

An Analysis of Aesthetics in Makoto Shinkai's Animated Films

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Abstract. As a traditional Japanese literary concept, the concept of “mono no aware” gradually forms an aesthetic consciousness deeply rooted in Japanese culture through the interpretation and enrichment of local literature, poetry, film and television. This aesthetic consciousness is a series of melancholic and melancholic emotions that the aesthetic subject experiences towards the aesthetic object, as well as a pessimistic feeling towards the fleeting moments of life and the impermanence of time. It resonates with emotions, and this emotional expression is introverted and implicit. Even though there are waves in the heart, the surface is only a frown, revealing a faint emotion. This article is based on the analysis of Makoto Shinkai's animated films, and explores the common aesthetic ideas and realistic meaning. the conclusion is as follows: Makoto Shinkai combines traditional aesthetic ideas with modern computer technology to form a more delicate and resonant new unconscious aesthetic. This aesthetic is presented layer by layer through a series of life oriented themed animated films such as "regret", "love", and "distance". It can better touch people's inner softness, comprehend the true essence of life, and awaken people's hope and motivation for life.

1 Introduction

In traditional Japanese aesthetic concepts, "mono no aware" is undoubtedly one of the most important concepts [1]. By emphasizing people's feelings about the brevity of life and the disappearance of things, this delicate expression of emotions, or the expression of natural landscapes, will encourage people to cherish life, the beautiful moments in life. "Mono no aware" directly translated to object mourning is a spirit that is difficult to express in writing. The feelings and experiences on a certain level can even be said to be difficult to perceive, with a strong sense of passing by without leaving a trace. However, it is precisely this unique. The special and mysterious are incredibly fascinating.

As a branch and development of animation, animated films is a combination of moving sound, image, and static painting. The characteristics of the media showcase the differentiation between "motion" and "stillness" in animated films. The vast majority of animated films naturally leverage the characteristics of "motion" in animated films, bringing exaggerated and distorted visual images onto the screen. Therefore, traditional animation often uses "action" and "fight" as its medium. As the theme, Makoto Shinkai sets aside the teasing and exaggeration in traditional animated films, pursuing static visuals and delicate emotions, which is the art of stillness. This aesthetic ideology extends to many aspects of Japanese culture. Which made Japanese movies have a unique emotional expression and aesthetic style comparing to other countries. In Makoto Shinkai's

animated films, such as *Weathering with You*, released in 2018, the concept of "mono no aware" is integrated into the visual expression, creating an aesthetic atmosphere where reality and imagination intertwine. The film focuses on marginalized youth and tells a story of youthful love that spans two worlds, presenting the reality of life in animated form, imbued with a rich sense of melancholy, and depicting the cruel yet somewhat warm feeling of "mono no aware" in life. In addition, the reason for choosing the movie "*Weathering with You*" for analysis is because it is a typical film released in recent years, reflecting his creative style in plot and setting. Widely loved by people, this is also one of the most highly acclaimed works among all of his works. Therefore, its use of the real Tokyo as the filming location promotes Japan's local culture and architectural style to many people in other countries. For this reason, many fans are deeply attracted by the beautiful yet beautiful environment after watching the movie, combined with the influence of the plot. Therefore, they run to the filming district in Japan to take photos, which indirectly attracts more people to visit Japan. The paper will focus on Makoto Shinkai's aesthetic style in film creation from five aspects of theme expression of "mono no aware", which are visual, auditory, story, characteristic, and influence. Also, this paper will explore how does the “mono no aware” is shown in Makoto Shinkai's animated films by integrating and analyzing second-hand research.

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2 Makoto Shinkai's new mono no aware aesthetics

For the term "mono no aware", many people understand it as a sense of sorrow and sadness towards nature, or a profound lament about the impermanence of life [2-4]. However, Makoto Shinkai has developed his unique aesthetic concept of new mono no aware based on the traditional Japanese culture, which is vividly reflected in his animated films.

Whether in a world full of youthful sentiments, delicate and tender urban romance, or in a plain and indifferent lifestyle, he fully embodies this aesthetic consciousness in various elements such as the changing seasons, human emotions and incidents, as well as the depiction of plant and animal life around the characters. Through seemingly short storylines and simple musical melodies, integrating hyper narrative music with different visual aesthetics [5]. Without grand blueprints or epic masterpieces, Makoto Shinkai focuses more on personal experiences. He presents to the audience the actual emotional reflections that individuals have when facing things, rather than reflections of things in the mind [6,7]. While watching his animations, audiences can perceive a sense of gentle grace and peaceful serenity, and through the advancement of the story plot, meet the spiritual needs of the audience at various levels, thereby achieving resonance with them. They seek to understand and integrate the people, nature, and myriad phenomena depicted in the animations, allowing the beauty born from that silence to naturally manifest. It is precisely rooted in reality that through the clever design of color elements and the interweaving of slow and slow visual changes, overlooked details, moments, and emotions in real life are delicately displayed. Let the audience not only become addicted to the movie story itself, but also project their actual life through resonance, excavate the overlooked or vague details from deep memory, and feel the beauty of life, cherish the people and things around them.

The traditional Japanese culture of "mono no aware" is a tragic and melancholic beauty nurtured from an empty state of mind, as well as a pessimistic feeling towards the fleeting moment of life and the impermanence of time, then Makoto Shinkai's new mono no aware aesthetics is a higher level to make the audiences feel pessimistic, and dispel the clouds of sorrow in audiences' sad hearts, then a ray of sunshine shines appear, the audiences finally feel the hope of rebirth. Just as the famous writer Liu Yong said "a fragile soul dares not gaze at beauty, because it knows that all beauty will fade; a strong soul dares to face sorrow, because it knows that all sorrow will fade away."

3 Integrating this aesthetic concept into the animation

In Makoto Shinkai's animations, the character and storylines are not overly complex or difficult to understand. They are simple stories that can be found in many movies and TV shows, like "The Garden of

Words," "*Weathering with You*," and "Journey to Agartha." There are no wars or grand goals, just a detailed and detailed depiction of things. The scenery is as audiences see in everyday lives – the sunrise, sunset, mountains, water, wind, rain, thunder, and more. The objects are ordinary – houses where everyone lives, trains, shops, or just a regular bicycle. However, in Shinkai's animations, these seemingly ordinary things become remarkably beautiful, as if they have been given life. Even a small stool, with a missing leg, evokes a hint of sadness in the audience. This imperfection adds to its beauty. At the same time, a broken-legged stool sparks endless imagination and also reflects the unforgiving nature of an earthquake, the extension of emotions and the extension of stories are perfectly presented through a single transaction. The landscapes depicted in the animations are so stunning that any frame can serve as a background image. The scenery of animation is better than the scenery displayed in real photos. Although animation is fictional, this kind of fiction is particularly realistic, just like the people and things that happen in life [8]. The emotions between the main characters, whether joy or sadness, resonate with the audience.

3.1 Containing sentiment in scenery and blending sentiment with scene

In the expression of character emotions, in addition to the delicate emotions of the character itself, all things in nature are also projections of the character's soul. From "The Garden of Words," firstly, the emotional impact between the main characters Yukino and Takao. When they first meet, the rain seems to silently express their shared sense of sorrow. Secondly, the world is huge, but it is also built out of countless "narrow spaces". Yukino is falsely accused and misunderstood by her boyfriend, leading to their breakup, followed by her teacher-student relationship with Takao. These various aspects of human life reflect the complexities of relationships and the different sorrows and loneliness experienced in their individual worlds. Different people embody different aspects of society. Thirdly, the integration of different natural landscapes with varying moods, when both characters are going through a low point in their lives, the sound of endless raindrops hitting the ground increases their emotions. But when they find solace together, the sunlight breaks through the clouds, bringing a sense of optimism and brightness [9].

3.2 Color expresses emotions

In terms of expressing the color of the lens, in addition to building the overall artistic style of the work, it is also a medium for rendering the atmosphere and conveying emotions. For example, in "Journey to Agartha," when the little girl opens the door and sees the pink sky above her head, it evokes thoughts of a girl in a pink dress for the audience, while also carrying a hint of sorrow, the pain of losing a loved one. In "The Garden of Words," when the male and female characters meet in the gazebo, there is faint thunder and a gloomy sky, but the trees in

the distant background are lush green. Amidst this sorrowful encounter, there is a glimmer of hope [10].

Makoto Shinkai's new *mono no aware* aesthetics combines different perspectives to blend various elements of the world, infusing them with different emotions within sorrow. The different characteristics of people and things are constantly re-expressed through juxtaposition, which distinguishes them from previous norms. At the same time, all things seem to resonate, transforming sadness and grief into multi-dimensional emotions. Just like the quiet morning and the sound of leaves being gently swept away, there is not only the sadness of fallen leaves but also the quiet arrival of endless hope.

4 Expression of mono no aware in Makoto Shinkai's film

In Makoto Shinkai's works, the use of light is very expressive. Taking *Weathering with You* as an example, visually, Shinkai mainly uses three colors: white, pink, and blue. White is used to depict weather and rain. For example, through the light passing through the window, the moving light spots are used to portray diverse visual scenes. The halo effect is utilized to make the entire character more vivid and lifelike, providing viewers with a visually realistic experience and a strong sense of immersion, allowing the audience to empathize with the characters' thoughts and emotions. The story uses elements and objects from daily life to express the emotional thoughts in the story, enhancing the authenticity of the story and helping the audience reflect on themselves, thereby allowing the audience to resonate with the content while watching the movie [11].

In the film *5 Centimeters Per Second*, the main elements of "mono no aware" that are shown are visual, auditory, and thematic. Visually, Makoto uses an exquisite painting style to depict everyday scenes and emotional experiences, presenting the beauty and fragility of life through exquisite images. Additionally, the film often features natural scenery changing with the seasons, such as cherry blossoms blooming in spring and leaves falling in autumn. These scenes resonate with the inner thoughts of the characters, helping to express the emotions of the ending characters, which also reflects the use of "mono no aware". Furthermore, the film vividly portrays the characters' inner loneliness and helplessness by depicting the characters' small expressions on their faces, gestures, and small scenes in daily life [12].

Secondly, the auditory aspect also demonstrates the aesthetics of "mono no aware." Shinkai's films often always combine soft music and visuals very well, which creates a melodious atmosphere, and enhances the audience's resonance with emotions. Moreover, environmental sounds also play a role in enhancing emotions. The environmental sounds in the film often emphasize the sense of reality in daily life, such as the sound of raindrops and the sound of wind blowing leaves, deepening the audience's experience of the situation.

Lastly, in the movie *5 Centimeters Per Second*, Makoto expresses the themes of time and distance

though discussing the impact this on relationships and show people's sadness and emotional created by the passage of time and distance. Love in the movie is tested by time and distance, yet still exudes unforgettable beauty, which echoes the aesthetics of "mono no aware" [13].

Thus, Makoto Shinkai's films has used exquisite visual elements, gentle auditory elements, and profound themes to demonstrate the aesthetics of "mono no aware," leading the audience into a world full of emotional resonance and contemplation. On the other hand, in his scripts, Makoto Shinkai deeply portrays characters' emotions such as loneliness, helplessness, and longing through delicate emotional descriptions. These emotions often resonate with specific scenes and atmospheres, deepening the audience's understanding and empathy for the characters. For example, in the movie *Weathering with You*, Shinkai depicts various natural landscapes in Japan, such as rainy urban scenes, lakes, and mountains. These landscapes complement the emotional entanglement between the protagonists, and created an atmosphere rich in melancholy and romance. All of these elements embody the characteristics of "mono no aware" [14].

5 Impact

5.1 The impact on the development of anime

Makoto Shinkai's new *mono no aware* aesthetics has injected new vitality into the Japanese anime industry. Through a more relatable character emotion and a more poetic and beautiful art style, the audience can more easily resonate and develop a higher interest and expectation in anime. Improving the overall quality of Japanese anime requires the use of advanced animation technology, combined with delicate visuals and beautiful music, to express such a high-level aesthetic atmosphere. This will bring a stunning audio-visual experience to the audience, thus helping to improve the progress of Japanese anime production technology and the quality of anime works. Further enhancing the influence and status of Japanese anime in the international community, this high-quality work has received widespread praise and recognition in the international community. It has not only accumulated a large number of fans for Makoto Shinkai, but also contributed to the promotion and dissemination of Japanese anime in the international market.

5.2 The impact on Japanese society

Makoto Shinkai's new *mono no aware* aesthetics is often presented through some deep psychological and social issues, such as loneliness, loneliness, interpersonal connections, time and memory, etc. These issues resonate widely in Japanese society, especially in today's fast-paced and high-pressure social environment, where many people can find their shadows. Therefore, to some extent, it has become an outlet for people's emotions and

psychology, helping them understand and face their inner world.

Although the protagonist of the work lives in a bustling city, such as high-rise buildings, busy streets, modern facilities, etc., he feels lonely and lonely in his heart. Through these contrasting elements, he showcases the indifference and alienation of modern urban life, which is also a reflection of traditional material mourning culture. This contrast helps people start to reflect on the value and significance of modern urban life and think about how to maintain human warmth and connection in such an environment.

In his films, natural elements are often used as emotional carriers, such as cherry blossoms, rain, snow, etc. These elements not only beautify the picture, but also convey the emotional connection and complementary relationship between humans and nature. This concept of emphasizing harmonious coexistence between humans and nature has important enlightening significance for Japanese society. Japan is a country with a beautiful natural environment and a focus on natural conservation, and Makoto Shinkai's works undoubtedly strengthen this reverence and love for nature.

Overall, for the general public, Makoto Shinkai juxtaposes people and scenery, presenting exquisite images in the form of beautiful and dynamic surfaces. These surfaces may not be complete or beautiful, allowing people to extract different ideas from the sad reality of earthquakes, the sluggish economy, aging, and other aspects of society. It showcases the fusion of personal feelings and views, showing the magnificence from a young age, and also reflecting the spiritual and moral sense presented in the hearts of contemporary people. The faint sadness presents a kind of beauty, and this beauty combines love without restraint, the unpleasantness in life, based on reality and transcending reality, based on the traditional aesthetics, but transcending traditional cultural values, when people immerse themselves in this aesthetic realm, they convey positive intentions through various means such as sunshine, scattered clouds, and stopped rain, helping people overcome the emptiness of their minds, and ultimately arousing people's appreciation and hope for life.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, "mono no aware" is a pervasive indicator in fashion with the aid of Japanese way of life and shows of their films arts, including the melancholic environment created in anime. It is a light melancholy that lets in audiences to revel in splendor and fleeting unhappiness in a lovely inventive realm as opposed to an extreme shape of sadness. Makoto Shinkai as one of the maximum influential animator, expresses "mono no conscious" through descriptions of emotions, which includes depictions of natural landscapes, expressions of time and distance, and diffused scenes of daily existence, giving the film deep emotional connotations and emotional appeal.

Makoto Shinkai has performed a profound exploration of the complexity of existence and its inherent beauty through "mono no conscious". Through his animated films, shinkai interweaves elements of nature, human emotions, and day-by-day occasions, supplying a profound mirrored image on existence in a tapestry. He makes a speciality of private experiences, inviting the audience to delve into the small differences in life and discover resonance inside himself. His aesthetic consciousness is expressed through gentle beauty and non-violent splendor, guiding the audience to embark on a journey of reflection and appreciation of the complexity of life. Through his works, the audience is reminded to cherish the existing and locate solace in the fleeting internal splendor of life.

However, the limitation of this paper may be not so detailed in covering all aspects of this movie, because since I did not find a great amount of articles to support in each aspect, the information may be missing some details about what the authors want to express.

In addition, this paper is analyzed based on the authors' understanding of the term "mono no aware" after researching on this topic and the movie, thus it might be subjective.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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