

Hayao Miyazaki with His Spirited Away

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Abstract: As the only Asian who can compare with The Walt Disney Company and DreamWorks Studios, Hayao Miyazaki earns the unique position in the world animation industry. From wild view of Miyazaki's film, it is easy to find out that almost all of his works put the naive girl as the protagonist, the girl always accompanied with some fantastic little creatures, telling meaningful story with nature color background and peaceful music are also some mystical creatures. In this essay, I will analyze one of Hayao Miyazaki's film "Spirited Away" in 6 aspects (Women supremacist, creatures, landscape design, human warning, background music and background colour.)

Keywords: Hayao Miyazaki; Animation; Film; Studio Ghibli; Chiro

Background

Hayao Miyazaki was born in 1941 from Tokyo Japan, he loved reading books and comics. Because he is the second child in his family, his elder brother will inherit the family business, so he could choose every career as he like. After that, he invited the famous Japanese composer Joe Hisaishi created the 'Studio Ghibli', which was inspired from an Italian aircraft in the second world war. This is because Miyazaki's father used to work in the aircraft factory, and he always looked forward to fly in the sky, which is almost all of Miyazaki's works present the sky and every kind of aircrafts. (Schilling, Mark, 1997)

1. Women supremacist

There are lots of beautiful and adorable female actress in Japanese animation, sadly all of them have immature behaviour, flirty voice and extremely huge eyes. Miyazaki is very disdain with this vulgar image. It is not hard to find that every protagonist from Miyazaki's film is female, they have the almost same appearance: big eyes and small nose with a great smile on her face, and also all of them have a pure and kind heart. Miyazaki thinks female is the representative of happiness, kindness and full of hope. (Laity, K, 2004) Just like Chihiro from 'Spirited Away', although she looks super normal as the Japanese girl, she is brave, friendly, virtuous and optimistic.

In the beginning part of the film, Chihiro was a normal 10-year-old girl, she is not beautiful, cowardly and languid, the director use this image aims to let every 10-year-old girl see themselves from her. After she went into the hot tub, she tried to be brave and strong, she helped the River Spirit clean up the filth, learned how to respect others. Moreover, Chihiro helped the No-Face split out all the desire, and took him to find the warm home, so she learned how to love and how to be loved. After that, she saved Haku's life, returned the treasure and begged forgiveness for Haku, and also helped him to find his name, so she learned to be forward to help others. Finally, she come back to the real society, but it does not mean she defeated the bad force, it is because she finds the humanity. Miyazaki used to say that the present Japan has become undistinguishably, using the characters from the animation to tell the reason of life is what Miyazaki's original intention of making film. (Daly, Steve, 2005)

2. Creature reflect the human reality

In the film, there are a variety of ghost and supernatural creatures, most of them have no viciousness, instead of that they just live there and pretending the alive camera record every detail of human's behavior, although Miyazaki do not say about the negative about people on the surface, he uses these creatures to warn people do not destroy the environment.

In addition, the No-Face who company with Chihiro from the middle of the story, firstly he was influenced by money and society

in the hot tub, he became a monster which eating people and appearing gold. After the guidance by Chihiro, he split all stuff he ate, and becoming an assistant of Zeniba. This character has a full-bodied symbolism, it also is seen as the real reflection of polluted humanity. For example, compared with Chihiro who is brave to become a worker in the hot tub, No-Face uses people's greedy to fill his sense of satisfaction. After that, when the rules from society come over, Chihiro choose to face reality, but No-Face is afraid to bear the pressure and loneliness, he swallows all of the food and people to pretend to be strong. This character is totally the same as the modern people.

Furthermore, the River Spirit as the only environmental image in this film, although he does not have any line, the first image of him reflected lots of problems: the stink mud means dirty which also represent inferior of himself, the motivation of giving money to Chihiro does not have any arrogance but more like begging. In this film neither he says nothing, nor he complains nothing about indifference from the others, all he does is tolerating everything. At last, when he got clean and leave, the different new look and his shape tried to notice human stop destroying the nature, people should get along well with the environment.

Yubaba and Zeniba are sisters, although two of them look alike, their extent of desire acquirement is different. Zeniba shows in seven minutes, but the first two minutes and the last five minutes show the opposite personality. First time of Zeniba was extremely horrible, she was trying to kill Haku (the male protagonist), but she explains things reasonable. After that, Zeniba gave Chihiro lots of meaningful tips, not only she makes Chihiro remembered Haku's name, but also guided Chihiro find her parents and go back to home. In the last part, Zeniba has more facial expression and more gentle figure. Moreover, combine Zeniba's two part of appearances, it can be seen that she is a kind and just woman, this kind of senior always point out the unsatisfied things to young generation in reality, but they also provide the professional and useful suggestions.

However, Yubaba is a very unreasonable witch, she is also the only role of villain in this film. her image is very peculiar: her head is as big as her body. Her grey hair is clubbed up with a pin on the top of her head, which presents Yubaba dictatorial personality. And also, her eyes are long and narrow, the upper eyelid is purple, this exaggerated design was combined perfectly with her huge nose. Furthermore, she wears the simple dark blue skirt, and she also wears a red diamond on her neck. Her finger nail is speculating and bloody red, "throughout much of the world, red represents events and emotions at the core of the human condition: violence, sin, desire and passion", so is here. (Greenfield, A. B. 2006)

(Greenfield, A. B. (2006). *A perfect red: Empire, Espionage and the Quest for the Colour of Desire*. Random House.)

As Yubaba's character, she is irritable, moody and avaricious, and she always acts very exaggerated. For her apprentice Haku, her hostility to Haku was obvious, she set curse to Haku, and does not care about him. When Haku get hurt, she even does not have a look and say 'he is not valuable', and want to kill him. Furthermore, she turns everyone who do not work into the pig and cook them as dinner. when Kahu told her that her most important thing was replaced, the first thing she is going to check is gold instead of her child, it directly present that in Yubaba's eyes, money is more important than anything else in the world.

3. Dream world scene design

Animation scene as the role of activity space, it plays the role of relationship introduction, create air and build personality. (Ellouze, Mehdi, 2010) not only the film 'Spirited Away' focus on content but also paying attention to the sense of formal beauty. So that the film makes audiences enjoy the visual satisfaction and appreciate the narration.

3.1 natural landscape

the film presents the phenomena of the human by a fantasy world, it also includes the Miyazaki's conception of nature, such as the elaborate natural landscape, the scenery of watercolor painting and the vivid shadow rendering. These landscape has the unique imagination and adorable line drawing, which are easily recognizing as Miyazaki's style.

When people come into Miyazaki's dream word, they will seem isolated the real world. For example, when Chihiro's parents went into the new area, the light wind gently brushed the grass, the clearly blue sky, and the running train surrounded by the sea, these realistic depiction of natural landscape contrast with fantasy story make up to a perfect match.

It can be clearly to say that the blue sky and grass show in the film, which is exactly Miyazaki's humanitarian natural conception. This film expresses the director unique understanding of nature; he also uses the easiest acceptable way to build the approach of explaining ideas for children, it also wide the thinking space for adults.

3.2 Human landscape

It is a process of gradually mature for Miyazaki using culture to direct animation. In fact, not only the pure imagination without culture is hardly to complete the film, but also its difficult for trying connect with audiences (Hess, Franklin, 2011). On the other hand, put the traditional culture into animation improves the audience affinity, as well as highlight the film's image style. As the previous works from Miyazaki, he always uses the forest to build the imaginative beautiful area. Such as Prada's home from the film "Valley

of the wind” and the trees totoro lives in from “My neighbor totoro”. The forest takes the majority part of the frame, and the color is based on multi-layered green and blue, which creates a telepathic visual effect.

In “Spirited Away”, Miyazaki changed to using the modern city’s background, meanwhile the main story does not happen in the forest but an ancient Japanese hot tub. Although compared with the previous work of Miyazaki, the visual technology has some improvement, this is the first full digital making animation film, every scene in the film has the better image, color and music. On the one hand, Miyazaki tries to present the traditional Japanese culture, make audiences return the native concept. On the other hand, the protagonist grows and experience in the hot tub, not just for cleaning the outside, but also for cleaning her spirit.

3.3 Scene deployment in the animation

Presenting 3D space by 2D technique makes film more meaningful. The way Miyazaki uses 2D technique to achieve the sense of 3D space always called Miyazaki 3 Episodes Film, it means make character or prop have several movements (left-right, up-down, front-back) by deploying and designing scene, this way can rich the sense of space and gentle the film rhythm.

4. Miyazaki’s warning

‘Spirited Away’ not just a story about a normal girl who break in to a fantasy world, it also represents a warning dream from senior to youngers. Just like Hamlet from Shakespeare, a fairytale reflects the introspection of the whole life and society, almost every younger have their own understanding form this film. Chihiro presents the young people who just come into the society, they have to work to embody value in the society, if people who do not or too lazy, they will be abended, just like the film people will became animals.

When Chihiro just came into the tunnel, she was afraid and hesitate to go inside, she prefer to stay at car rather than go to new school, that Chihiro was too naive and have no responsibility. After been through so many things in the new world, she become more and more mature, she can reason to Yubaba bravely, finding Zeniba by herself, she also shows kindness in helping River Spirit and saving Haku’ s life. In the end, not only she can keep herself for temptation, but also save her parents and others.

5. The interpretation of music

“Spirited Away” ’s background music was created by the famous Japanese composer Joe Hasashi, he made around 20 pieces of music for the film, these built characters perfectly, and have a great combination between the film and theme.

The most important of this film is about growing up, Joe Hasashi use 2 music called “One Summer’s Day (あの夏へ)” and “The Return (帰る日)” to make a great explanation and narrate. Although they are the same melody, the meanings which send to audiences are totally different, which are also two of the most important background music. the music appeared 3 times in the film, the first time is the beginning of the film, Chihiro took the card and flowers which were sent by her friends, she seated on the back of the car, at that time, she was just a naïve, normal and vulnerable girl. The second time is after Chihiro looked after her pig parents, when she ate the rice roll and thinking about the tragic experience happened to her, she could not stop crying. She has learned the principle of persistence and she was not that tiny shy girl anymore. And the last time is at the end of the film, Chihiro saved her parents, she has became a brave girl.

In these 3 scenes, Joe Hasashi generally used a simple piano sound, which shows a unique capability for using an easy tone to express the trending of emotion. He also combined string music increases the melody, which have the feeling of Japanese traditional artist conception. This theme is very appropriate to express the thinking of the meaning of survival.

Furthermore, there is also an important plot in these scenes, that is the name of “Chihiro” has been repeated continually. In the hot tub, the master Yubaba control others by taking their names away, the name symbolizes “ego”, and the hot tub is the epitome of the real money society. In the beginning, the story has been told that the name must be token before getting work in the hot tub, so those waitresses and “frog man” both lose themselves, they have no personality and soul, just working for money. This implied the real Japanese society, which also metaphors the survival condition of present Japanese people. Chihiro relied on remembering her name and finally escaped form hot tub, because she does not have greedy to money and the power of living. Miyazaki would like using this character to tell audiences that the true meaning of survival should not be controlled by desire, but we need to be righteous, individualized and fortitudinous.

The second important part of music is “The Sixth Station (6番目の駅)”. In this part the director tries to express “return”, which means searching people’s spiritual home. This is a fancy and color music, the depress theme played by piano with orchestra brings audiences into dream. Especially the plot of this music can be seen as the most insipid and the most meaningful scene, such as the running train on the sea in the sunset, the music in the deep heart makes the strong sense of loneness. Actually Miyazaki and Joe Hasashi trying to express the nostalgia. It is because the high technology civilization makes people trend to care about the material

satisfaction more than the pursuit of spirit. The train Chihiro took goes from the money and cold world to the faithful and warm ideal world. It is the world that Miyazaki reminiscent ancient Japanese which still have tradition and virtue. And the destination that Chihiro going to is the place where does not have any industrial building scars but just a simple straw house. Although the house is not luxury, but its cozy, enable to seat and talk leisurely, and make gift by themselves instead of magic or money. The director presents the infinite missing to the back time, so does the music, and even strength this emotion, make it sublimation.

6. The application in storytelling color language

The animation is a way of visual performance. In the animation world, the color has always been the most intuitionistic and the most effective visual image. Hence, the animation film has become the main method of popular entertainment. Miyazaki as the leader of the east animation industry, his works' color has the great effecting of theme and culture intuitionistic.

People always say that color has soul, that is because people's visual experience has reaction with external color stimuli, it causes emotional reaction, and effect audiences' attraction and reorganization. (Burdick, John, 1999) In the beginning of the film, the scene shows a red flower, the red means passion external stimuli, which indicates the story tone and whole fantastic adventure. Different color and tone can express different narrative content (Greenfield, A. B. 2006). When the film starting, Chihiro is going to move from city to suburb with her parents, the brightness and color are modest, it mainly characterized by narration. When the car drove into the forest, the color starts to become gloomy, depressed and tense. After the car was stopped, the scene become bright again, but the red gate tower makes feel mysterious and sudden. Red can become the rude and impudently interloper when it was under green-yellow color. (Yang Xiaolin. Animation master Hayao Miyazaki. Shanghai: Fudan University press, 2007) In addition, the color also can express the mental emotion. When Chihiro's parents became pigs because of greedy, the color tends form bright to dark, presents Chihiro's hopeless and terrified. With the help of music, the editor outburst the curious and worry, push the story to the peak.

In conclusion, as the only Asian animation film which won the Academy award, "Spirited Away" tells more than just a story. Because of Miyazaki is a Women supremacist, he tells story about how a normal girl become brave, responsibility, kind and pure naïve. Furthermore, the director use lots of mysterious creatures to reflect the negative parts of the real society. As the design part, Miyazaki uses two kinds of landscapes to express the real world's crucial. Although every work from Miyazaki have different kinds of story and narrative, he combines the meaningful information of dream, environmental protection, life and survival together perfectly. Finally, the director uses the combination of background music and color to create the beautiful fantasy world, and also reflect the humanized emotional changes. Unfortunately, there are too many aspects can be distinguishing, so there is just a superficial study about this film. Hope in the future study, I can have deeper realization about Miyazaki's works, and I also hope that there will have more and more meaningful and great animation in the film industry.

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