

Visual and cultural analysis on "your name"

Parts of the World, Asia



Japanese animation film “ Your Name” written and directed by Makoto Shinkai was a huge impact. Commercially, it was very successful. It became fourth-highest-grossing film of all time in Japan and the first Japanese animation movie which is able to reach 10 billion yen in box office in Japan and is not produced by Studio Ghibli. It also won several awards for its artistic achievement. The success is not just a coincident. There are several factors that make the movie so popular among not only anime fans but also the general audience. Makoto Shinkai has done several works before “ Your Name” like “ 5 Centimeters per Second” (Makoto Shinkai, 2007) and “ The Garden of Words” (Makoto Shinkai, 2013).

Although he was not as famous as Miyazaki Hayao or Mamoru Hosoda before “ Your Name”, he had a group of die-hard fans for his outstanding art style. It is also not hard for the careful reviewers to find out how the director has developed mature skills of representing his distinct visual style and storytelling through his previous works. First, no one would doubt that one of the most attractive parts of this movie is its shockingly beautiful graphics. And second, the story is more than a romantic fantasy story which also involves “ Musubi” or complicated connections between various things. This essay will try to analyze the movie from both the visual aspect involving the art style and visual technics like CGI used in the movie and the matical aspect involving cultural and social context. When “ Your Name” is being discussed here, Makoto Shinkai’s art style has to be mentioned. For most people who watch any of Makoto Shinkai’s works for the first time, they will definitely be amazed by the exquisiteness of the graphics, or more specifically the sceneries in the background. Actually, Makoto Shinkai is one

of the most representative Japanese animation creators that use CGI. By comparing landscapes in “Your Name” with “Metropolis” (Shigeyuki Hayashi, 2001), what is special about “Your Name” is that it is very difficult to tell where CGI is actually used.

Animation consists of the characters and the background. If 3D CG is used for background and 2D animation is used for characters, one huge problem will be the disunity between the two elements. In order to make these two intervals blended seamless, a lot of effort was made. In an interview with Makoto Shinkai, the author Wesley Fenlon directly uses Shinkai's words “When using CG models for a flock of swallows, I use cell shading to make it look like the models are part of the cel (by giving them a black outline and flat color). For a turning windmill, I use texture mapping with background art to make the 3D object appear more like the background” (Fenlon). And also due to the cost, CGI is inevitable in today's 2D animation.

By using 3D modeling, it provides a more precise scaling of the landscape and uniformity among different shots. What is more important is that almost everything is only created once during the modeling. For example, the crater (Your Name, 35: 55) has appeared multiple times throughout the story. With CGI, camera rotation and zooming animations are much less repetitive work than without CGI. For creating the crater in the rain (Your Name, 59: 09), modification can be done based on the previous model. This highly reduced complexity of the work and increase the efficiency, especially for large scaled scenes. So, CGI is used because of both his particular art style and the cost of the film. If the visual aspect is the appearance of the work, then the

story is the soul of the work. The story of “Your Name” reflects several noticeable social and cultural phenomena. The most important clue in this movie is the braid-making which represents as a tradition. It contains the idea of ‘musubi’. As a girl living in a family which operates the shrine in a rural town, Mitsuha represents the traditional Japanese culture. Taki who is an ordinary high school boy living in the Tokyo represents the modern world. These two young people are connected from different times and spaces by the ‘musubi’. The story uses juxtaposition to switch perspectives between two people. And after drinking the ‘kuchikamizake’, the story starts to merge. And finally, they save the town from the comet. Japan is a country with a low birth rate and aging population. In order to keep the economy growing, the government has to solve some problems by modifying immigration policies. As a nation-state, this inevitably will cause anxieties about Japanese culture. The movie provides an interesting idea that how Japanese culture and foreign ideologies can be fused nicely by respecting their traditions. Second, the movie is about saving a town from a natural disaster which makes people to relate it with the earthquake happening in 2011.

When the comet is about to hit the town (Your Name, 84: 23), the main characters’ friends try to cut the power and broadcast the fake alert to evacuate the people. However, they fail. It looks that the movie is questioning how the government can be better when such disaster happens. And the result that everyone lives seems to want to tell people there always hope. Finally, the essence of the story is still about love. Herbivore men or grass-eater men is a Japanese term describes men who have no interest in

getting a relationship with women. This group of people are considered as a potential reason why Japan has such a low birth rate. However, the movie is so successful in Japan. It can't stop letting people think whether people are really losing their interest in pursuing their true love or there is something wrong about the society. Works Cited Fenlon, Wesley. " 2D Animation in the Digital Era: Interview with Japanese Director Makoto Shinkai."