepts in the yin-yang theory of *the Book of Changes* provide abundant inspiration and theoretical support for the artistic design of film and animation.

The Yin-Yang theory emphasizes the unity of opposites in all things. In film and animation, this principle manifests through the contrast and harmony of various elements. For instance, the interplay of light and shadow, the contrast between warm and cool colors, and the character contrasts can all be skillfully designed using Yin-Yang principles. Simultaneously, the harmonious unity of Yin and Yang requires these contrasting elements to achieve balance and coordination as a whole, ensuring the work maintains both tension and harmonious beauty.

In film and animation scene design, the Yin-Yang theory guides designers to create layered and rhythmic visuals. By applying Yin and Yang principles, elements like lighting, color, and composition in a scene can harmonize to form a cohesive whole. For instance, dark and cool tones can evoke a Yin atmosphere in mysterious scenes, while bright and warm tones can embody Yang vitality in cheerful scenes.

Furthermore, the Yin-Yang theory from the *I Ching* provides valuable inspiration for character design in film and animation. Characters can be categorized into two types: Yang and Yin. Yang personalities typically exhibit traits like bravery, decisiveness, and extroversion, while Yin personalities are characterized by gentleness, sensitivity, and introversion. By thoughtfully pairing characters with contrasting personalities, stories gain greater depth and resonate more effectively with audiences.

In conclusion, the theory of Yin and Yang in *the Book of Changes* has broad application prospects in the field of film and animation. In-depth study and application of this theory will help to improve the artistic quality and cultural connotation of film and animation.

2. Research Objectives and Methods

This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of how the concept of *Xia Wang Da Lai* (literally meaning “small going, great coming”) influences the design of positive and negative roles in domestic animation. It explores the role of this concept in enriching character connotations, promoting character development, and enhancing the expressive power of animation works. By analyzing the design of positive and negative characters in domestic animation works from different periods, this study reveals their evolutionary laws and explores more innovative and artistic character design strategies in combination with the *Xia Wang Da Lai* concept, so as to provide useful references for domestic animation creation practice.

In terms of research methods, literature research and case analysis are mainly adopted. For the literature research method, relevant philosophical and cultural literature on the *Xia Wang Da Lai* concept is extensively collected to deeply understand its connotation and extension. At the same time, academic works and research reports related to the development history of domestic animation and character design are collected to sort out the historical context and research status of positive and negative character design, laying a solid theoretical foundation for subsequent research. In the case analysis method, representative domestic animation works from various periods are selected, such as the early *Havoc in Heaven* and *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King*, some transitional works in the middle period, and popular contemporary animations. A detailed analysis is carried out on the image shaping, personality traits, behavioral motivations, and relationships between characters of the positive and negative roles in these works. Combined with the “*Xia Wang Da Lai*” concept, the characteristics and changes of their character design are

observed, so as to intuitively show the application effect of this concept in actual animation creation. Thus, the corresponding character design strategies and laws are better summarized to provide strong support for promoting the optimization and innovation of positive and negative character design in domestic animation.

3. The Basis of Zhouyi Yin-Yang Theory

The Yin-Yang theory of *I Ching* (Zhouyi) regards Yin and Yang as the core components and operational laws of all things in the universe. Its core essence can be summarized into three points: First, the unity of opposites. Yin and Yang form an interdependent and indivisible contradictory unity, such as heaven and earth, hardness and softness, light and darkness. Without Yin, there would be no Yang; without Yang, there would be no Yin. Together, they constitute the complete form of all things. Second, mutual transformation. Yin and Yang are not absolutely static but mutually transitive and waxing-waning under certain conditions. As revealed by the Hexagram Tai (Small Going, Great Coming) and Hexagram Pi (Great Going, Small Coming), things will transform from one state to its opposite along with the changes in the forces of Yin and Yang, embodying the developmental law of "extremity leads to change, and change leads to continuity". Third, dynamic balance. The waxing, waning and transformation of Yin and Yang are not unrestrained but pursue a dynamic balance of harmony. This kind of balance is the foundation for the stable existence and sustainable development of things, as well as the fundamental order governing the operation of the universe. In essence, this theory is a philosophical generalization of the contradictory movement and developmental laws of things, providing a core ideological kernel for understanding various relationships of unity of opposites.

4. Contrast and Harmony in Theatrical Animation

4.1. Color contrast and harmony

Taking animated feature films as the research object, this study centrally achieves the tension and harmonious unity of visual atmosphere through the opposing collocation of warm and cool color tones, which is consistent with the core idea of "opposition and interdependence" in the Yin-Yang theory of *I Ching*.

Taking *Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child* as an example, warm color tones are mainly used to serve two core emotions: the bond of family affection and the awakening of justice. In family scenes, the residences in Chentang Pass are dominated by warm orange and beige. The courtyard lanterns and indoor furnishings are shrouded in soft warm light. Especially in the scene where Ne Zha's mother accompanies him to play shuttlecock, the interweaving of warm yellow light and shadow highlights the pure warmth of family love, echoing the emotional desire hidden beneath Ne Zha's identity as a "demon child". At the key plot point where Ne Zha resolves to defend Chentang Pass, the frame shifts to a blazing warm red. Combined with his movements of breaking free from constraints, it not only demonstrates the masculinity embodied in his declaration "My fate is determined by myself, not by heaven", but also conveys the power of rebirth through overcoming hardships. This precisely echoes the positive attributes of "Yang" in the Yin-Yang theory and resonates deeply with the audience.

In the film, cool color tones are mainly applied to shape villain-related scenes and enhance conflict tension. The East China Sea Dragon Palace, as Ao Bing's residence,

is based on dark blue and jet black tones. The palace constructed with cold ice and mysterious iron is paired with dark blue water waves and cold metallic luster. This not only fits the undersea setting, but also implies Ao Bing's gloomy life experience as an "abandoned child of the Dragon Clan" and his inherent "Yin" characteristics, creating a mysterious and oppressive atmosphere. When Ao Bing first appears, his silver and dark blue armor is set against a cool-toned background of snowflakes falling all over the sky, reinforcing his image of being cold on the outside and lonely on the inside. In their first confrontation scene, the collision between blue ice magic and black devilish energy, together with the cold light, intensifies the conflict tension. It directly presents the opposing relationship between "Yin" and "Yang" in the Yin-Yang theory, enabling the audience to clearly perceive the sense of oppression brought by the confrontation between good and evil.

4.2. Contrast and Harmony in Character Building

4.2.1. The Color Difference between Protagonists and Supporting Characters

Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child as a case in point, the color design of the protagonist Ne Zha and the antagonist Ao Bing closely aligns with the attributes of Yin and Yang while implying metaphors of transformation. Ne Zha's color scheme is dominated by red and black: red symbolizes the courage and righteousness inherent in Yang, whereas black hints at the controversial nature of his identity as a "demon child". The golden aura that surrounds him when he unleashes his powers further reinforces his Yang essence of breaking free from labels and returning to the path of justice.

In contrast, Ao Bing's color palette is based on dark blue and silver white, which resonates with the gloomy and forbearing traits of Yin. The contrast between his delicate facial lines and cool-toned attire creates an image of "gentle exterior yet cold interior", mirroring his conflicting inner world. The color opposition not only clearly distinguishes between good and evil, but also implies through subtle details that Yin and Yang are not absolutely separated—thus embodying the philosophical idea of unity of opposites.

4.2.2. The Harmonious Coexistence of Characters with Distinct Personalities

In the film, the personality differences among Ne Zha, Taiyi Zhenren and their companions form a Yin-Yang complementarity. Ne Zha is impetuous and rebellious (Yang); Taiyi Zhenren is honest and composed (Yin); and the young characters are kind and straightforward (a combination of both Yin and Yang). These three parties complement each other in their interactions: Ne Zha's courage, Taiyi's resourcefulness and the young characters' assistance converge to form a cohesive force that drives the plot forward. The mutual influence between characters—Ne Zha restraining his impetuosity, and others becoming more resolute—embodies the law of Yin-Yang interaction, harmonization and coexistence. This dynamic constitutes a complete character relationship network, echoing the core tenet of Yin-Yang harmony and unity.

5. The Application of Yin-Yang Theory of *I Ching* in Theatrical Animation

5.1. The Embodiment of Yin and Yang in the Plot

Yin and Yang in the plot are mainly presented through conflict and reconciliation, as well as happy endings. In traditional opera animations, the opposition between good and evil, justice and villainy constitutes the Yin-Yang conflict. However, the dual Yin-Yang nature of characters' personalities and the redemption and transformation of antagonists gradually bring the conflict to reconciliation, ultimately achieving Yin-Yang harmony through a happy ending. For most animations, the happy ending is essentially the resolution and integration of opposing Yin-Yang contradictions. It not only achieves Yin-Yang balance through the principle of "good deeds reap good rewards and evil deeds incur evil consequences" but also conveys positive values, which is consistent with the core tenet of Yin-Yang harmony and unity.

5.2. The Yin and Yang in the Design of Animation Scene

The design of animation scenes integrates feng shui culture and implements the Yin-Yang principles from two aspects: spatial planning and the selection of colors and materials.

In terms of spatial planning, entrances conform to the attributes of Yang, adopting bright and open designs to convey vitality. Activity centers need to achieve Yin-Yang balance, incorporating both bustling areas and quiet corners. Bedrooms emphasize the introverted nature of Yin, using soft cool tones and private layouts to create a tranquil atmosphere.

In the selection of colors and materials, warm tones and natural hard materials correspond to Yang, highlighting vitality and strength; cool tones and soft materials correspond to Yin, fostering a sense of calm and warmth. Through rational collocation, the scenes achieve Yin-Yang harmony, which enhances the layering of the frames and resonates emotionally with the audience.

6. Conclusion and Prospect

6.1. Summary of research conclusions

This study conducts an in-depth exploration of the application of Yin-Yang theory from the *I Ching* in film and television animation, as well as the realization of contrast and harmony. By elaborating on the fundamentals of the *I Ching*'s Yin-Yang theory, we have gained an understanding that Yin and Yang are both opposing and unified, and mutually transformative—a philosophical connotation that is widely reflected in all aspects of film and television animation.

In film and television animation, color contrast and harmony serve as crucial expressive techniques. Warm tones can convey positive and cheerful emotions, such as the cozy scenes in *Snow White*; cool tones, by contrast, create mysterious and terrifying atmospheres, like the scenes where the witch appears. The color differences between protagonists and supporting characters, as well as the harmonious coexistence of the Seven Dwarfs' distinct personalities, all embody contrast and harmony in character shaping.

In terms of plot, the conflict and reconciliation in opera animations, along with happy reunion endings, all contain Yin-Yang implications. The happy reunion ending embodies the harmonious unity of Yin and Yang, bringing positive emotional experiences and enlightenment to the audience.

In animation scene design, integrating Yin-Yang layout from Feng Shui culture—from spatial planning to the selection of colors and materials—can achieve the harmonious unity of Yin and Yang, endowing animation scenes with greater charm and depth.

In summary, the *I Ching*'s Yin-Yang theory provides abundant inspiration and theoretical support for the artistic design of film and television animation. Through the application of Yin-Yang theory, film and television animation can achieve a balance between contrast and harmony, enhancing the artistic quality and cultural connotation of works.

6.2. Prospects for Future Research

Future research can further explore the innovative application of Yin-Yang theory from the *I Ching* in film and television animation. For instance, it can integrate modern technological means such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to create more immersive animation experiences, thereby better embodying the contrast and harmony of Yin and Yang.

At the same time, comparative studies can be conducted on film and television animations from different cultural backgrounds to investigate the applicability and influence of the *I Ching*'s Yin-Yang theory on a global scale. Additionally, research can be carried out on how to combine the *I Ching*'s Yin-Yang theory with other philosophical thoughts and artistic theories, so as to provide more possibilities for the development of film and television animation.

In terms of education, training on the *I Ching*'s Yin-Yang theory can be strengthened for film and television animation creators to improve their artistic literacy and creative capabilities. Meanwhile, the *I Ching*'s Yin-Yang theory can be disseminated to audiences through animation works, promoting the inheritance and development of traditional culture.

In summary, the application of the *I Ching*'s Yin-Yang theory in film and television animation has broad prospects and great potential, and future research will bring more innovations and breakthroughs to the development of film and television animation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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