

# Mamoru Hosoda and His Humanistic Animations

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## 概要

本論文は、日本のアニメーションの監督である細田守の作品を考察する。彼のアニメーションには、筆者によると二つの特徴がある。一つ目は人と人とのつながりが大切であるというメッセージを、細田はアニメーションを通して伝えている。人と人とのつながりは、家族ばかりでなく、親戚、友人、隣人、師弟を含んでいる。作品によって人と人との関係性は違うが、その重要性を彼の作品は伝えている。二つ目は異次元の世界をうまく描いているという点である。インターネットの世界と現実、人間とオオカミ、人間と化け物などの二つの次元の違う世界を相対立する世界というより、共存する世界として描いている。この二つの点が細田守のアニメーションの特徴である。

## Introduction

Japanese animations are popular not only domestically but also globally. The wide variety of animations ranges from family-oriented TV animations such as *Sazae San* (1968–the present) and *Chibi Maruko-chan* (1990–1992, 1995–the present) to science fiction animations, such as *Appleseed* (2004) and *PSYCHO-PASS* (2015). Because of the Internet it is easy to gain access anywhere to the contents of Japanese animations

with provocative themes, and this situation contributes to their popularity (Otmazgin, 2014). The first animation appearing on TV in Japan was *Astro Boy*, created by Osamu Tezuka in 1963. Then, an epoch-making animation that surprised audiences throughout the world, *Akira*, was produced by Katsuhiko Otomo in 1988. In my generation (i.e., born in the 1960s), many people grew up with animations, starting with the TV series, *Space Battleship Yamato* (1974–1975). *Lupin the Third: The Castle of Cagliostro* (1979) and *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (1984) followed, both of which were directed by Hayao Miyazaki. Of course, I watched more animations in my school days. In fact, many people, including me, have been influenced by certain animations in their youth in one way or another.

Japanese animations have four characteristics that distinguish themselves from animations produced in other countries (Napier, 2005). First, animations in Japan possess a global identity. In other words, they are recognized as distinctive artwork and are accepted by many people throughout the world. For example, Napier reports that a Japanese journalist saw a figure of *Akira* on the wall in Sarajevo in war-torn Serbia in 1993. Second, Japanese animations with complex storylines cause audiences to think through important contemporary issues. For instance, *Ghost in the Shell* (1999), directed by Mamoru Oshii, asks the audience to consider the relationship between mind and body in the contemporary and technologically savvy society. In addition, this animation poses a question as to what extent our memories shape our identities. Third, Japanese animations emphasize metamorphosis to capture fluid and multifaceted identities. In *Akira*, one of the main characters, Tetsuo, is weak, and members of a violent motorbike gang bully him at first. However, after following a medical experiment, he feels a surge of enormous power inside his body and is filled with confidence. Toward the end of the story, he engages in a fight with a bully. Tetsuo cannot control his power, and his body expands to the point that he becomes a grotesque creature. Finally, Japanese animations express three modes: festivity, elegy, and apocalypse. Festivity refers to the power of the weak and the diminishing strength (though for a limited time) of people in power; the atmosphere is similar to that of a carnival in the Middle Ages. For instance, *Ranma 1/2* (1989) has a carnivalesque quality in that gender roles are reversed. Elegy is the expression of sadness or remorse. A good example of this mode is *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988), in which a poor boy with a little sister tries to survive after World War II. It is a poignant animation that shows how life is changed by war. The apocalypse mode focuses on the end of the world. I believe that the atomic bombs dropped over Nagasaki and Hiroshima affected many animators who were born after the war, and the aftermath of the bombs

is engraved on the hearts of many anime creators. Both *Akira* and *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (2007) begin with a scene depicting devastated Tokyo.

Mamoru Hosoda is one of the best animators in Japan, and he is gradually being recognized as an anime director by people in other countries. He was born in 1967 and graduated from Kanazawa Art and Industrial Design University. Subsequently, he worked for Studio Ghibli's *Howl's Moving Castle*. He left Studio Ghibli to join Madhouse, an animation studio. His first full-length animation was *One Piece: Baron Omatsuri and the Secret Island* (2005).

In this paper, I will attempt to analyze social ties that are depicted in the animations that Hosoda directed. In addition, I am very interested in two worlds in different dimensions and their relationship in an animation; thus, I will examine this subject in considerable detail.

## **Social Ties**

Interestingly, Mamoru Hosoda directed *One Piece*, one of the most popular animation series in Japan. In 1997, a manga version of *One Piece*, written by Eiichiro Oda, began to appear as a series in *Weekly Boys Jump*, a manga magazine with a large circulation. The TV series, *One Piece*, first aired in 1999. There were 13 *One Piece* movies as of 2018, and Hosoda directed the sixth (i.e., *One Piece: Baron Omatsuri and the Secret Island*).

Luffy and his crew members receive an invitation and map of the sea in *One Piece: Baron Omatsuri and the Secret Island*. They land on a secret island called Festival Island. Baron Omatsuri welcomes them. They expect to have a good time on the island, but Baron Omatsuri tells them that they have to overcome tough challenges if they want to enjoy a luxurious vacation there. Most of the crew members are reluctant to participate in the ordeal, but Luffy is enthusiastic about the tests imposed by Baron Omatsuri.

The crew members exhibit robust teamwork as they face three challenges. In the goldfish scooping game, they must outperform their opponents by placing an enormous goldfish in a large bucket. They skillfully catch the goldfish and it falls into the big bucket. The second challenge requires three people from each party to encircle their opponents' bodies with a float from their position onboard a boat. The team who accomplishes this task first wins. In this race, Luffy's crew members win because they collaborate. The third challenge is a fight between Luffy's crew members and a water sprite (like a martial artist) who serves Baron Omatsuri. Luffy's team defeats the martial artist in the end.

However, Luffy's crew members are absorbed one by one by the huge root of a carnation at the top of a mountain. Luffy wants to save them from entrapment, but he does not have his team members to support him and is about to be defeated by Baron Omatsuri. In the midst of this crisis, Luffy meets a man, his wife, and two children who were previously captured by Baron Omatsuri. The man is cowardly at first, but with the encouragement of his wife and children, he helps Luffy save his crew members. Baron Omatsuri confesses that he hates bonds of friendship; hence, he captures and kill pirates who are comrades. In the end, Luffy succeeds in saving his crew members.

This animation focuses on the bonds of friendship (Mills, 2015). It is obvious that Luffy and his crew members have strong ties together. They overcome many difficulties and develop the confidence to face predicaments at sea. Near the end of the story, Luffy is about to give up on saving his crew members. He feels lonely, but the aforementioned family comes to his aid. I think that family love and strong friendship are the driving forces that defeat Baron Omatsuri and the carnation that swallows the crew members.

The friendship depicted in *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* (2006) is unique. Makoto is a female high school student who has two male friends, Chiaki and Kosuke. They play catch together, and their feelings for each other initially are platonic at first. After a girl at school confesses her true feelings to Kosuke, Chiaki is inspired by her courageous act and decides to confess his feelings to Makoto while giving her a ride on his bicycle. However, Makoto does not want to accept his love, so she leaps through time to avoid hearing Chiaki's confession. Makoto wants to maintain a friendship, but Chiaki would like to be closer to her emotionally. I think that the relational triangle involving Makoto, Chiaki, and Kosuke is an interesting bond.

The underlying message is that it is important to express our true feelings at the appropriate time (Russell, 2013). If our timing is off, our true feelings cannot be delivered properly, even if we could return to the past. Of course, we do not have a time machine to go back and start again. When we miss an opportunity, we usually feel remorseful. In *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time*, Makoto does not regret what she does because she acquires the ability to travel through time. However, she gradually recognizes that it is not possible to make everyone happy at the same time. She travels through time so that her schoolmate's confession to Kosuke will be successful, but it does not go as well as she wishes. This scene implies that there are appropriate times for certain events, usually without second chances.

In *Summer Wars*, extended family ties play a significant role (Stefan 2010).

Natsuki Shinohara is a very popular high school girl, and she returns to her hometown during summer vacation. She promises her grandmother that she will bring her fiancé to the house, and she asks Kenji Koiso, a “geek” who is junior to her in the same high school, to assume the role of provisional boyfriend. Kenji is welcomed by Natsuki’s immediate and extended families who gather to celebrate the grandmother’s 90th birthday. When the online world called OZ—where millions of people throughout the world have accounts and make monetary and informational transactions with each other—is hacked by a digital character (artificial intelligence) named Love Machine, Kenji and Kazuma Ikezawa (Natsuki’s cousin) fight the entity. Furthermore, Natsuki’s uncles help them use very powerful computers and an advanced system so that Kenji and Kazuma eventually defeat Love Machine.

In addition, 90-year-old Sakae Jinnouchi exhorts her relatives and acquaintances not to yield to the threats and confusion caused by Love Machine. OZ and the real world are closely intertwined, and the malfunction of OZ causes numerous problems in the real world. For instance, traffic signals randomly go on and off so that traffic congestion occurs in many places. Sakae encourages people whom she knows to do their best to overcome such difficulties. Surely this scene shows the importance of collaborating to tackle predicaments.

The family ties between parents and children are exquisitely shown in *Wolf Children* (Schilling, 2012). A college student, Hana, notices a handsome man in her classroom and begins talking to him. He tells Hana that he is not really a student. He reveals that he is a wolf man who can transform into a human being. Nevertheless, Hana falls in love with him and they have two children: Yuki, a daughter, and Ame, a younger son. However, one day the wolf man’s dead body is found in the river, and Hana’s life is changed drastically. She wonders if she should raise her children as humans or as wolves. Each child transforms into a wolf when excited.

One day, Ame is sick and Hana wonders if she should take him to a doctor’s office or a veterinarian. This dilemma points to the family’s confusion over living in the animal world versus the human world. Eventually, Hana decides to live in the country, where she does not need to worry about the prying eyes of neighbors. Ame and Yuki play freely outside and sometimes transform into wolves. Both of them attend school, but Ame does not like school life. Yuki, however, wants to get along with her classmates. Ultimately, Ame decides to live in the forest and Yuki determines to live in the human world. In the end, Yuki—conducting herself as her late father did with Hana—reveals that she is half-wolf to her classmate.

In *Wolf Children*, the nurturing care of a mother for her children is heartwarming.

According to Hikawa (2015), Mamoru Hosoda lost his mother and grandmother before creating *Wolf Children*, and he was interested in producing an animation in which a mother who raises her children would be the main character. After losing her husband, Hana, a single mother with two children, is suspected of abusing and neglecting her children by welfare staff members in the city because she does not want to take them to the hospital for vaccinations. Hana is afraid that her children will transform into wolves in a public place. I was impressed with the delicate depiction of Hana's anguish in this animation.

The relationship between master and pupil is uniquely depicted in *The Boy and the Beast* (2015). Kyuta is an orphan who tries to escape from the custody of his relatives; he wanders in the street of Shibuya, Tokyo. Kumatetsu, a beast, looks for someone to be his disciple. He is one of the contenders for the position of grandmaster in the beast world. The other contender is Iouzen, a well-mannered and respected beast with many disciples. To be the grandmaster, the two must fight. Further, having a disciple is a necessary condition for becoming the grandmaster, and Kumatetsu desperately needs at least one disciple. By chance, Kumatetsu notices Kyuta and talks to him. At first, Kyuta is not interested in the beast, but he somehow gets lost in Shibuya and goes through the alleyway that leads him to the beast world.

It is said that humans are disliked and avoided in the beast world because of the deep darkness in their minds that can cause them to become very dangerous and violent. However, Kyuta is welcomed by Kumatetsu and is trained by him. Kyuta wants to be strong enough to live independently, so Kumatetsu attempts to teach him martial arts. Kyuta imitates every motion that Kumatetsu introduces; gradually, he becomes stronger. Several years pass after Kyuta begins living in the beast world, and he becomes an adolescent. In this animation, the relationship between master and disciple is depicted in a comical way. In particular, Kumatetsu grows mentally as he teaches Kyuta martial arts techniques, showing the importance of their bonds.

One of the characteristics of Mamoru Hosoda's animations is that he emphasizes the importance of relationships among family members, extended family, and master and disciple. Hosoda portrays hope in the chaotic world in which we live by describing a variety of social ties that help overcome the difficulties that we face. A family is the nucleus of society, and it is best to rely on one another to overcome the obstacles we face.

## **A World in Different Dimensions**

The relationship between the real world and virtual world in Hosoda's animations

is close and seamlessly connected. It seems to me that the two worlds coexist in parallel and support each other. For instance, in *Summer Wars*, the virtual world of OZ and the real world are intricately connected. When the central system in OZ is hacked, the people in a real world panic and experience inconveniences. One day, Kenji Koiso receives a mysterious email in which he is asked to solve a mathematical problem. He does not attempt to identify the sender; he thinks that someone is challenging his mathematical ability. Overnight, he solves the problem and sends the number to the person who sent the email to him. This is the beginning of the turmoil that takes place in the world of OZ, where millions of people have their avatars and bank accounts. What Kenji finds are numbers that enable the artificial intelligence to enter the central system of OZ. Subsequently, Love Machine hacks the system and starts to control OZ, and the avatar of Love Machine becomes maliciously powerful and dominant.

What the world of OZ implies in relation to the real world where the characters live is that we tend to think that the virtual world is separated from the real world; in fact, the two worlds are intricately connected. Thus, the breakdown of the virtual world results in serious consequences in the real world (Condry, 2013). In our daily lives, we rely on an ATM to handle monetary transactions, and the Internet is indispensable for the academic, social, and economic dimensions of our lives.

It is fascinating for me to watch the two interrelated worlds and synchronize them. I think that depicting the hybridity of the two worlds is one of the unique aspects of Mamoru Hosoda's animations. In other words, reality and a simulated world coexist, and the animal world and human world in *Wolf Children* portray fantasy and realism at the same time (Shaker, 2013). It is not possible to see a wolf man/woman in reality, but in this animation, it seems possible to live with a human possessing the nature of a wolf, mainly because the family lives in the countryside next to the forest, which symbolizes nature. The family lives in harmony with nature and the two worlds are connected seamlessly. The juxtaposition of the forest and field where the family grows crops makes the unrealistic world realistic.

In *The Boy and the Beast*, the model for the market in the beast world was a bazaar in Morocco, and the dueling field where Kumatetsu and Iouzen fight looks like Colosseum in Rome. Many scenes in this animation appear to take place in Shibuya even though the scenes are drawn, not photographed. Recreating the scenes in an animation requires a great deal of manual labor, but in this animation the scenes in Shibuya are very realistic. Animation is regarded as an art form. I think that superior artistic drawing techniques make it possible to imagine that incidents occurring in the animation are authentic.

## Conclusion

Mamoru Hosoda is one of the best creative animation directors in Japan these days. When I watched *The Girl Who Leapt through Time* for the first time, I was fascinated by the main characters, particularly Makoto, who was a tomboy with a positive attitude. She is energetic and uses her acquired ability to engage in time travel to repeat trivial events. She sings songs karaoke-style and eats sweets before her younger sister eats them. Likewise, Hana—who raises two small children in *Wolf Children*—always shows positive feelings toward them, and she never gives up caring for her offspring. Both characters show the affirmative and optimistic nature of the woman in contemporary Japanese society. I think Hosoda delivers the message that women live in less restrictive communities than they did previously; thus, they can explore more opportunities for self-actualization in Japan.

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