Mutual Images

ISSUE 5

AUTUMN 2018

POLITICS, ARTS AND POP CULTURE OF JAPAN IN
LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

MUTUAL IMAGES

ISSUE 5 – AUTUMN 2018

Mutual Images

A Transcultural Research Journal

Founded by

Aurore Yamagata-Montoya, Maxime Danesin & Marco Pellitteri

Previously published issues

POLITICS, ARTS AND POP CULTURE OF JAPAN IN LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

EDITED BY

MARCO PELLITTERI & HERB L. FONDEVILLA

Mutual Images

A Transcultural Research Journal

MUTUAL IMAGES

A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

Mutual Images

Issue 5

Table of contents

Anime and Nationalism: The politics of representing Japan in *Summer Wars* (Hosoda Mamoru, 2009)

Rayna DENISON **|** University of East Anglia, UK

ABSTRACT

Anime has a long and varied history of engagement with the national. This article investigates how different forms of nationalism inflected Hosoda Mamoru's Summer Wars *(2009). Rather than focusing on extreme representations of nationalism such as propaganda, this article demonstrates how everyday or banal forms of nationalism also work to construct the nation. The release of* Summer Wars *coincided with a notable moment of turmoil within Japan's political firmament, and so the film's engagement with nationalism is examined in order to understand how Japanese media negotiate such political upheavals, and the role that nationalism plays in such negotiations. The article considers a range of representations, from the films uses of Japanese history through to its discourse on online technologies in order to better understand how anime contains and refracts nationalism.*

Japanese animation has long-standing links to nationalism. For example, anime historian and commentator Jonathan Clements quotes Japanese sources suggesting that animation was used to promote national sentiment in Japan even before anime itself came into being. Clements argues that an animated short called *Kokka Kimigayo* (*The National Anthem: His Majesty's Reign*, 1931), made by Ōfuji Noburō, was used to promote the singing of Japan's national anthem before film screenings and was 'hence liable to have been one of the most widely seen pieces of domestic animation in the 1930s' (2013, 47). Expanding upon this early link between Japanese animation and nationalism, World War II saw cinematic animated films used as propaganda in Japan, as they were elsewhere in the world (Cohen, 1997). In this period, Japanese animation's links to nationalism developed hand-in-hand with developments in animation form, with wartime propaganda like the *Momotarō* films (Seo Mitsuyo, 1945 and 1947) acting as first attempts at feature-length cel animation production in Japan. From such beginnings,

anime has matured into a medium with a complex history of national representation that ranges from nationalism to statelessness (Napier 2005).

In the most sustained academic engagement with anime and nationalism to date, media philosopher and historian Thomas Lamarre argues across a series of articles that Japanese wartime animation was not simply nationalistic, but also racist and speciesist. Analysing *Momotarō: Umi no shinpei* (*Momotarō's Divine Army*, Seo Mitsuyo 1945) and Tagawa Suihō's *Norakuro* manga and anime, Lamarre argues that 'Speciesism is a displacement of race and racism (relations between humans as imagined in racial terms) onto relations between humans and animals' (Lamarre 2008, 76). Elsewhere, Lamarre has problematised this equivalency between races and representations of nation(alism) in Japanese wartime animation by utilising Sakai Naoki's critiques of Japanese cultural nationalism and particularity (1997, 2000) to argue that such easy equivalencies 'completely ignore the process of mediation at work in the animations' (2010a, 87). Such semi-covert depictions of warring nations as different animal species within Japan's World War II animation subtended state discourses about enemies and a planned Co-Prosperity Sphere in Asia. In Lamarre's accounts, therefore, even before the anime industry had fully developed, Japanese animation displayed a nuanced and variable engagement with nationalism and performed key roles in disseminating nationalistic government policies.

Lamarre also notes that this nationalistic speciesism has been adaptive, living well beyond World War II:

> speciesism has today expanded beyond its initial emphasis on racial difference to embrace all manner of cultural difference—racial, national, ethnic, subcultural, generational, and so on. It has become a stupendous translation machine that shuttles every difference it touches into biopolitical difference, introducing life into politics at every turn (Lamarre 2010b, 76).

It is to this politics of anime that I wish to turn. In this article, I expand on Lamarre's discussions of anime's wartime (bio)politics to investigate how nationalism manifests in varied ways in anime director Hosoda Mamoru's *Samā Wōzu* (*Summer Wars*, 2009). In doing so, I argue that – reflective of the way Yoshino Kosaku attests to the fragmentation of nationalism in Japan (1992)– there are now myriad nationalisms evident in anime, ranging from racism and speciesism to far more banal forms of pro-Japanese representation. Taking an approach similar to Sakai's calls for discursively constructed accounts of materialist forms of nationalism, I examine both the text of

Hosoda's *Summer Wars* and the way it was discursively constructed through its promotional surround (Klinger 1997). In this, I build not only on Sakai's work, but on that of New Film History, in which textual analysis is conducted in relation to the way films are discursively constructed and received (Street, 2000; Chapman *et al.*, 2007).

Nationalism and Anime

Summer Wars has been selected for this analysis because its release coincided with a moment of heightened political turmoil in Japan. The Liberal Democrat Party (LDP), which had been in power ever since 1955, lost its hold on government in 2009. According to Arthur Stockwin and Kweku Ampiah, this marked the beginning of Japanese politics' swing to the right. They note that:

> Even though it appeared to re-establish its dominance in the late 2000s, it [the LDP] faltered and was replaced in office by the largest of the opposition parties in 2009, being confined to the opposition benches until winning back power in December 2012 (2017, 3).

In response, Stockwin and Ampiah argue that the LDP

> evolved into a far more monolithic organization, whose center of gravity lay with the most right-wing section of the old party, determined to assert the primacy of national identity, to revise the constitution, roll back crucial elements of the occupation settlement, bear down on human rights guarantees and important elements of democratic process, remove restrictions on freedom of action of the Self-Defense Forces and establish Japan as what it called a "Normal State" (Stockwin and Ampiah 2017, 9).

The right-wing turn in contemporary Japanese politics mirrors that seen in many parts of the world, and this shift has been facilitated by internal as well as global issues in Japan. In light of these local and global issues, this article seeks to question what kinds of nationalism are at work in contemporaneous Japanese animation. *Summer Wars* provides a useful way into these debates because the film provides representations of both the local and the global.

Nationalism in Japan is a highly contested area of scholarship, not least in relation to film. Inoguchi Takashi, for example, provides a basic definition and critique of nationalism in Japan in which

> nationalism is defined as a political principle holding that the political and national unit should be congruent, as a sentiment about that principle, and as a theory of political legitimacy requiring that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones (Inoguchi 2015, 216).

In this statement we can see postwar *Nihonjinron* (discourse of the Japanese) refracted; a discourse that situates Japan as ethnically homogeneous and unified, though in different ways in different periods of postwar Japanese history. Kosaku Yoshino, using a sociological approach, defines *Nihonjinron* as a form of cultural nationalism that 'aims to regenerate national community in creating, preserving or strengthening a people's cultural identity when it is felt to be lacking, inadequate or threatened' (1992, 1). Film historian Ko Mika relates that it has taken a variety of forms but that '*Nihonjinron* legitimises certain political and social situations desired by the ruling group by linking these situations with the myth of an unbroken imperial line' (Ko 2010, 18). *Nihonjinron*, therefore, retains a significant place in the politics of representation and in debates about nationalism in Japanese culture and cinema. Consequently, *Nihonjinron* has tended to operate as the other against which many scholars undertake their studies of nationalism in Japan (and its cinema).

However, academic studies of nationalism in contemporary Japan have tended to try to unpick the monolithic mythos of previous *Nihonjinron* accounts. For example, philosopher Sakai's analysis of *Nihonjinron*, most notably through a critique of *Nihonjinron*'s 'founding father' Watsuji Tetsurō (1997, 115), provides a counter-narrative to *Nihonjinron*. He seeks to understand and unpack the binaries constructed around concepts such as Japanese particularism versus American universalism, which Sakai argues have underpinned such cultural nationalism debates (1997). By contrast, Yoshino outlines two valences along which we might see the development of cultural nationalism: temporal and spatial. He argues that this these paths have generated divergent strands of nationalism based on the way 'different social groups and different individuals have different perceptions of and attitudes towards the ways in which Japanese national identity and solidarity should be reaffirmed and reconstructed' (1992, 223). Rather than entirely leaving *Nihonjinron* behind, both authors complicate and nuance the debates around *Nihonjinron*, seeing it as one manifestation among many.

Concurring with both authors, historian Tessa Morris-Suzuki has also argued that the Japanese nation has never been as unified as it first appears. Morris-Suzuki argues

that a pluralist understanding of Japan is necessary, one that takes in differing traditions of the nation and nationalism. 'By "traditions," I mean words, phrases, and bodies of thought which are passed on from one generation to the next and are in the process of constantly being reinterpreted, reworked, and interwoven' (Morris-Suzuki 1998, 11). Morris-Suzuki's concern with "traditions" and generations of nationalism chimes with the broader work of social psychologist Michael Billig who, though entirely focused on what he dubs 'the West', argues that studies of nationalism should move away from extreme cases, in order to attend to what he calls banal nationalism:

> The term banal nationalism is introduced to cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced. It is argued that these habits are not removed from everyday life, as some observers have supposed. Daily, the nation is indicated, or "flagged", in the lives of its citizenry. Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition (Billig 1995, 12-13).

Here, Billig suggests it is the everyday practices of nationalism, which often pass unnoticed as common sense, which we should focus on. Just as anime has continued to incorporate and adapt cultural difference into its representational schema as Lamarre argues, I contend that anime has also continued to expand its relationship to nationalism as part of its endemic lexicography.

Alexandra Hambleton's study of Japanese television further complicates the picture of banal nationalism in Japan by building on Yoshino's cultural nationalism (1992) to examine how such representations manifest in Japanese media. She argues that:

> Cultural nationalism is a process of regenerating a national community or identity when it is perceived to be under threat, and can be seen in behaviour as simple as displaying the national flag, or in more complicated performances' (Hambleton 2011, 42).

This fracturing of nationalism into a variety of more and less overt nationalisms has led Shimazu Naoko to question whether, 'instead of "nationalism in Japan", should we be closer to the complex reality if we were encouraged to think more in terms of the plural, that is, "nationalisms in Japan"' (Shimazu 2006, 181). In recognition of this complexity, I build on the work of Hambleton, Ko, Lamarre and Morris-Suzuki who all seek to analyse

texts and their contexts of production in search of potential nationalistic meanings, rather than seeking a single framework for nationalism in anime.

Alexandra Hambleton has argued that 'the media plays a great role in the formation of Japanese perceptions of non-Japanese even within Japan. The media's role in creating image of worlds that viewers have no opportunity to experience firsthand cannot be disregarded' (Hambleton 2011, 33). Consequently, the Japanese media's role in filtering the world for Japanese citizens adds frisson to the extant tensions in representations of self and other in those same media texts. These tensions are present everywhere from state campaigns that promote and exploit Japanese media, such as the 'Cool Japan' strategy (Abel 2011), to the piecemeal and myriad messages about Japan disseminated through its media texts. This makes it vital for us to refocus attention on contemporary nationalisms in all of their forms, and to think about how nationalism is manifesting along a spectrum from racism to the banal "flagging" of national identity.

This article therefore aims to examine how the national is represented in one specific case study – Hosoda's *Summer Wars* – in order to consider how splintering nationalisms might be filtered through Japanese media, and how Japanese media producers might be responding to a specific contemporary moment of heightened political tension in Japan. By examining *Summer Wars* for signs of nationalism – in essence, by examining statements by the filmmakers and analysing the film itself for evidence of nationalistic references to traditional Japanese culture, for racism, for explicit references to the state and for comparisons to other countries in other parts of the world – I hope to be able to reveal the way Hosoda's *Summer Wars* negotiates representing the Japanese nation at a recent turning point in Japanese history.

Family, Nationalism and *Summer Wars*

Following the assertions of Billig and others, it would be easy to read *Summer Wars* as a recuperative text that reasserts the stability of Japanese national identity in the face of this political upheaval. However, as Ko Mika attests, this period was marked not just by a political swing to the right and rising nationalism, but also by a rising discourse of multiculturalism. As Ko argues, this created an at least 'cosmetic' engagement with globalising representational strategies within Japanese film (Ko 2010). Linked to attempts

to use and promote Japan's 'soft power' abroad across the 2000s (McGray 2009), Ko argues that:

> Since the late 1980s, Japan has been characterized by the coexistence of seemingly conflicting social and political practices. On the one hand, there has been a resurgence of right-wing nationalism, encouraging a reinforcement of traditional notions of 'Japaneseness' and of calls for a strong and united nation-state. On the other hand, there has also been an increasing propagation of discourses of *kokusai-ka*, or internationalisation, and of multiculturalism (Ko 2010, 1).

Summer Wars, therefore, came at a moment when the tension between national and multi- or transnational forces in Japan were particularly apparent. My question is to what extent can we see those forces at play in the film's production and in the film itself.

Summer Wars presents two internal worlds that mirror these tensions: an online world called OZ and a 'real' world that tells the story of a traditional large Japanese family called the Jinnouchis, whose family home is near Ueda city in Nagano prefecture. It is the second of these worlds that Hosoda is most consistent about across the promotion of *Summer Wars*, saying in interview that: '*Summer Wars* is about the vitality of a Japanese rural family.' (*Summer Wars* DVD). Promotional materials released in Japan took this a step further, appealing to national audiences:

> a traditional Japanese extended family fights against a high-tech world crisis. [...] these 'relatives' are tied together by a cord across all the generations, from a baby to a great-grandmother, and even though it is the oldest in humanity, here is the strongest 'network'! (Summer Wars Film Partners 2009a)

In the hyperbolic promotion for *Summer Wars*, two things are revealed. First, that the film's producers were heavily signalling the importance of 'local' and 'traditional' Japanese identity to the meanings and pleasures to be found within *Summer Wars*. The discussion of the 'extended' family harks back to what Yoshino sees as a hallmark of 'secondary' nationalism's attempts to reassert traditional cultural bases, in this case the *ie* (home or family) and *mura* (village) systems linked to Shintō religion and emperor-worship that traditionally underpinned Japanese society (Yoshino 1992). Second, that the traditional Japanese family network is also viewed as preferable to the kinds of community generated online. Through the central family of protagonists in *Summer Wars* the traditional is framed as strong and multi-generational, making

traditional forms of the nation preferable to online 'networks'. The focus on the rural, the local and the traditional thereby situates the extended family in *Summer Wars* as something admirable and preferable within contemporary Japanese culture.

The extended family in *Summer Wars* is similarly heralded as something that Japan should return to, in ways that refract historical forms of nationalism in Japan. Morris-Suzuki has explained how the metaphor of the *ie* system in Japan has been linked to that of the emperor as father of the national family, wherein:

> the emphasis was on vertical relationships between parents and children; where the power of the male household head was paramount; and where the maintenance of the household name was more important than biological blood ties (so that the adoption of heirs, whose take on the family surname, was a common practice) (Morris-Suzuki 1998, 78).

She goes on to indicate that this system is crucial to understanding modern Japanese nationalism, because the *ie* system 'was transformed into the central image of Japanese nationalist ideology from the late nineteenth century onward' (Morris-Suzuki 1998, 78). By representing the Jinnouchi household as an *ie*-style extended family at the heart of the narrative, the 'real' world depicted in *Summer Wars* ties the film to an overtly nationalist set of familial metaphors.

However, Hosoda's nationalist discourse is not straightforwardly presented in *Summer Wars*. Hosoda promoted the film by linking his own status within his family's *ie* system – and that of his wife's and his collaborators' families – to the genesis of representations of the traditional Japanese family in *Summer Wars*. In interview, the director remembers his character design retreat with Sadamoto Yoshiyuki and their discussions of family, saying that the intra-familial tensions in *Summer Wars* were a product of comparing his and Sadamoto's experiences of their *ie*. 'Sadamoto comes from a head family, while I'm from a branch family… and members of head families don't get along with members of branch families as a general rule. (laughs)' (Hosoda 2013, 125). The collaborative nature of the construction of the Jinnouchi family indicates what the director sees as a comparability of familial experience in Japan. The Jinnouchi family thereby becomes an amalgam of the national, or at least generalised Japanese, experience.

Journalist Anthony Carew notes that this comparison between familial experiences is part of the narrative of *Summer Wars*. Carew reports that Hosoda included a

> "meet the family" story that was inspired [...] by his marriage, and meeting his new
> in-laws: "All these people who were total strangers before, were suddenly my
> family," Hosoda says. "Your family suddenly doubles in size [...] I wanted to put
> that into a film" (Carew 2017).

Hosoda has elsewhere claimed that he included this theme because of what he perceived as a decline in the traditional *ie* system in Japan:

> big families mean constant chaos, and that feeling of being bowled over every
> second with a new relationship was important. Families in Japan these days tend
> to stay pretty small, so I guess a family that big would seem even more bewildering
> (Sevakis 2009).

While it may be a conglomeration of Hosoda and his collaborators' experiences of family, far from seeing the *ie* system as a norm, in *Summer Wars* Hosoda presents the extended Jinnouchi family almost as a throwback. The *ie* system is presented in clear contrast to the loner status of his protagonist, Koiso Kenji, whose family is small and fragmented, leaving Kenji largely isolated before his encounter with the Jinnouchis. Hosoda suggests that Kenji's situation should be read as normative within contemporary Japan, and therefore that the extensive family of Jinnouchis, whom Kenji meets through his upper-classmate and love interest, Shinohara Natsuki, should be read as an exceptional other in the narrative. Kenji's gradual acceptance into the Jinnouchi family can be read as a conservative narrative thread in which the protagonist is embraced and seemingly adopted into the traditional family structure of Japan in a manner that echoes *ie*-centred nationalism.

However, this core nationalist-familial ideology is further complicated by a range of twists that Hosoda applies to the logic of his nationalist familial discourse. Perhaps most obviously, the male head of the household in the traditional *ie* system is replaced by matriarch Jinnouchi Sakae, the family's great-grandmother. Sakae's status is overtly referred to by her family, when her daughter Jinnouchi Mariko says that 'the head of the family' adopted Wabisuke, who was the love child of Sakae's husband. Later in the film, Hosoda shows a young Wabisuke being collected by Sakae and taken to the family home in Nagano, hints that it may have been Sakae, and not her husband, who adopted Wabisuke. At another moment in the film, a male family member declares that the women of the Jinnouchi clan tend to be stronger than the men, reinforcing Hosoda's

inversion of the *ie* system's gender ideology. By placing Sakae at the head of the family, therefore, *Summer Wars* employs an obvious set of nationalist paradigms, but reworks and complicates their meanings so that they re-present the *ie* system as a potential challenge to patriarchal nationalism in Japan, all the while celebrating the *ie* system itself as a fundamentally nationalist concept, and one that – in this film at least – saves the world.

This impression is compounded by the uses of history and setting in *Summer Wars*. In the former case, the Jinnouchi family's history is used in the film to emphasise the past cultural significance of the clan, while at the same time, historical stories about the family are also used to suggest the family's outsider status within national history. History, therefore, is used to add a further layer of nationalistic representation by suggesting that the Jinnouchis have had a long history of involving themselves in state affairs, but the nationalism of these representations is undercut by the non-conformist ways in which the family has acted in relation to the state. This is a recuperative set of narrative threads that works to rehabilitate the nationalism seemingly inherent to the *ie* system within *Summer Wars*. For example, Jinnouchi Mansuke, Sakae's son, tells stories about the Jinnouchi family history at important moments within the narrative of *Summer Wars*. Initially, he tells Kenji that the family settled in Ueda to 'protect the land' and that, as part of the 'great Takeda Clan' their army won the first Battle of Ueda against the Tokugawa in 1586. Subsequently, Mansuke tells another historical story that the family uses as a strategy to fight against an Artificial Intelligence (AI) that has taken over parts of the online world of OZ, a global system that controls everything from infrastructure to shopping and gambling in the film's narrative.

In his journalistic article on *Summer Wars* Jonathan Clements quotes Hosoda admitting that he borrowed the Jinnouchi family stories from the real-world history of Ueda. Hosoda notes that Ueda 'was once ruled by the Sanada clan, and I'd learned that it was a historical fact that the local forces had twice defeated Tokugawa Hidetada' (Hosoda, in Clements n.d.). According to Hosoda's account, these battles in Ueda remain intrinsic to a sense of local pride and identity in the real world. Their use in *Summer Wars* creates another layer of appeal to Japanese audiences, one that runs beneath and alongside nationalism: the invocation of a sense of local pride. Given that the Tokugawa would become the eventual unifiers of the Japanese nation, Mansuke's stories position the Jinnouchi clan as historical rebels. The careful conflation of the real and represented in this example allows us to see the way animation mediates and collapses

the borders between the fictional and the real, allowing localism and nationalism to be exaggerated, or at least emphasised within anime.

The Jinnouchis' family history is underscored in *Summer Wars* by the associative editing that connects Sakae with a suit of samurai armour sitting prominently in an alcove in the family's main living space. Before she is introduced, a series of close-ups of the armour are shown while one of the characters describes Sakae. This conflates Sakae's non-traditional matriarchal role with those of past heads of the Jinnouchi family, and associates both with traditional martial forms of Japanese feudalism. In these ways, the history of the Jinnouchi family is paralleled to that the founding of the feudal Japanese state, which helps to explain why Sakae has the cultural capital to mobilise a nationwide and powerful network of contacts in the later portions of the film. This connection between family history and the state, however, also suggests that the Jinnouchi clan should be read as past rebels who are now firmly entrenched within the hierarchies of Japanese political and social power, reinforcing the *ie* system's connections to that state, and through that connection, to Japanese nationalism.

The echoes of real history and the details of local culture displayed in *Summer Wars* were significant in and beyond the film. On the film's release in 2009, for example, the producers created a tourist map that audiences could use to explore the 'real' settings and locations seen in *Summer Wars* (Summer Wars Film Partners 2009b). The map provides images and descriptions from the film that can be found in the real world in the city of Ueda. Part of a wider 'contents tourism' boom in Japan (Seaton *et al.* 2017), this map focuses attention on the local instead of the national, but also partakes of a wider shift towards emphasising the real in anime for touristic purposes. The map is presented in the film's marketing colours, features the film's poster, includes avatars from OZ and commingles these with screenshots featuring animated versions of real-world locations and descriptions of their use in *Summer Wars*. In particular, the map highlights moments from the film that feature travel to Ueda, as well as some of the city's more obvious tourist attractions, such as the Ueda castle park, local shrines and festivals. These highly detailed, slice-of-life representations of Ueda are used promotionally, in order to ground the more outlandish aspects of the Jinnouchi storyline, but they also play to wider forms of banal nationalism, especially in the ways that infrastructure, sports and seasonal food are repeatedly emphasised in the film, and then again on the map. By focusing on the everyday, and on representations of real

places, *Summer Wars* offers a fictionalised version of cultural nationalism in which the banal and everyday are used to offset representations of externalised threat coming from OZ. By promoting tourism to Ueda, moreover, the filmmakers connect to a rising tide of domestic and regional tourism in which the fictional and the real of the Japanese nation are being brought into closer proximity with one another (Seaton *et al.* 2017).

From the central family to the representations and uses of history and settings, *Summer Wars* makes Japan central to its concerns. However, as the marketing catch phrase in Japan – 'A large Japanese family saves the world!?' – implies, there are some perhaps unexpected aspects to these depictions of the traditional and national in *Summer Wars.* From a newly feminised version of the *ie* system through to a focus on Japan's rural geographic north, the Japan of *Summer Wars* is often coded as alternative, even as it adheres to the kinds of nationalistic representation seen elsewhere in Japanese media.

OZ and Multicultural Japanese Nationalism

If the Jinnouchi storyline presents a bespoke local and domestic variation on banal Japanese nationalism in *Summer Wars*, then the depictions of the online world of OZ reframe the narrative in more global dimensions. Hosoda has explicitly said that OZ is intended to throw the nationalist representations of the Jinnouhi family into relief in *Summer Wars*, claiming that he focused on:

> "How the minutiae of our daily life are [sic.] entwined inextricably with globalism. [...] I wasn't being political, just contrasting domestic and global issues, and the convergence of problems within the family. I mean, if our 'family' can't deal with the problems it already has, how can it deal with the problems of the world around it?" (Hosoda, in Clements, n.d.)

The director's denial of politics seems disingenuous in a film that divides its concerns between the cultural capital held by traditional Japanese families and an overtly globalised online space. This division is reflected in the film's dual animation aesthetics too, with the 'real' world of the Jinnouchis presented in what might be thought of as 'traditional' cel anime style, while the online world of OZ is created in 3-dimensional computer animation. By dividing the worlds in this way, the global issues raised in the film are linked to a form of animation more popular outside Japan than

within it (three-dimensional computer-generated animation is seen most commonly in video games in Japan), while the aesthetics of the local are emphatically tied to 'traditional' cel anime style, and even to Golden Age live action filmmakers like Ozu Yasujiro (Clements n.d.). Even more tellingly, Hosoda's invocation of the Japanese 'family' – meaning nation – needing to solve its problems, belies his claim about political disinterest.

The online world of OZ offers aesthetic and storytelling possibilities that are largely distinct from the portions of the film set in the 'real' world, with its more classically 'anime' aesthetic. OZ offers another 'other' space in which Hosoda is able to play with different forms and styles of representation. This connection between globalisation and OZ is perhaps most obvious in the ways sound and written languages are created for the online world. The film begins with an aural palimpsest. In the Japanese language version of *Summer Wars*, the female voiceover that welcomes viewers to OZ in Japanese is echoed by a simultaneous American-accented English language variant low in the soundtrack mix. From the opening onwards, therefore, OZ is presented to audiences as a multilingual space, and, as the voiceover narration informs viewers, the space is inherently transnational, something enabled by OZ's ability to provide simultaneous translations, turning user statements into any desired language.

These claims to multiculturalism are replicated throughout the portions of *Summer Wars* set in OZ. For example, as the initial voiceover tells us about OZ, an avatar bounces around bookshelves featuring famous world sites like the Colosseum and the Statue of Liberty. A few moments later, the same voiceover introduces audiences to the translation software in OZ, and we are shown avatars with text bubbles above their heads that rapidly shift from one language to another. OZ becomes a linguistically global space that is translated into Japanese language, placing Japan at the centre of the film's linguistic world. However, this translation is not always consistent. The two most significant instances of translingual communication in *Summer Wars* take place when Natsuki's young cousin, Kazuma, fights the film's antagonist AI using his avatar King Kazma. As King Kazma's challenge to the AI 'goes global', the screen fills with messages in a wide variety of scripts and languages. These multilingual message sequences repeat throughout the film thereafter, as the users of OZ cry out for help, or seek to support the film's main characters. In a contrasting example that emphasises transnational and translingual communication, the speech bubble motif is repeated when Natsuki later

battles to save OZ from the AI interloper. When she momentarily hesitates and loses most of her supporters, a young German boy types his offer of support, and the language shifts automatically between German to Japanese onscreen. However, during other battle sequences, and especially when a crowd shouts-types their encouragement for one of the film's central characters, original languages are often retained, creating a seemingly endless proliferation of messages in different languages.

These collages of text bubbles scatter across the screen in an echo of the kinds of anime 'superplanarity' discussed by Thomas Lamarre. Lamarre cites artist Murakami Takashi as having recognised anime's superplanarity, in which the animation 'flattens the image's multiple planes in order to force multiplicity to emerge at another level, that of information' (Lamarre 2006, 139). By having the speech bubbles proliferating across the screen, the designers of OZ create a similar flattening effect, hybridising two-dimensional objects within a three-dimensional world. This in turn, Marc Steinberg has argued, creates a 'mobility of the gaze' (Steinberg 2004, 450) that helps to reduce the importance of perspective and forces the viewer to seek out points of interest within the shot. Both Lamarre and Steinberg have discussed these techniques as connected to Murakami's Superflat art. Murakami created Superflat with reference to anime, and the reciprocal influences are perhaps not surprising given that Murakami hired Hosoda to direct his animated television commercials for fashion house Louis Vuitton, early in Hosoda's career when he was still working at Tōei Animation. The first of these commercials, titled *Superflat Monogram* (2003) and a sequel, *Superflat First Love* (2009), were produced in a computer animated 'superflat' world in which superplanarity is generated by focusing on characters in circular spaces, minimising background environments (Surman 2018).

Whether for commercial or artistic reasons, however, the connections between Superflat and OZ have been rejected by the filmmaker. Hosoda says that:

> I had a great time working on *Superflat Monogram*, and of course I have great reverence for Murakami and his work. However, the look of those scenes [in OZ] isn't really something I made with his style in mind. Simply, it's a very clear, uncluttered look – there's virtually no backgrounds, just layering and compositing effects – and that visual simplicity appeals to me. (Sevakis 2009)

RAYNA DENISON

This rejection is important because Superflat art has its own connections to nationalism. Koh Dong-Yeoh explains that

> Murakami's notions of 'Superflat' and 'Little Boy' are close to New Nationalists' interpretation of Japanese society in late modernity; his emphasis on history, traditional Edo-style painting, and otaku [manga and anime fans] is also repeated by the New Nationalists' nostalgic writings on Japan's wholesome nationhood before the American occupation and, most recently, before the post-bubble period of the 1990s (Koh 2010, 399).

The overlaps between the aesthetics of Hosoda's work with Murakami and the design of OZ suggest at least some replication of aspects of Superflat in *Summer Wars*, despite the director's protestations, and with it, the same kinds of potential for nationalism.

Three examples may help to demonstrate these connections. First, the rounded spaces into which protagonist Aya travels in *Superflat Monogram* are similar to the circular design of OZ, which has halos of 'bookshelves' circling around a central totem pole-style pillar. This means that OZ presents a dynamic space in which characters rarely travel in straight lines and in which there is little sense of edges or backgrounds, helping to emphasise surface layers of the animation. Second, the central totem pole features an ovoid, flattened cat's head, which, when it is graffitied by the AI, closely resembles Murakami's four-screen panel painting *Tan Tan Bo Puking* (also called *Gero Tan*, 2002). The deformation of this central pillar chimes with Koh's claims that *Tan Tan Bo Puking* represents the ultimate deformation of Murakami's DOB character (short for *dobijite*, meaning 'why'), which normally is described as a monkey that has ears like Mickey Mouse (Koh 2010, 398). Thirdly, there are a plethora of OZ avatars that can be conceptually linked to either DOB or *Superflat Monogram*.

The speciesism of these avatars – the anthropomorphic adoption of animal avatars by the human characters in *Summer Wars* – is redolent with multiculturalism, and some overt nationalism. The Jinnouchis who work for the state or infrastructure companies in Japan, for instance, adopt avatars related to those professions, while other characters have avatars more closely connected to Superflat art. For example, there are at least three panda-based characters similar to the LV Panda of the Louis Vuitton commercials. There are, in addition, multiple characters linked to Murakami's DOB and the wider Superflat oeuvre, which can be seen in the multiple OZ avatars with Mickey Mouse ears. Most notable amongst these characters is Kenji's original avatar, which takes the shape

of a teenager with black Mickey Mouse-style ears. When it gets taken over by the evil AI, it transforms into an evilly grinning version of the original avatar. In these aesthetic choices, there are points of overlap between the concerns of Murakami's Superflat art and Hosoda's *Summer Wars*. In the repetitions and allusions, *Summer Wars* becomes suggestively connected to the politics and ideologies of Superflat's nationalism, with *Summer Wars* sharing Superflat's critiques of commercialism, its precariously positive representations of multiculturalism and its use of aspects of traditional Japanese art to do so. In *Summer Wars*, regardless of the director's claims to the contrary, Superflat art itself is recycled into a palimpsest that opens up space for nationalism to creep in through the film's critiques of the fallibility of online, commercialised global spaces.

There are two important facets to the way a Superflat-inspired nationalism is evoked in OZ. First, and most overtly, there is an anti-American, pro-Japanese nationalism evident in Hosoda's depiction of the AI that inveigles its way into OZ. Known as Love Machine (after a song by Japanese girl group Morning Musume), the AI is created by the Jinnouchi family's estranged adoptee, Wabisuke, in an attempt to impress Sakae. Working in American academia, before selling his 'hacking' AI to the US Army, Wabisuke's avariciousness is linked to the lingering presence of the American military within Japan and therefore he and his creation are presented as the film's ostensible villains. But, more so than Wabisuke, the US Army is blamed for carelessly loosing Love Machine on the unexpecting denizens of OZ. Hosoda thereby tries to spread the blame, and to create a multicultural sense of villainy. However, the fact that the protagonists all belong to a traditional Japanese family makes the US Army appear all-the-more culpable by comparison. In addition, with Sakae and her family taking responsibility for putting an end to Love Machine, the filmmakers suggest that the self-sacrificing Japanese family can recuperate Wabisuke's (and through him, Japan's) culpability in this global crisis. The allegory here between Japanese post-war history and the swing towards right wing nationalist rewritings of history is apparent, and this is perhaps the most overtly nationalist and culturally conservative aspect of *Summer Wars*.

On the flip side of this coin is heroine Natsuki's *hanafuda* card game battle with Love Machine in OZ. This traditional Japanese card game is often cited by the Nintendo games company as their starting point, although the film presents *hanafuda* as traditional and obscure enough that Natsuki's life-long experience of playing it gives her an advantage over the vastly more powerful AI. In OZ, the game is situated in a

casino environment full of neon Western gambling machines, into which the tradition *hanafuda* game is digitised and inserted, with the rounded backgrounds taking on the look of traditional Japanese art, while cards fly across the screen as Love Machine and Natsuki play for control over OZ's avatars. All of this makes for a complex, cluttered and transcultural mise-en-scene that reinforces the connections between *Summer Wars* and the precepts of Murakami's Superflat art, whilst also running contrary to Hosoda's proclaimed desire for simplicity. The game and casino environment also connect the traditions of the Jinnouchi household with the rest of the world. As Natsuki receives 'gifted' avatar support from people across the world, they begin to use the language of this culturally specific card game (shouting '*Koi koi*!' at key moments), and immediately understand its rules. Through this representational strategy, Hosoda suggests that Japanese cultural exports, such as games, have a global following that can be aligned with Japanese 'soft power' in nationalism debates (McGray 2009).

Conclusion

Summer Wars does, therefore, contain a wide spectrum of nationalisms. Most are focused on banal reproductions of the nation that reinforce national identity in the late 2000s, at a moment of political upheaval in Japan. The fact that the Japanese government only starts to fight back against Love Machine at the behest of phone calls from Sakae hints at Hosoda's ambivalence about the contemporary political situation in Japan. By returning to the traditional extended family system, with all of its nationalistic baggage, as the solution to the problem of a rampant AI threatening to destroy the world, Hosoda also suggests a conservative vision of Japanese culture.

Hosoda's challenge to this conservative conceptualising of Japanese identity is to position women, most notably Sakae and Natsuki, as the agents most capable of solving national problems. As a kind of gentle probing of banal nationalisms of late 2000s Japan, therefore, *Summer Wars* presents a complex view of banal nationalisms that acknowledges the problems Japan has been facing and sees their solution in a revisionist inversion of the gendering of traditional Japanese ideologies. However, these inversions are still underpinned by relatively clichéd conservative forms of femininity. Sakae can be read as the ultimate self-sacrificing heroine, and Natsuki's elevation to winged angel avatar within OZ is similarly suggestive of a retention of long-standing conservative gendered representational schema in *Summer Wars.*

The schema of pro-Japanese nationalisms that runs through *Summer Wars* is all the more important because of the twists that Hosoda makes. From the overtly anti-US military sentiment undergirding the film's narrative, to the far subtler declarations about Japanese media's soft power, to the uses of the *ie* system as an answer to Japan's contemporary political problems, *Summer Wars* is riddled with nationalism. Importantly, however, it is not riddled with a single kind of nationalism. Nor does the film or its filmmaker reach for particular nationalistic extremes. The US military is gently chided, with news reporting seen in *Summer Wars* arguing that the army had no idea that Love Machine would be able to run riot through global infrastructural systems when they began running their tests. In the soft critiques of politics, nations and Japanese nationalism itself, then, *Summer Wars* demonstrates the importance of attending to the variety in cultural nationalisms at times of heightened tension.

REFERENCES

Billig, M. (1995), *Banal Nationalism*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Chapman, J., M. Glancy and S. Harper (2000), *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Clements, J. (2013), *Anime: A History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

— (n.d.), Mamoru Hosoda's Summer Wars, *Manga UK*. [Online] Available from: http://www.mangauk.com/christmas-in-august/ [Accessed 01 August 2018].

Cohen, K.F. (1997), *Forbidden Animation: Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators in America*. Jefferson: McFarland and Co.

Hambleton, A. (2011), Reinforcing Identities? Non-Japanese Residents, Television and Cultural Nationalism in Japan. *Contemporary Japan*. Vol. 23, 27-47.

Hosoda, M. (2013), Interview with Mamoru Hosoda, in Summer Wars Film Partners, ed. M. Kirie Hayashi, trans. *Summer Wars Material Book*. Ontario: Udon Entertainment Group, 124-133.

Inoguchi, T. (2015), National Identity and Adapting to Integration: Nationalism and Globalization in Japan. In: Suryadinata, L., ed. *Nationalism and Globalization*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 215-233.

Klinger, B. (1997), Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies. *Screen* Vol. 38(2): 107-128.

Ko, M. (2010), *Japanese Cinema and Otherness: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and the Problem of Japaneseness*. London: Routledge.

Koh, D.Y. (2010), Murakami's "Little Boy" Syndrome: Victim or Aggressor in Contemporary Japanese and American Arts? *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*. Vol. 11 (3), 393-412.

Lamarre, T. (2006), The Multiplanar Image. *Mechademia: Emerging Worlds of Anime and Manga*. Vol. 1. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 120-143.

— (2008), Speciesism Part I: Translating Races into Animals in Wartime Animation. In: Lunning, F., ed. *Mechademia: Limits of the Human*. Vol. 3. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 75-95.

— (2010a), The Biopolitics of Companion Species: Wartime Animation and Multi-ethnic Nationalism. In: Calichman, R. and J. Namjun Kim, (Eds), *The Politics of Culture: Around the Work of Naoki Sakai*, London: Routledge, 72-90..

— (2010b), Speciesism, Part II: Tezuka Osamu and the Multispecies Ideal. In: Lunning, F., ed. *Mechademia: Fanthropologies*. Vol. 5. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 51-85.

McGray, D. (2009) Japan's Gross National Cool. *Foreign Policy* [Online], 11 November. Available from: https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/11/11/japans-gross-national-cool/ [Accessed 31 July 2009].

Morris-Suzuki, T. (1998), *Re-inventing Japan: Nation, Culture, Identity*. New York: ME Sharpe.

Napier, S.J. (2005), *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Sakai, N. (1997), *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

— (2017), The Modern Regime of Translation and the Emergence of the Nation. *The Eighteenth-Century* Vol. 58(1), 105-108.

Seaton, P., Yamamura, T., Sugawa-Shimada, A. *et al.* (2017), *Contents Tourism in Japan: Pilgrimages to "Sacred Sites" of Popular Culture*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press.

Sevakis, J. (2009), 'Interview: Mamoru Hosoda,' *Anime News Network,* 22 December. Available from: https//www.animenewsnetwork.com/interviews/2009-12-22/interview-mamoru-hosoda?ann-edition=uk [Accessed 29July 2009] .

Shimazu, N. (2006), *Nationalisms in Japan*. New York: Routledge.

Steinberg, M. (2004), Otaku Consumption, Superflat Art and the Return to Edo. *Japan Forum* Vol. 16(3), 449-471.

Stockwin, A. Ampiah, K. (2017), *Rethinking Japan: The Politics of Contested Nationalism*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Street, S. (2000), *British Cinema in Documents*. London: Routledge.

Hosoda, M., (dir.) (2010) *Summer Wars* [DVD] Madhouse Animation. Tōkyō: Japan.

Summer Wars Film Partners (2009a), *Samā Wōzu (Summer Wars)* [Cinema Advertising Leaflet]. Tōkyō: Japan.

— (2009b), *Samā Wōzu Guide Map*. http://www.ueda-cb.gr.jp/s-wars/pdf/guidemap.pdf [Accessed 2 August 2018].

Yoshino, K. (1992), *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan: A Sociological Enquiry*. New York: Routledge.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rayna DENISON *is a Senior Lecturer in Film, Television and Media at the University of East Anglia where she teaches and does research on contemporary Japanese film and animation. She is the author of* Anime: A Critical Introduction *(Bloomsbury, 2015), and the editor of* Princess Mononoke: Understanding Studio Ghibli's Monster Princess *(Bloomsbury, 2018). She is the co-editor of the Eisner Award-nominated Superheroes on World Screens (University of Mississippi Press, 2015) and her scholarly articles can be found in a wide range of journals including:* Cinema Journal, Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal, Japan Forum *and the* International Journal of Cultural Studies*.*