



## Hosoda Mamoru + Azuma Hiroki — Animation for Parents

### Discussion between HOSODA Mamoru and AZUMA Hiroki

*In 2012, director Hosoda Mamoru scored a big hit with a movie called *Wolf Children*. Unlike conventional animated movies, it was full of messages aimed at families raising young children. On September 25, while the movie was in theaters, Hosoda's first child (a son) was born, thrusting the director right into the heart of child raising himself. He met up twice with the *genron* etc.'s Editor-in-Chief (Azuma Hiroki), who himself has a daughter in elementary school, for an in-depth discussion regarding the hidden messages in *Wolf Children* and the isolating effects of becoming a father.*

#### Where does being a parent start? And where does it end?

**Hosoda Mamoru:** I didn't have children when I was making the movie. Although my wife and I had always wanted to be parents, we just hadn't been blessed with a child at that point. We started going to the hospital and things like that, so it was a fairly tough time for us. So both of us were really longing to become "child-raising parents" so to speak. We knew that some aspects of raising children would be fun and some would be hard, but when you put it all together, we still wanted to become parents. Even if it turned out that we were unable to have children, we knew that we would never be able to shut out that desire to become parents and to raise children. I decided to turn that into something tangible, and the result was this movie. I took the desire to be a parent and transposed it onto the main character Hana. At the same time however, I wanted to depict it as an enjoyable experience rather than a difficult one.

After I'd finished the movie and it was released, we were fortunate enough to have a child of our own. To be honest though, I don't think being a father has quite sunk in yet. It's a funny feeling...

**Azuma Hiroki:** It never does sink in! *[Laughter]* Seriously though, for me at least, I don't think it has ever quite sunk in. I don't suppose it ever will now.

You mentioned making the movie out of a sense of longing. Even with your longing to have children however, it's interesting that you chose to tell the story of a mother as your main character, and a single mother at that. Perhaps "interesting" is the wrong word... "Intriguing" may be a better way of putting it. The question is why you chose not to tell the story of a happy couple raising children. That was one of the key points that I took away after watching *Wolf Children*.



Azuma (left) and Hosoda.

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To put it simply, the movie is about Hana being very isolated. Nobody understands the difficulties she is having raising her children. Even if she tries to make friends with those around her, it's always a struggle. That sense of isolation is depicted allegorically through the story of Hana raising her wolf children, but I think that's something that all mothers experience to some extent. I'm not just talking about single mothers either. That applies to happy couples too. Mothers always have to deal with problems that "fathers just wouldn't understand." I felt that *Wolf Children* was superb because it really captures that accurately. Ordinarily, I would expect a movie that was made out of a sense of longing to be a more positive fantasy from a male point of view, maybe emphasizing the father's role in raising children. But it's not like that at all. It's a story that clearly depicts a mother who feels hemmed in and isolated. That's why I feel there's a sense of realism that lays heavy on your heart, even though the movie itself is a fantasy about raising wolf children.

**Hosoda:** I feel like I should expand on that word "longing." When we decided as a couple that we wanted children, I can't help wondering if we were truly prepared for what that meant. You don't know if your child will be born safely for instance. Or they might fall ill at a later stage. They might end up getting seriously injured. They might be bullied at school. They might even bully other children. Taking it a step further, there's no guarantee that both of you as parents will remain healthy while your child is growing up. You never know what tomorrow might bring, especially when you've got a job with irregular pay like mine. We talked about things like that over and over again. We still wanted children though, so our "longing" also factored in that sense of being prepared. Hana goes through numerous trying and difficult experiences in the movie, but they all reflect issues that we knew we might have to face ourselves.

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***Hosoda Mamoru***

That's why, when it came to working out what to depict in the movie, it ended up being something completely different, as opposed to the usual stories about the "bonds between parent and child," for instance. Instead, I wanted to explore the question of "where does being a parent start? And where does it end?" Some might say that you are a parent for your whole life, from the moment your child is born. I wasn't convinced that was the case though, in some respects. If we assume that being a parent starts when your child is born, then it presumably ends when your child reaches adulthood and becomes independent. There are various different views on independence, but in the movie I decided it would be the point when the children were able to take the initiative and act on their own. In other words, the parent's role lasts up until that point. The movie is about watching your children grow up and making it all the way to the end of that process. If I wanted to do that properly, I knew that I needed to tell a story over the course of thirteen years (the time taken for Yuki and Ame to grow up). Although the end result is that the children go their own way and Hana is left on her own again, I suspect the movie leaves you with a very different impression depending on how you view that. Is she



lonely? Or is she left with a sense of fulfillment having achieved something special?

### Children have an isolating effect on parents

**Azuma:** I agree completely. One thing I have realized while raising my own child is that children have an isolating effect on parents. That's something you probably don't hear people say very often. I think most people try to look the other way.

As we mentioned earlier for instance, on a simplistic level, mothers and fathers have completely different roles. The idea that couples raise children together is little more than a fantasy. That's something you can't fail to realize as soon as you start raising your own children. After all, the mother gives birth to the child, while the father just watches. The two roles are completely different from the start. All the father has to do is just video things as they happen! Given that the mother is doing so much, why isn't there anything more useful for the father to do? Did you ever feel that way too?

**Hosoda:** My child is only four months old, but it already feels like I'm being left behind in some respects.

**Azuma:** You'll keep on getting left behind in the future too!

**Hosoda:** Really?!

**Azuma:** I'm afraid so. What's worse is that, if you're in a community surrounded by friends who don't have children, you inevitably find yourself drifting away from those friends. Whether you use social media or not, that's always the case. You find yourself cut off from the group – as the guys go drinking and the girls go out together – so you keep an eye out for other couples with similar lifestyles, and whose children were born around the same time as your own. It's never quite that easy though is it? Couples have children at different ages these days, so even if there are other couples with children in your neighborhood, they will most likely be in a different age group or lead different lifestyles. It's never easy to just “go out together.” Worse still, even if you happen to find a couple who are just right, a five-year-old and a one-year-old are very different. They might enjoy playing together, or they might not. It's a tricky situation.

***“Conversely, when you have children you are reminded constantly that you are alone. You may have felt like you were connected to other people in the past, but you realize that, in actual fact, you are quite vulnerable.”***

***Azuma Hiroki***

The point is that people without children tend to lump all families with children together, when in reality they are all different in their own way. This means that, conversely, when you have children you are reminded constantly that you are alone. You may have felt like you were connected to other people in the past, but you realize that, in actual fact, you are quite vulnerable. If we still had large



families, as in days gone by, you probably wouldn't feel like that at all, because you'd have a large family to shield you from the isolation of raising children.

In our modern society however, we don't have buffers like that any more. We are all individuals who form communities based on our interests, rather than local or family ties. There's nothing wrong with that as such, but if you're expecting some sort of help when you have children, you'll be surprised at how little help you get. That's why people say, "it's hard to raise children in this day and age." I tend to think the opposite; "that's just the way of the world." It may sound obvious, but we all have to live on our own, and we all die on our own too. In much the same way, Hana has to live on her own after her wolfman husband dies. There's nothing she can do about that fact. I saw a review that questioned why Hana didn't have any friends. Personally, I feel that the careful depiction of her isolation is the movie's real masterstroke. So rather than saying, "being a mother means being isolated," another way of putting it would be "being a parent means facing up to reality"... Although I suppose that would make for a pretty downbeat movie, which is not the case at all!

### Dealing with the realities of raising children

**Hosoda:** Indeed. I think that's why the realities of raising children come through more vividly than they would have done with a tacked-on happy ending. It's becoming increasingly difficult to see through to the realities of life these days, so it feels like the allegory of the wolf children brings those realities back into plain sight again.

When I first came up with the idea for the movie, I set out to write a story that spanned three generations. You would have seen the parents from the children's point of view, and their grandparents would have featured too. I intended the father to go to war soon after the children were born, leaving the mother to raise the children on her own while he was away. It was going to be a story of how she survived, raised her children and made it through to the present day, amidst so much hardship.

***“Rather than just chalking it up to history, I felt that I needed to find the strength to make it through similarly tough times, even if they were different in nature, such as being forced to live in isolation for instance.”***

***Hosoda Mamoru***

My grandparents weren't farmers, so they had struggled to get enough food to eat during the turbulent times after the war. If you had a farm, you had fields that could provide you with food for the time being at least. If you weren't farmers however, you had to trade in other possessions for food. They had to sell clothes, furniture and household goods. They planted crops but they failed... It must have been a truly terrible time. When I heard about their experiences, I wondered whether we would still have that sort of vitality these days, to keep going and raise our children no matter what. Rather than just chalking it up to history, I felt that I needed to find the strength to make it through similarly tough times, even if they were different in nature, such as being forced to live in isolation for instance.



I started to think about what sort of strengths we would need as we faced up to the realities of raising children. That's what was on my mind.

**Azuma:** I think that fantasy is an essential element in other forms of entertainment too, not just animated movies. You can't just depict the harsh realities of life as they are. You need to create something that offers people the "nourishment they need to make it through the harsh realities of life." With that in mind, I wonder if this movie would be some sort of consolation to people who appreciate the isolating effect of raising children. Perhaps "consolation" has too many negative connotations. I'm sure there must be a more positive expression...

**Hosoda:** Encouragement?

**Azuma:** Yes, that's it! I think this movie could definitely be a source of encouragement.

Personally, I don't find movies with the message "having children is fun" very encouraging at all. If you've actually had children, you know that's a lie. I don't feel remotely encouraged by movies that are based on empty thoughts like that. *Wolf Children* on the other hand offers the encouragement to keep going, even when you know about the realities of life. That's why Hana has to be isolated. If she were enjoying life, surrounded by supportive friends and family, it would somehow be far less encouraging.

**Hosoda:** The fact that the children in the movie are "wolf children" is kept secret within the family. Although the wolves work as a metaphor, we all have our own secrets and individual circumstances in real life too. No matter how well we get on with those around us, it is still perfectly plausible to have secrets that are ours alone. The issue of self-consciousness in particular is something we are always faced with, and so are our children. That makes it even harder to speak out. I suppose that's another aspect of isolation.

**Azuma:** These days, people feel that actively sharing their problems with those around them is the right thing to do. Obviously, there's nothing wrong with that. In fact, some problems only exist because you can't talk to other people about them.

Health is a prime example. Our child was fortunately born healthy, but you are actually taking a huge gamble by having children. Anything can happen when it comes to children. There are plenty of children who are physically healthy but still struggle in life, for various reasons. All children are different, so if you've got a problem that you can't share with other people, you've got no choice but to keep it inside somewhere. When you become a parent, you've got to be prepared to "catch whatever life throws at you, no matter what." I think the wolf children are the perfect metaphor to illustrate that fact.

## Issues highlighted by the earthquake

**Hosoda:** A friend of mine moved to the countryside to cure his child's allergies. Having previously lived in a convenient location right by the station, they sold their house and moved somewhere with a really long commute, all for the sake of their child. As I was single at the time, I found it unbelievable that he would do something like that. I couldn't understand why he would give up his easy lifestyle, even for the sake of his child. Over time however, I realized that things like that do happen. I found that more and more people were deciding to act for the sake of their children. I realize now that



children have the potential to drastically alter our living arrangements, more than we could ever have imagined.

**Azuma:** In more recent times, many parents were forced to move or evacuate from their homes for the sake of their children following the earthquake in March 2011. The earthquake actually led to me losing interest in the Internet in Japan.

**Hosoda:** Why was that?

**Azuma:** Following the earthquake, the Internet was supposed to be a place where people could comfortably share information with others. Even so, I was sure that no useful information would actually be posted. Take evacuation for instance. The Internet was full of people saying things like, “why do we need to evacuate? You must be joking!” Behind the scenes however, I’m sure there were plenty of people who evacuated without posting anything, and men who stayed in Tokyo for work whilst leaving their families behind. Details like that never seem to come out on the Internet.

It’s obvious when you think about it. There’s no need to go to the trouble of posting a message saying, “I’m evacuating.” People would have been busy getting their things together instead.

It’s the same with raising children too. If you’re busy day-in day-out raising your children, you’re not going to write a blog about “being busy raising children.” Taking it to the extreme, you would need to have some guts to write something like “I’m struggling because my child is disabled” on Twitter. Essentially, that’s the sort of level that connections on social networks are at. People like to talk about being “connected” these days, but it’s no easy matter to connect everyone together if we’re all struggling with separate problems on our own.

The key point when thinking about raising children is right there in the phrase itself. We talk about “raising children” as a whole, but in reality, raising children covers a wide range of possibilities. So when parents are encouraged to connect with other people dealing with the same problems, it’s a case of “where are these people?” Your previous movie, *Summer Wars*, told a story in which everyone came together to work towards the same goal. In that sense at least, *Wolf Children* is a completely different story. In fact, there is no mention of the Internet in the movie, or social media for that matter. If we take *Summer Wars* to be the story of relationships within a large family, then *Wolf Children* is the story of a single mother and her isolation. I think it’s fascinating that the same director made such contrasting movies.

***“We talk about ‘raising children’ as a whole, but in reality, raising children covers a wide range of possibilities. So when parents are encouraged to connect with other people dealing with the same problems, it’s a case of ‘where are these people?’”***

***Azuma Hiroki***

**Hosoda:** I think you’re right. When it comes to raising children, parents each have their own individual circumstances to deal with. The earthquake brought a lot of issues to light. What really



struck me at the time was that, regardless of whether people decided to evacuate or not, they all agreed that the children were the most important consideration. Children are of the utmost importance to society too, as well as their parents. My child wasn't even born at the time, but it felt like that was obvious even to me. At times like that, I realize that what we need to do as adults is to hold on to our children. We need the strength to stay standing, even if Japan is reduced to rubble around us. It's only natural that we would waver in the face of an earthquake, but that made me want to think about the "strength to stay standing" more than ever.

### The reasons behind the success of *Wolf Children*

**Azuma:** *Wolf Children* was a success at the box office as a result. Given that it's such a challenging movie however, I wouldn't have been surprised if it hadn't been a hit. In actual fact, it turned out to be a massive hit. I think that's because it gave a real sense of courage to people who want to make their own animated movies in the future, and people who want to make anything else for that matter.

**Hosoda:** I have no idea why it was a hit personally... As the movie's creator however, I wanted it to be my greatest challenge yet. Usually, even if you set out to make a movie with the intention of "being free as a creator" or "creating something that goes beyond the confines of animation," the reality is that you're always stuck within those confines to some extent, because you get reactions like "that's what you get with animation" or "I love the imagery." As I was very much aware of that fact, it took real guts to step out in a different direction. I felt anxious that, if I made a wrong move, the movie would be a flop at the box office and I might not be able to make any more movies after that. In terms of the end result however, people don't care that a movie is so challenging that it causes its creator to lose sleep. I think people react to movies naturally, based on their own individual problems. That's probably why so many people went to see my movie. You could say that the movie's success was down to the creator's intentions and challenging spirit, but I felt that it was more down to the genuine insight of the audience. I find it quite encouraging to think that there are so many insightful people out there. Maybe I could express something completely new and different in my next movie. Sorry, that doesn't really explain why the movie was a hit!

**Azuma:** Lately, I get the impression that animated movies, and other forms of entertainment too, are being deliberately aimed at niche markets, in the hope that they will then spread by word of mouth. *Wolf Children* on the other hand adopted a completely different strategy. What I mean is that it doesn't seem to have been made with anyone in mind as the movie's "core market." Given that everyone has a different experience of raising children, it would be virtually impossible to target a movie at "child-raising parents." In reality, some parents might be a bit rough around the edges, whereas others are very liberal. At any rate, they are all different. There is no community of people with a "shared interest in raising children." It's easy to target a movie at geeks, because they represent a clearly defined community. I would say that you set yourself a truly difficult challenge with this movie.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to basing something on a community with shared interests. Whereas you have a clear target market, you also have an increasingly narrow range of expression, which limits artistic freedom. In contrast, *Wolf Children* has a tremendous sense of freedom. It's almost as if you're running free yourself, like in the scene where Hana, Ame and Yuki are



running across the snowy fields!

What I'm trying to say is that you are completely free from the notion that "certain types of people watch animated movies, so we need to cater to their tastes." We each live our lives in our own way, and have different beliefs and interests, but you have taken that varied audience and just gone for it, on the basis that "as long as it gets through to one in ten, or one in thirty, that's fine." It seems to me that is how you went about making the movie.

I know we're talking about *Wolf Children* as a "movie for families raising children," but it goes without saying that families will see the movie in different ways. No doubt some people won't like the way in which the mother is depicted. Reading through blogs, people have reacted in various different ways. I think that's a good thing personally. You could never depict raising children in a way that would please everyone. I think choosing a path like that, where there is no right answer, actually gave you a great deal more freedom.

### Possibilities surrounding the debate about child raising

**Hosoda:** There are various different positions you can take when it comes to raising children. Should you give your children nothing but organic food? Is the countryside better, or the city? Should you play an active part in their education or keep your distance? We all have our own ideas and take different sides in the debate.

**Azuma:** You're right. People have all sorts of opinions, whether they're for or against organic food for instance, or for or against breast-feeding.

**Hosoda:** We went down the breast-feeding route, but it's not something we made a conscious decision about. The maternity ward simply recommended breast-feeding. There are advantages and disadvantages to both breast milk and regular milk.

**Azuma:** It's another of those questions where there's no right answer. No matter what you believe, when it comes down to it, you just get on with raising your children. That doesn't mean you can give up completely and let your children eat nothing but junk food. You've still got to put some thought into it. Even if you entered into a debate with other couples with children of a similar age, I don't suppose you would come to a conclusion. All you would learn is that "people have very different ways of thinking about things." And there's nothing wrong with that. The reality is that different people adopt different approaches to raising their children. Raising children is a process of realizing there is no right answer.

I would say that raising children is essentially an "undebatable" subject. You could have a good discussion regarding whether or not you find the movie interesting for example. That's because it doesn't really matter what conclusion you reach. Raising children isn't like that however. People aren't prepared to concede anything, let alone discuss whether something is logically correct or not. After all, there is a child's life depending on the answer. That's precisely what happened with the issue of radiation after the earthquake. It once again brought up the question, "how can people who view things in various different ways coexist side by side?" You simply can't poke your nose into how other people raise their children. At the same time however, you wouldn't 100% support how another person raises their children either. That's the sort of relationship you inevitably end up forming.





You might think that we're all unshakeable in our beliefs when it comes to raising children, but I don't necessarily think that's the case. People like that only account for a small percentage. The vast majority of people simply pass on the patterns of behavior and ethics they received from their own parents. In that sense, "the foundations on which people have lived their lives to date" start to play a part.

That confirms the point that we all have different ways of thinking about things. Although that's effectively acknowledging that we are all isolated, in another sense, we're all supposed to be highly "connected" these days, as we mentioned earlier when discussing social media. There are people who would see Hana's actions and say things like "I wouldn't hide away in the countryside if it were me" or "I wouldn't bring my children up like that." Those are people who have never reached that point however. All you need to do is quietly accept that those are the choices Hana has made. After all, Yuki and Ame are Hana's children, not yours. Also, it's not as if the movie is trying to force Hana's approach to raising children on the audience. We simply have to accept "Hana's strength in choosing to raise her children that way." The bonds that develop from that are genuine. That's what I think at least.

***"The reality is that different people adopt different approaches to raising their children. Raising children is a process of realizing that there is no right answer."***

***Azuma Hiroki***

### **"Correct choices" and "independent choices"**

**Hosoda:** Along similar lines, Yuki and Ame are raised in the same way, but then they think and live their lives completely differently; one as a human and the other as a wolf. The movie doesn't suggest that either path is correct. It doesn't even try to do that. I think there are lots of situations like that in life. What is the correct thing to do? What will benefit me most? What can I do to make it through unscathed? We are always asking ourselves things like that! No matter how you choose to live your life however, the important thing is that you make an independent choice for yourself, rather than letting others decide for you. You can only determine which choice is right for you based on your own criteria.

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***Hosoda Mamoru***



**Azuma:** You can't persuade someone to change the way they raise their children. That applies to most things actually, not just raising children. I'm sure we all think "I can change people's lives just by talking to them" at some point when we're young. We think things like "this is the right way to live, so you should do the same."

You can't intervene in other people's lives like that however when it comes to raising children. I have come across a number of surprising cases myself. I know someone whose child has to commute two hours each way to elementary school, just because the school has a good name. I would never do that personally. But then I would never tell them to stop either. You find more and more things like that as you get older. It's another indication of being "isolated." It seems obvious, but I never felt strongly about it until I became a father.

**Hosoda:** Parents and children often think they can change each other's mind too. Parents tell their children, "this is how you must live your life." Children on the other hand demand that their parents "let me live my own life." Ultimately, both sides are just trying to assert themselves. The arguments themselves seem to just pass by. I think it's more important to "accept that is the nature of independence." In the past, movies often used to revolve around the theme of "tension between parents and children." I get the feeling that we are heading in a different direction these days.

**Azuma:** There has been something of a shift in values recently. People think that the best option is to "respect people of the same generation and form loosely connected groups of friends." To me, that seems extremely superficial.

I'm sure I'll be criticized for saying this, but having a child is a tremendous act of aggression. You're forcing into existence something that didn't previously exist. You then instill all sorts of things into them from scratch. Whether you realize it or not, over time you pass on things like the way you talk, and the way you walk, to your child. You might say, "I respect my child's independence," but they don't have any real independence at the age of one or two. You're continually exerting your influence on something that has no independence. What could be more aggressive than that? The notion that "parents and children respect one another" obviously comes into play from a certain age, but when children are really young, it's little more than fiction.

In *Wolf Children* too, Yuki and Ame live their lives in the same way as their mother or father, respectively. Ultimately, they can't get away from that. When you raise children, that's the sort of outcome you end up with. You've just got to accept that.

**Hosoda:** Personally, I think that living your life in the same way as your parents is one of the joys of life, because it shows that you're connected. For example, I was talking about the difficult experiences my grandparents went through either side of the war. They didn't actively seek out those experiences, but even so, they would have understood and passed on their thoughts and feelings from those days as they raised their children, albeit in a different form. I think that's how you end up feeling a real connection (to previous eras). Up until a certain age, I was convinced that "my thoughts are in no way influenced by my relationships with my parents and relatives – I was born free." Now that I have a job, a wife, and my own "family context," so to speak, I get the feeling that I'm subconsciously trying to exert my own influence on something, to pass on something of myself. I find that really interesting.



**Azuma:** That idea of repeating the past is depicted in a positive light in *Wolf Children*, but you also had the option of depicting it in a negative way. As both Yuki and Ame are under the spell of their parents' generation, you could have depicted their lack of freedom in that respect too. I think many animated movies would have done that. But instead, you chose a more positive depiction. That must have been a major challenge too. "It doesn't matter whether you attain freedom from your parents or not. I am like my father, and my son will be like me. That's just the way it is." That's not the sort of message you would get from a child's perspective.

**Hosoda:** Although Ame has no image of his father as a person, because he died before Ame was old enough to remember, he still feels something when the Japanese wolf starts to die out as a species. Indeed, he independently picks up the baton. Unknowingly, Yuki picks up her own baton too, when her relationship with a boy in her class at school starts to resemble the relationship between her mother and father. I hope people see that as something to be celebrated.

### **Ame is just like a boy obsessed with RPGs**

**Azuma:** Sorry for lowering the tone somewhat, but don't you think that Yuki and Ame fit the stereotypes of a "riaju" (someone leading a fulfilling life, usually because they have a boyfriend or girlfriend) girl and an "otaku" (obsessive geek) boy?

**Hosoda:** Ha, ha! I suppose Yuki is a "riaju" girl.

**Azuma:** I thought the movie captured that really well. Ame talks about "returning to the wild," so you wouldn't immediately associate that with being a geek, but I felt that he was just like an elementary school boy obsessed with online role playing games (RPG). The wild mountains are like the virtual world in an RPG. Ame is so obsessed with that world that he won't come out of his room. Even when his mother tries to talk to him, he says things like "I'm going to see my master" or "my master won't come down to the village because he hates people." It's just like the behavior of an Internet-obsessed shut-in! Don't you think?

**Hosoda:** Ha, ha!

**Azuma:** It may not seem that way, because the natural scenery is depicted so beautifully in the movie, but if you transplanted the same situation into reality, it's like a mother wondering what to do about a son who won't come out of his room.

**Hosoda:** *[still laughing]* He discovers an entirely new world while growing up, and then finds that world is more important to him. That whole idea definitely has a familiar ring to it!

**Azuma:** When Ame gained independence, it felt real to me.

**Hosoda:** I guess that's why everyone identifies with either Yuki or Ame. So in your case it would be...?



**Azuma:** I'm definitely more like Ame. I'd be saying to my mother "don't come in (because I'm drawing sexy female characters)!" Thinking about it, I know that the wolves in Yuki and Ame are a metaphor for disability in the context of raising children, but they also symbolize the "dark powers" that cause children to withdraw from reality and take refuge in fantasy. Whereas Yuki breaks away from those dark powers and becomes a "riaju" girl, Ame withdraws from the world and becomes an "otaku."

**Hosoda:** That's definitely one way of looking at it. I think people view the movie in different ways. Whereas movies usually encourage the audience to view them in a certain way, this is a movie that doesn't really do that. Even assuming you take the wolves to be an analogy, there are still various possible interpretations. That's why I try to avoid giving definitive answers in interviews. I don't want to interfere with the audience's own interpretations. I want everyone who sees the film to interpret it freely.

### **I want parents who are currently raising children to see the movie**

**Azuma:** When I saw the movie, I felt glad that I lived in Japan for the first time in ages. As it stands, this is the only country in the world where you regularly can see such high quality animated movies in theaters. I've always loved animated movies, but they have had an increasingly small place in my heart in recent years. Modern movies are amazing from a technical point of view, but I can't help wondering, "is there anything left that can only be achieved through animation alone?" Even so, I feel that *Wolf Children* genuinely achieves something that could only be expressed through animation. If it had been a live-action movie, the husband would have turned into a wolf, thanks to some amazing special effects, and gone to bed with Hana! I think that would have really put people off!

This movie comes from the same sense of imagination that enabled Japanese animation to develop a distinct style in the first place. In that sense, it's a fantastic movie that I would encourage as many people as possible to see.

***"When I saw the movie, I felt glad that I lived in Japan for the first time in ages. As it stands, this is the only country in the world where you can regularly see such high quality animated movies in theaters."***

***Azuma Hiroki***

Although we've been talking mostly about raising children today, I get the feeling that the movie was actually made for people who aren't particularly interested in raising children.

**Hosoda:** I hope that all sorts of different people will enjoy the movie on formats such as DVD and Blu-ray. I obviously want children, movie fans and people who love animation to see it, but as the creator, I am always thinking, "I hope people in the same situation as the main character see this movie." So I particularly want mothers and fathers who are currently raising children to see the movie. Having said that, I appreciate that mothers with young children sometimes struggle to get to the



movies in reality.

**Azuma:** Undoubtedly.

**Hosoda:** Movie theaters make life very difficult if you want to go and see a movie with a very small child. You don't want to leave them with a baby sitter yet either.

**Azuma:** On a simple level, raising children makes it harder to access entertainment. Some might say, "just get a baby sitter." Equally however, others might question, "are you so eager to see a movie that you would go to the trouble of getting a baby sitter?" Obviously you could get a baby sitter, but that brings with it a cost, in various different senses. In most cases, you would tend to use a baby sitter for more important reasons.

**Hosoda:** Even if I said to my wife, "I'll look after the baby, you go to the theater on your own," I get the impression that she still wouldn't be keen to go. I suspect the same would apply to lots of the mothers and fathers who are interested in seeing this movie.

That's what DVDs and Blu-rays are there for. People who have missed the movie can watch it together whenever they want, at home with their children. I imagine parents will see the events in the movie in a different light as their children grow up. I think it would be fun to look back along the way and stir up different feelings.

*Translated from "Oya" no tameno Animeishon (Hosoda Mamoru + Azuma Hiroki Animation for Parents)," genron etc. #8, pp. 8-22. (Courtesy of Genron Co., Ltd.) [June 2013]*

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**HOSODA Mamoru**, a film director and animator

His works include *One Piece: Baron Omatsuri and the Secret Island* (film, 2005), *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* (film, 2006), *Summer Wars* (film, 2009).

**AZUMA Hiroki**, critic and writer

He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Tokyo in 1999. He is President and Editor-in-Chief of Genron Co., Ltd. which he established in 2010.