



東海大學學生報告 ePaper

報告題名：

Insight of Howl's Moving Castle: How Miyazaki's
Concept of War Influences His Main Characters
in the Film?

解析〈霍爾的移動城堡〉：宮崎駿的反戰意識與電影
角色設定

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課程名稱：研究方法

開課系所：外國語文學系

開課學年：106 學年度

中文摘要

本研究目的在於探究宮崎駿電影〈霍爾的移動城堡〉對於戰爭與角色的詮釋，主要由宮崎駿導演的訪談記錄、影評、相關文獻等資料中來進行分析和討論，並從中反映出電影場景、情節與角色之間的轉變與互動所帶來的詮釋是如何呈現戰爭與角色的轉變。宮崎駿藉人們的不安的神情、戰爭畫面與武器等，在電影中展現著戰爭的殘酷，影射電影探討的是那時候鬧得沸沸揚揚的國際戰爭議題。再者，宮崎駿對於設立角色轉變的執著從主角蘇菲與霍爾作為孤兒或孤獨奮發的孩童為起發點來塑造角色，更以角色所遇到的事與人來讓角色萌發轉變。從這兩面向的探討，我們將更了解電影中的寓意，也更了解宮崎駿對於電影創作的契機與社會上的關心。宮崎駿的這部動畫片帶給觀眾不僅只娛樂效果，更是深入人心的反思，並達到關心著社會各面向的發展和正面的回應。

關鍵字：宮崎駿、戰爭、角色轉變

Abstract

The purpose of the research is to discuss the viewpoints of Miyazaki's film in the concepts of war and transformation in the characters, and how Miyazaki brings these concepts into the movie of *Howl's Moving Castle*. Through Miyazaki's documentaries, film commentaries, and other researches, it can be discovered how the elements of war and character transformation is reflected throughout the movie plot and character's development. Through the research, Miyazaki's background can be seen as a strong influence of how he started to produce his films. By the film, Miyazaki portrays the cruelty of war and indicates rage on the outburst of war during the time the film was made. Furthermore, Miyazaki's forms the main characters with the bases of orphans to bring out strong transformation in developing them as the story evolves. By means, through understanding the aspects of war and transformation, we not only understand the movie better, but also understand the underlying meanings behind Miyazaki's film and his caring for the society.

Keywords: Hayao Miyazaki, war, transformation

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I. Introduction

Brought into theaters in 2004, the film Howl's Moving Castle by Hayao Miyazaki was a big hit. With a story set in a magical kingdom in the early 20th century, the story basically talks about a journey between a young girl that was cursed named Sophie, and a wizard named Howl. The film was roughly based on the novel of the same name by Diana Wynne Jones. However, Miyazaki made the film with his own twist, and inserted a message of his own. With a total gross of 230 million, Howl's Moving Castle (2004) was definitely enjoyed by many people around the world, but not many could totally understand all aspects of the movie. The movie contained many details and hints which doesn't just celebrate the triumph of love, but also indicates the serious issues of war and reveals human nature through a series of transformation in the characters. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to achieve the goal of investigating the depths of Miyazaki's viewpoints and analyze how the concepts of war and transformation are brought into the film. In this way, readers could have better understandings of the film Howl's Moving Castle (2004), as well as an insight of Miyazaki's concepts in filmmaking. By definition, war is a state of armed conflict between different countries or different groups within a country ([10] Oxford Dictionary). On the other hand, transformation, by definition, is a complete change in the appearance or character of something or someone, especially so that that thing or person is improved ([9] Cambridge Dictionary). However, in the paper, we will solely focus on the transformations of a character.

II. Literature Review

Diving into Miyazaki's background, readers are guided to see how his personal experiences influence the creation of his animated films, especially Howl's Moving Castle (2004). Also, the following passages include the study on the development of

the major characters in his movies, which are closely based on Miyazaki's life experiences.

i. Hayao Miyazaki's View on War (Anti-war)

In many of Miyazaki's animations, audience may sense that the settings are commonly set closely related to war. Undeniably, Howl's Moving Castle (2004) is of no exception. Through digging into Miyazaki's background, it is analyzed that his view on war has played a crucial role in creating the setting and the design of the characters in this film in order to point out the pointlessness and ugliness of war and to raise people's anti-war awareness.

To begin with, to interpret the setting of war background in the film properly, one needs to dive into Miyazaki's background first. In some of his animations, the reason why Miyazaki strongly advocates his anti-war ideology has been closely related to his personal traumatic experiences during war time while growing up. According to Yazbek, "As a child, Miyazaki recalls the time when World War II had forced him to 'escape Tokyo and the ravages of war,' where he commented about 'the guilt and trauma that he felt over his family's refusal, as they escaped Tokyo by truck, to help other families begging rides along the way for their children' ([12] qtd. in Murakami, 2005: 105)." Ever since Miyazaki witnessed the disturbing scene of people being killed by the bombs in the attack, he has decided to appear himself as a pacifist in public from then on. It is reported that Miyazaki has proved himself to be a pacifist who would renounce war in all cases in response to the question of amending the pacifist article of the Japanese Constitution (1946) ([12] Yazbek 9). As a pacifist, Hayao Miyazaki has dedicated himself to bringing people's attentions around the world to the meaninglessness of war through creating animations with war background in Studio Ghibli.

Aside from understanding Miyazaki's anti-war concept, it is especially and

directly shown in the setting of Howl's Moving Castle (2004) how desperately Miyazaki is against the war. Based on the interview of the film, Miyazaki stated that he was deeply affected by the 2003 Iraq war when creating Howl's Moving Castle (2004) ([12] Yazbek 13). In particular, the purpose for him to set the movie on Iraq war is to condemn the launch of it and the oppressive and misleading political message behind it. As stated by Yazbek, Miyazaki politically criticizes the Iraq War and Japan's "political support" of it ([12] 13-14). For instance, Howl's Moving Castle (2004), there's one scene shown in the film that the soldiers from different sides come to Howl's castle to inform him the time of the launch of the war and to encourage him to join in the war. It ends up that Howl accepts the invitation and represents the Japanese force to participate in the battlefield, which is against the pacifist belief in Japan. Moreover, with the war setting in the film, Miyazaki criticizes that the US government is justifying the Iraq war on terror ([1] Akimoto). Based on the historical background, in the Iraq war, the US government claimed that whoever stood in the opposite position with the American force, they were terrorists. In other words, if the country doesn't choose to come to American's side to fight against Iraq, those countries are seen as terrorists ([1] Akimoto). Therefore, in several scenes in Howl's Moving Castle (2004), the audience get to see Howl is actually forced to join the war under the pressure from the outside. In the depth of his heart, he is, in fact, unwilling to go to the battlefield anymore. Reflecting the war in reality into animation, Miyazaki is eager to arouse people's perception that it is discouraged and unnecessary to take part in the war.

In addition to the setting of the movie, Miyazaki depicts the characters in various ways so as to emphasize the hideousness of war and the round characters' changing views toward war. Take the henchmen and the castle as examples. There are semiotic languages lying behind these two characters for the purpose of reflecting on

the corruption and shifting viewpoint on war. Judging from the henchmen's appearance, they are portrayed as black, sludge-like men in suits and masks so that they can blend in with the crowd ([3] "Howl" 2). Their jobs correspond to the denotation of their names; that is, to do illegal or unpleasant works, such as, casting the spell on Sophie and searching for Howl's castle for Witch of the Waste and Madam Suliman. When they are trying to intruding the castle, their bodies begin to swell and twist, symbolizing the corruption of the evil power. The connotation says that, since the henchmen are supporting the evil force in the war, they appear in unpleasant shapes, which suggests that those who attend the war be as nasty as the henchmen appear to be. As for the castle, the changing of the color and the places to which the door leads implies that Howl modifies his ideas toward war. In the beginning, the green door is where the castle is; the red door takes the characters to the King's town where Howl fights in the name of Pendragon; the yellow door to the port town where Howl fights in the name of Jenkins; the black door to the battlefield. Yet, as the plot develops, Howl decides to move to better places for Sophie and others. The green door is still where the castle is, but other door changes into different places: the red door to a wetland with multiple beautiful flowers; the yellow door to the hat shop at which Sophie originally was; the black door to Howl's boyhood. The shifting of the destination to which the door leads indicates that Howl has been tired of going to the battlefield; instead, he wants to end the war and lives with his significant others in peaceful places. Under the theme of anti-war, there are reflections on both dark and bright sides of human's behaviors. On the one hand, Miyazaki is pointing out the ugliness of war; on the other, he also indicates that the bright sides of human souls still exist, encouraging people to look for peace. According to Wu, Tu, and Hseih, Miyazaki once said, "I don't want to solve the problems in this world; I just want to convey it to the people around the world. Even though there's hatred, brutality, and

killings, beauty and peace still exist ([11] qtd. in Chang 4).” In Howl’s Moving Castle (2004), Miyazaki not only endeavors to raise the anti-war awareness, but promotes the idea of seeking peace for himself and the whole nation.

From Miyazaki’s experiences, it is shown that he strongly opposes the idea of war which greatly influences the theme, the setting, and the design of the characters in his animations. It is reported in Yazbek’s report that Miyazaki states that Japan is not a country where a war can be fought ([12] qtd. in Miyazaki 10). With the firm anti-war belief, Miyazaki emphasizes the significance and the power of love and peace in human spirits, which will triumph over evil and hatred in a war eventually.

ii. Hayao Miyazaki’s Take on Developing the Characters

Japanese filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki is considered to be one of the world’s greatest animators. His naturalistic style has shaped the genre of animation both in Japan and around the world. Hayao Miyazaki’s characters are thoroughly individuated and distinct, which makes his films so remarkable and well-known for people. In his films, every character is created to present one image and they are all exquisitely designed ([2] Cavallaro 23-24). As a result, the audience is hard to confuse one character with others. Based on the research and the interview, there are three features about Hayao Miyazaki’s development of characters in the films.

The first feature is heroine. Many protagonists of Hayao Miyazaki’s works are female, such as *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, *Totoro*, *Kiki’s Delivery Service*, *Spirited Away*, Howl’s Moving Castle (2004), and *From Up On Poppy Hill*. Instead of portraying female characters with the images of weak, fragile, delicate or supported by men, he describes them as brave, independent and fighting for what they believe in ([5] Kuo 64-67). Hayao Miyazaki never sexualizes his characters. For instance, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* is impressed by the strong and

independent nature of the female protagonist. Also, in Howl's Moving Castle (2004), Sophie is more fearless than Howl of accepting the imperfection of life.

Second, Hayao Miyazaki is especially concerned about love and family. Therefore, a number of his works contain love. Compared with other romance movies, the couples are more like companions rather than lovers in Hayao Miyazaki's films. Two individuals get through the struggles together and take the responsibilities through the time, Hayao Miyazaki always draws attentions on mutual assistance ([2] Cavallaro 2006). On the other hand, Hayao Miyazaki seldom presents the idealized image of family. Some parents of the protagonists are bad models. To him, family love can be made up by those who really care about you, and this may be build up by two people without any blood relation.

The last one is transformation. Hayao Miyazaki's films are also famous for their dynamic characters. His stories involve submissive individuals taking responsibilities, making difficult choices, and growing into better people ([2] Cavallaro 2006). All of Hayao Miyazaki's characters have stuck to their beliefs and traditions for a long time. After they confront great changes in their lives, they must become stronger and more mature, not only in their physical states but also mental states. In the interview with Hayao Miyazaki, he says that he wants to transmit the messages that youth can bring new life to old traditions and ancient ideas. Also, everyone has the potentials to become more brave and powerful.

III. The Current Study

Knowing from the above, Miyazaki's demonstration of the works he had made is connected to his personal experiences to see the war and his development to be an adult. To be more convincing, in the following context, it will bring the evidence in the movie Howl's Moving Castle (2004). Scenes like war scenes and transformations

of the characters will be presented to make the previous information more related to the movie Howl's Moving Castle (2004).

i. The War Scenes in the Movie

According to the background of Miyazaki Hayao's Howl's Moving Castle (2004), it is known that Miyazaki is a person who hates war through his whole life. Using animations to pass the idea of anti-war and how he loves peace, has become Miyazaki's self-expectation. He wants to let people know how difficult life can be and how painful it is during the war, and alert those bellicose people to stop using brutal tricks or strategy to win whatever they want, hereby bringing peace to the world.

Although Howl's Moving Castle (2004) is a work that was adapted from an English novel, it's still full of Miyazaki's distinctive style. Miyazaki spread the anti-war idea throughout the movie. To human, war is like killing machines everywhere attacking innocent people like demon; there will be bombs exploded, planes drop from air destroying houses and blocking the roads. In the animation, Howl is a person who hated war, which seems that Howl is the reflection of Miyazaki. To hate and escape from war is what he did at first. War could be only just a little misunderstanding between two countries, or there is no actual reason for a country to start a war with another. The thing is, it causes the people in this country suffer the pain under war. Thus, Miyazaki wanted tell people about this cruel fact in any kind of war, and how praiseworthy it is to live in peace through Howl's Moving Castle (2004).

Once in the interview during *CommonWealth Magazine*, Miyazaki Hayao said that he is not the person who is good at creating stories that he never had experienced ([4] Kuan and Chang). In the movie, though war is not the main part throughout the whole story, still, it tightly connected the overall context. At the very beginning, people at where Sophie live are all happy and excited to send off their soldiers to the

war. However, while Marco and Sophie went out for groceries, the ship on fire came back from the war. People's uneasy emotions are diffusing in the air. The original happiness stopped here, only the people who fled in panic were left over in the city. There's a very thought-provoking word spoken by Howl: "whomever started the war and slaughtered the people, are not good men." No matter who started the war and no matter who started the killing first, innocent people are always the biggest victim. We can see that the nobles in the castle were protected under the magic and they didn't suffer any of the pain from war. On the contrast, the villages or cities outside the castle will have to bear the violent attack. It is just like the real world of ours, people who are rich can live in the city that's more secured, but as for the poor, can only live beside those secured places which are not safe and sound. Miyazaki Hayao said that this piece of work is talking about the Iraq war:

"Miyazaki was angered when hearing the American President (Bush) at the time declare the right to fight terror in Iraq. It can be seen that the "transformative adaptation" analytic tool, which Akimoto refers to in his essay *Howl's Moving Castle and the War on Terror*, is used by Miyazaki into a film ([12] Yazbek 2015)."

Miyazaki Hayao hoped that by letting people around the world see this film, we all can know that the future is beautiful, and this is a world that is worth exploring and living peacefully.

ii. Transformations of the Characters in the Movie

Miyazaki's character design is based on his own development as well as his experiences that can slightly be standardized in a certain way. "Orphan" as one of the elements in the protagonists is highly used in many of Miyazaki's movies, Howl's Moving Castle (2004) is included. According to Canadian Children Literature scholar, Perry Nodelman, children are usually well protected by their parents whereas orphans

are not; orphans need to be independent and face the reality and adventure alone, lacking care and protection ([13] Yu 12-13). That is contradictory that makes the audiences have empathy for the poor kids. Hence, in this part of the paper, it will be a focus on how Sophie and Howl are seen as the orphans, for Miyazaki used a lot to make a male and a female paired ([6] Lioi), what conflicts they have encountered ([5] Kuo 101), and how they solve the problems as their transformations.

The female main character, Sophie, is actually considered an orphan also a normal girl in real life, which is one of the elements Miyazaki typically used in his characters. Sophie was left to take care of the hat shop that was inherited from her father; her stepmother seemed to be concerned at her but in fact helping Madame Suliman behind the back. In addition, Sophie's sister was busy in her own position that even Sophie had to meet her in person just for short time. Therefore, Sophie is considered as an orphan in the story. As the movie went on, it could be told Sophie's personality trait of giving in the situation. This was the inner conflict in herself that she constantly yield to the difficulties, for example, the hat shop. When her sister said, "Do you really want to spend the rest of your life in that hat shop?" Sophie never replied directly. Instead, she said, "The shop is just so important to father and I don't mind." showing her willingness to take over the shop merely for her father not her own sake.

Another conflict was when Sophie met the Witch of the Waste that she was haunted by a spell to be a ninety-year-old lady. She blamed fault to no one and started an adventure to find the way to break the curse. It was demonstrated that Sophie to be a kind and independent person to tackle the difficulty alone, which reflected back to her orphan position. Even though Sophie showed herself to be unconfident in the beginning, things had changed as the story went. Sophie became more confident and energetic through several events that she was not afraid to speak out about what she

really thought of. For instance, when Howl's hair was dyed orange and Howl was being childish, Sophie was pissed at him. Sophie directly yelled at Howl, "Fine, I have never been beautiful in my life." implying her common eagerness to be a pretty woman but she couldn't because of the reality. This was the first time Sophie said something truly from her feeling that meant as the start of the transformation.

The other transformation on Sophie was the time she represented for Howl to be Madame Suliman. Although Madame Suliman was a powerful royal witch, Sophie seemed to be fearless and defended for Howl without doubts. It was a scene that Sophie's eyes were filled with confidence and became a young lady again. Her attitude and mind began to be positive that age was nothing. It was echoed as Miyazaki had told in an interview, "What's wonderful about the story is that the happy ending isn't that the spell is broken and the girl is young again. It's that she forgot the age ([8] 2004)."

Similarly, Howl was presented as an orphan in the movie. No parents were involved in the film and the only relative of Howl was his uncle, who gave him the little house and didn't show up in person either. All the proof above could make Howl a classic orphan character under Miyazaki's design. Subsequently, Howl was in contact with the demon Calcifer and quitted from the magic school. It indicated Howl to be independent that fitted his identity as an orphan. The conflict he had met was the war and the forcing calling from the palace to join the war. Howl was helpless and didn't want to hurt the people and their shelters. Thus, the movie had displayed him followed by his willingness, to protect the people in his own power and to ignore the calling taking no side. It showed his consideration for the innocent as well as his vulnerability to face the problem straightforwardly.

Nevertheless, Howl transformed himself gradually just as Sophie did in the movie. One of the most significant scenes was when Howl stop the bomb to secure

Sophie and others. Seeing the cruelty and the danger of the war, Sophie said to Howl, “Let’s run. Don’t fight them, Howl.” Surprisingly, to be different from the beginning, Howl replied, “Sorry, I have been enough running away, Sophie. And now I get someone I want to protect. It’s you.” Howl then flew in the firing air and disappeared. It was Howl’s transformation toward dealing with the war. In the past, he tried to fight in a passive way to influence the war. In contrast, later in the movie, he chose to be involved in the war for people he loved even it was dangerous enough to kill him.

To sum up, Miyazaki’s design for the main two characters, Sophie and Howl, depends on the concept of “Orphan” and develops the story with conflicts they run into and the solution they come up with as the transformation. Take Sophie for example, she did change her personality to deal with problems instead of giving in like she stayed in the hat shop. Likewise, Howl changed his solution to stopping the war for the love and chose not to affect the war passively. All the evidence showed and the journals cited above fit completely as the classic design of Hayao Miyazaki to his two main characters in Howl’s Moving Castle (2004).

IV. Conclusion

As the paragraphs shown above, it can be known that the anti-war thinking and the character design of Miyazaki are based on his own experiences and growing development. Hayao Miyazaki has used Howl’s Moving Castle (2004) as a method to narrate the cruelty in war as well as the protest to the attack of America in Iraq war. It is reflected in the movie through several scenes like bomb scene. As for character design, Hayao Miyazaki has his own style. He often applies “Orphan” element in the protagonists, in other words, independent characters. In addition, Miyazaki has design the characters to encounter the conflicts and later overcome in the movie. By using

this method, people are easy to have empathy for the characters, which can somehow explain the popularity of Miyazaki's movies.



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