

NO WALT DISNEY IN JAPAN

HOW LOCAL CULTURE INFLUENCES ANIMATED MOVIES

No Walt Disney in Japan

How local culture influences animated movies

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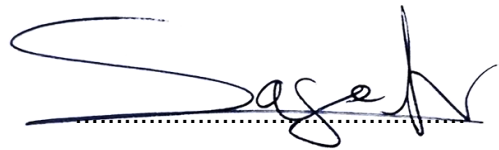
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Abstract

Hayao Miyazaki has achieved global recognition as one of the most influential individuals in the global animation scene (Cavallaro, 2015, p. 1). As someone who has had an incredibly successful career, making what could reasonably be construed as „kid’s movies”, Miyazaki (resp. Studio Ghibli, which he co-founded in 1985) often is compared to Walt Disney, one of America’s most seminal faces in the animation industry. There exist countless articles and interviews in which Miyazaki gets heralded as „the Walt Disney of Japan“, a sentiment which has ingrained itself into Western culture (Prakash Dwivedi, 2018, p. 63; Robinson, 2011; Cavallaro, 2006, p. 176; ¹⁻¹²). Miyazaki even expressed his disapproval regarding his unofficial title, yet he cannot seem to discourage the comparison (Japanorama, 2002).

However, aside from the fact that Walt Disney Studios acquired the distribution rights to Studio Ghibli’s work in 1996 (Animation World Magazine, 1996), which likely originated the prevalent analogy, is it a justifiable assertion to compare the works of Studio Ghibli to those of Walt Disney Animation Studios? Ostensibly, Disney’s and Ghibli’s movies are somewhat comparable, however, these studios were founded and are comprised of people who grew up in different countries, at a different time, each with their own history, assortment of cultural norms and social customs. We also have to take the structural differences of the studios into consideration, like the fact that Miyazaki produces his movies without a finished script (Miyazaki, 1996, p. 103). All of these differences manifest in the respective studios’ approach to storytelling, the themes discussed, and how those stories and themes are depicted through animation.

In this thesis, I will deconstruct and compare the oeuvre of both Studio Ghibli and Walt Disney Animation Studios by analyzing the cultural, religious and structural influences informing art style, storytelling conventions and themes portrayed in their movies. Based on my initial research, my presumption is that we can draw no reasonable comparison between Miyazaki’s and Disney’s work, other than the fact that both constitute exceptionally successful 2D animated movies. I further presume that Japanese culture exerts greater influence on Ghibli’s work than Western culture does on Disney’s animated features.

Abstract (German)

Hayao Miyazaki ist einer der einflussreichsten Personen in der internationalen Animationsszene. Durch den Erfolg seiner Filme, die unter Studio Ghibli produziert wurden, hat er sich weltweit einen Namen gemacht, was den Nebeneffekt hat, dass er oftmals mit Walt Disney, einer der maßgebendsten Personen der Westlichen Animationsszene, verglichen wird. In zahlreichen Artikeln und Interviews wird Miyazaki als der „Walt Disney Japans“ bezeichnet; eine Phrase, die sich tief in der Westlichen Kultur verwurzelt hat (Prakash Dwivedi, 2018, p. 63; Robinson, 2011; Cavallaro, 2006, p. 176; ¹⁻¹²). Miyazaki selbst hat bezüglich seines inoffiziellen Titels sein Missfallen zum Ausdruck gebracht, jedoch ist es ihm bisher nicht gelungen, den Vergleich zurückzuweisen (Japanorama, 2002).

Abgesehen von der Tatsache, dass Walt Disney Studios die Distributionsrechte zu Ghibli's Filmen in 1996 erworben hat (Animation World Magazine, 1996), ist es eine vertretbare Annahme, die Werke von Studio Ghibli mit denen von Walt Disney Animation Studios gleichzusetzen? Die Filme der beiden Studios sind scheinbar vergleichbar, jedoch bestehen diese aus, und wurden von Personen gegründet, die in verschiedenen Ländern aufgewachsen sind, zu unterschiedlichen Zeiten. Die Länder besitzen unterschiedliche Kulturen, soziale Normen und gesellschaftliche Bräuche. Außerdem müssen wir die strukturellen Unterschiede der beiden Studios in Betracht ziehen, wie die Tatsache, dass Miyazaki seine Filme ohne Skript produziert (Miyazaki, 1996, p. 103). All diese Unterschiede wirken sich auf die Erzählstrukturen, die Thematiken, und deren visuelle Darstellung der jeweiligen Studios aus.

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Dekonstruktion und dem Vergleich der Gesamtwerke von Studio Ghibli und Walt Disney Animation Studios, durch Analyse der kulturellen, religiösen und strukturellen Differenzen, welche die Arbeitsweise der beiden Studios prägen. Basierend auf erster Recherche vermute ich, dass die Werke von Ghibli und Disney nicht sinnvoll miteinander verglichen werden können. Des Weiteren gehe ich davon aus, dass Japanische Kultur einen größeren Einfluss auf Ghibli's werke ausübt, als Westliche Kultur auf Disneys animierte Filme.

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1 Introduction

2D Animation is a fascinating and incredibly multifarious medium, which covers a multitude of genres. When taking a representative cross section of contemporary Western animation, you will find everything from works featuring basic, straightforward animation, tackling simple topics aimed exclusively at preschool children (i.e. *Peppa Pig*, 2004 – present; *Caillou*, 1997 – 2010; *Dora the Explorer*, 2000 – 2014; *Martha Speaks*, 2008 – 2014), to programs catering to an adult audience, featuring blood, violence and mature subjects (i.e. *Family Guy*, 1999 – present; *South Park*, 1997 – present; *Rick and Morty*, 2013 – present; *The Simpsons*, 1989 – present). To overgeneralize these works and to put them together in one category, just because they display the commonality of being 2D animated, or being extremely successful in their industry, would be detrimental and counterproductive when discussing this medium. Animation is a multifarious art form manifesting in a multitude of shapes and sizes, so in order to have intelligent and productive discussions about the medium, it is important to speak with nuance, necessitating my proposed differentiation. Lumping works of a particular medium together, based merely on superficial similarities, can be an easy way to mentally compartmentalize the things we see, however, doing so devalues the variegated nature of the medium.

If we add to the equation the subject of Japanese animation, this discrepancy becomes even more apparent. In contrast to the Western world, Japanese culture exhibits a fundamental difference when it comes to the cultural relationship with 2D animation. This perception is ingrained in the collective consciousness of modern Japan, and can be illustrated by particularizing Japan's history of art. One particular comparison, which has ingrained itself in modern popular culture, becomes emblematic of the situation: Hayao Miyazaki, Japanese film director and one of the most influential faces in the global animation scene, frequently is compared to Walt Disney. You can find countless articles scattered throughout the internet pronouncing him the "Japanese Walt Disney" without any further elaboration or explanation (¹⁻¹²). Even books written about Miyazaki draw this comparison at times (Robinson, 2011).

In this thesis, I will first particularize the historical origins and cultural significance of Japanese manga and anime. Next, I will closer examine the background of Studio Ghibli's founder, Hayao Miyazaki, and Walt Disney Animation Studios' founder, Walter Elias Disney. I am going to take a deeper look at how animation is perceived in Japanese society and how this affects storytelling conventions and visual language. This will be contrasted with the manner Western society treats 2D animation, particularly by comparing the trends of films by Walt Disney Animated Studios with those of Hayao Miyazaki.

1.1 Why the Comparison?

To start with, what do the writers and authors of articles on the web typically mean when they draw a comparison between Miyazaki and Disney? Nowadays, the majority of people know the name "Miyazaki" from his work as a director at Studio Ghibli, since he only achieved worldwide recognition through his work there. Of course, there are other people involved in the creation of Ghibli's films, but due to his strong personality and prominent position in the studio itself, people came to strongly associate Ghibli's films with Miyazaki's name. Over the last century, "Disney" has become a ubiquitous name, and is generally used when describing the movies produced by the studio, not the person born in 1901. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that people calling Miyazaki the "Japanese Walt Disney" do not literally mean Miyazaki (the person) is comparable to Walt Disney; they mean that movies produced by Studio Ghibli are like Japanese animated Disney movies.

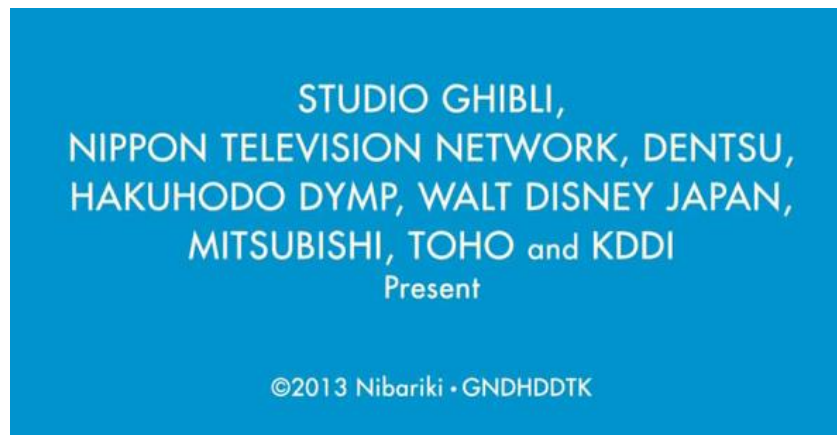


Fig. 1: Opening Credits in „Kaze Tachinu“ (2013)

However, why is Miyazaki's work compared to Disney so frequently? There are two possible causes for this. Firstly, on a surface level, both Miyazaki and Disney have produced movies that are 2D animated, generally aimed at a wide audience, including children, and have achieved international success and fame by doing so. Furthermore, Walt Disney Studios acquired the distribution rights to movies produced by Studio Ghibli in 1996 (Animation World Magazine, 1996). Consequently, American releases of Ghibli's works include opening credits like "Walt Disney Japan ... present" (Fig. 1). These circumstances likely facilitated the perception of Studio Ghibli movies just being another batch of Disney movies. This, however, is a meaningless conclusion, since Walt Disney Studios are constantly buying rights to a plethora of movies produced by a multitude of different studios all over the world.

Miyazaki's films exhibit fundamental differences when contrasted with Disney's animated features; from structural differences in storytelling, the use of characters and themes, to the animation techniques used to convey these aspects of their movies. All of these differences make the comparison, regardless of how culturally prevalent it may be, completely vacuous. I believe that the difference in overarching patterns of themes, story structure and visual language are attributable to a number of influencing factors. There exist differences ranging from culture, religion, to the work ethic of the studios themselves. All of these aspects will be particularized in chapter 5, but first we need to lay initial theoretical groundwork.

2 History of Japanese Animation

To accurately illustrate the cultural differences characterizing Miyazaki's works, it is imperative to be aware of the historical background of Japan's contemporary art. To achieve this, we will examine the prefiguration of manga (and consequently anime), which emerged in the Asuka Period (飛鳥時代 *Asuka Jidai*), all the way to modern Japan (Frédéric, 1971).

2.1 Proto-Manga

Before we start, a quick explanation of the term. "Manga" is an American colloquialism derived from the Japanese term 漫画 (*Manga*). It is comprised of two kanji: 漫 (*man*) meaning "whimsical or impromptu", and 画 (*ga*) meaning "pictures" (Rousmaniere, 2001, p. 54; Thompson, 2007, p. 13). In modern Japan, manga refers just to comics in general; international audiences popularized the connotation with explicitly Japanese comics. Mangaka (漫画家) is the term used to describe an artist creating manga. The suffix "-ka" (家) implicates some level of expertise in creating manga, so the word "mangaka" would not be used for someone simply writing a story, which would later be transformed into manga by another person. However, a clear definition does not exist, since the creators of Japanese cartoons themselves claim to execute a variety of different interrelated tasks (¹³).

The historical origins of manga can be traced back as early as 607, when the Hōryū-ji temple was built. There, progenitors of anime were first found in form of caricatures. In Japanese culture, *fūshi*, (caricature) refers to the act of criticizing or deprecating the failings of society or specific people. The term, *fūshi-e* (caricature pictures) refers to media in form of drawings, illustrating these criticisms in a customarily humorous fashion (Shinmura, 1991, p. 214). This was accomplished mainly by exaggerating details, which is a fundamental building block of manga even today. When excavations were made in 1935, people found caricatures of animals, people and "grossly exaggerated phalli" on planks at the temple ceiling (Schodt, 1988, p. 28).

Another noteworthy example of early Japanese artisan production is the *Chōjū-giga* (The Animal Scrolls), which many consider a precursor of manga. It is one of the most famous *emakimono* (picture scroll) - scrolls which combine illustrations and text to create a narrative. The *Chōjū-giga* depicts brush-and-ink caricatures of various animals in a number of comical situations, meant to satirize the degenerate lifestyle of the upper class (Sharpe, 2008, p. 26) (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: extract of the *Chōjū-giga*

Scrolls were also frequently used to familiarize people with Buddhist principals. These scrolls were not playful and lighthearted in nature; they exhibited a more serious approach to the subject at hand. The *Gaki-zōshi* (Scroll of Hungry Ghosts) depicts the Buddhist philosophy of metempsychosis, meaning the transmigration of the soul after death. The *Jigoku-zōshi* (Scroll of Hell) depicts the realm of hell in a gruesome artistic style, intent on scaring people into avoiding damnation (Shinmura, 1991). These *jigoku-e* (hell pictures) also utilized the technique of caricatural exaggeration, not for comedic purposes, but for educational and instructive reasons. This can be associated with modern *jōhō manga* (informational manga), which uses exaggeration for the same purpose. During the Edo period (1603 – 1867, alt. Tokugawa period), “hell pictures” became highly popular, but unlike modern manga, which generally strives for mass-market appeal, *jigoku-e* were predominantly read by members of the upper class (Schodt, 1988, p.32). However, throughout the Edo period, the ancestors of modern manga began to reach a more widespread audience, thanks to woodblock-printing technology. This technique, although fairly crude, enabled cheaper production of art pieces for commoners. In Ōtsu, a town near Kyoto, people sold what they called *Ōtsu-e* (Ōtsu

pictures), usually depicting Buddhist imagery. At that time, the government was actively persecuting Christians, so travelers used to buy *Ōtsu-e* as a proof of their faith. Subsequently, these pictures became increasingly popular, and started to cultivate themes of secularism and satire (Shimizu, 1991, p. 23).

During the *Hōei period* (1704-1711), *Toba-e* (Toba pictures – paintings attributed to the Bishop Toba) steadily gained popularity with their humorous depictions of everyday life situations (Sharpe, 2008, p. 28). First published in Osaka, later in Edo, which would become the Tokyo we know today, they were an early form of a commercial publishing industry, which has left a lasting impact on today's manga. It was based on the woodblock-printing technology I mentioned before. It is also important to mention *Akahon* (red books), adaptations of classic Japanese legends and folklore like *Momotarō* (Peach Boy), *Shita-kiri Suzume* (Tongue-Cut Sparrow) and *Saru Kani Gassen* (Monkey-Crab Battle). Though initially intended for a younger audience, over time, *Akahon* evolved into picture books featuring mostly illustrations with a negligible amount of writing, targeted primarily at adults. *Toba-e* and *Akahon*, both hand-drawn and printed with woodblock-printing technology, became popular consumer goods, and would continue to permeate Japanese culture (Sharpe, 2008, p. 28).

It is important to make mention of both *kibyōshi* (yellow-jacket books) and *ukiyo-e* (pictures of the floating world), since they are believed to be direct progenitors of modern manga (Schodt, 1983). *Kibyōshi*, like the aforementioned *Akahon*, were illustrated narratives primarily created for children. Customarily sporting yellow covers, they approached traditional Japanese customs with a satirical slant, and were usually released in form of pictures with captions in succession to one another.

The most noteworthy example would be *Kinkin sensei eiga no yume* (Mr. Kinkin's Dream of Prosperity), created by Harumachi Koikawa (1744–1789) (Fig. 3). It featured a Man daydreaming about life within a rich, upper class family. He dreams of all the benefits and decadency life in that position would facilitate, but he ultimately is cast out by his imaginary homestay family (Shinmura, 1991, p. 701, 843).

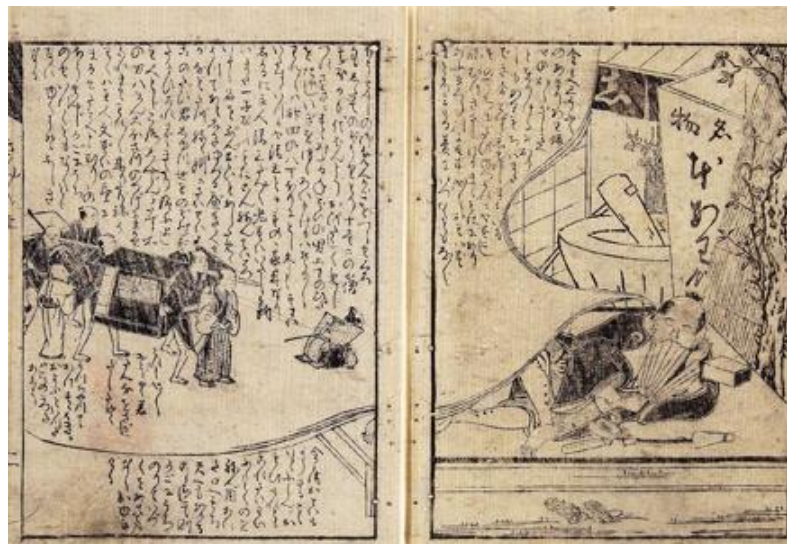


Fig. 3: A page from „Kinkin Sensei Eiga no Yume“

Ukiyo-e described a genre characterized by the predominant use of landscapes, historical motifs, as well as actors and sumo wrestlers that were popular at the time. Like many other works during the 1700s, the dissemination and subsequent popularity of *ukiyo-e* was stimulated thanks to woodblock printing technology (Sharpe, 2008, p. 28). However, in 1765, Harunobu Suzuki started using a multicolor woodblock printing technique, which would herald the start of the golden age of *ukiyo-e* color prints (Reischauer, 1990). It is unclear who actually invented the multicolor woodblock printing process, but it is fair to say that Harunobu popularized and perfected the technique.

Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) was famous for his high level of artisanship utilizing the *ukiyo-e* style. He was known for his exceedingly dynamic illustrations of nature, as well as animals, samurai and beauties. One of Hokusai's most notable works include *Furyū odoke hyakku* (One Hundred Elegantly



Fig. 4: *Furyū odoke hyakku*

Silly Verses), a series of woodprints featuring stylistically rendered characters (Fig. 4). They were depicted with elongated limbs, accentuating the dynamic nature of his illustrations and giving the reader a sense of flow. This expression of dynamicism can also be found in Hokusai's *Fugaku Sanjūrokkei* (The Thirty-six Sceneries of Mt. Fuji), a series of landscape prints (Sharpe, 2008, p. 29).



Fig. 5: *Kanagawa-oki nami ura*

If we take a look at *Kanagawa-oki nami ura* (The Great Wave off Kanagawa), the first, and presumably most famous painting in this collection (Fig. 5), we can see the sense of flow and movement characterizing the *ukiyo-e* style. This aesthetic had considerable influence on the visual language of Japanese art, and can be found even in modern manga, like in the popular series *One Piece*, where its

creator, Eiichiro Oda, clearly makes direct allusions to the iconic painting style of the 1700s (Fig.6).



Fig. 6: „One Piece“ Issue 910, page 9 (2018)

Katsushika Hokusai is also believed to be the first person to coin the term *manga*, as evidenced by *Hokusai manga*, a fifteen volume series consisting of thousands of images, created from 1814 to 1878 (Sharpe, 2008, p. 29). Despite Hokusai's use of the expression *manga*, his series does not reflect the contemporary understanding of the word, since the pictures featured were not intended to form a continuum to create a narrative.

Another considerable characteristic of early Japanese manga is their distinct relationship to sexuality. During the Edo Period, *shunga* (spring drawings) were a popular commodity (Sharpe, 2008, p. 29). They consisted of adult oriented illustrations highlighting the uninhibited approach to eroticism prevalent at the time. Lovers were predominantly depicted wearing clothes, since the Japanese did not see nudity as inherently sexual. Community baths were - and still are, albeit to a lesser degree - commonplace in Japanese culture ⁽¹⁴⁾, so people were accustomed to seeing other members of society naked in a non-sexual context.



Fig. 7: *Tako to ama*

Shunga, the *ukiyo-e* style woodblock paintings would feature a multitude of sexual fetishes, including but not limited to homosexuality, voyeurism, autoeroticism and bestiality. Perhaps the most renowned illustration exemplifying these tendencies is *Tako to ama* (The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife), featuring a female *ama* (pearl diver) sexually intertwined with two octopi (Fig. 7). This design is part of a *shunga* collection, drawn by none other than Katsushika Hokusai in 1814. These themes of fetishistic tendencies can still be found in contemporary adult oriented manga and anime (Ito, 1994, p. 81 - 95).

1853 was going to be a pivotal year for Japanese culture, and subsequently the visual customs practiced by its inhabitants. That year, Matthew C. Perry arrived in Japan to demand the opening of Japan's commercial harbors to the rest of the world (Sharpe, 2008, p. 29). Ever since 1636, Japan was understood to be a rather isolationist country, since the Tokugawa government banned travel overseas, and forbade virtually all interaction with foreign nations. Matthew Perry's demand would lay the foundation for the Westernization of Japan, since open borders meant cultural assets and influences from the Western world could finally be introduced to Japanese society (Sharpe, 2008, p. 29). This can be observed in the work by Charles Wirgman, a British journalist and cartoonist, who arrived in Japan in 1861 and established his own Magazine *Japan Punch* just one year later (Fig. 8). His illustrations frequently featured word bubbles, a visual custom adopted by various

Japanese artists at the time, which has since become the status quo in modern manga (Sharpe, 2008, p. 30).



Fig. 8: a page from 'Japan Punch'

2.2 Modern Manga

In 1887, a French painter named Georges Ferdinand Bigot started to produce a magazine called "Tobae", clearly referencing the *Toba-e* I mentioned earlier. Based in the foreign settlement of Yokohama, these magazines were satirical in nature, making fun of Japanese government and societal customs. Bigot structured his works in sequence to create a continuous narrative. Though the magazine's life span was short - only three years – it proved to be highly influential in what we came to understand as modern Japanese manga (Kawasaki, 1996, p. 80; Schodt, 1988, p. 40; Shinmura, 1991, p. 214; Shimizu, 1991, p. 82–87).

Manga has a history with being used for satirical purposes, evidenced by events occurring in the Meiji period (1868 – 1912). At that time, Shojirō Gotō, Taisuke Itagaki and Shimpei Etō formed one of the first modern political parties. They named it the Aikoku Kōtō, formed in 1874. This was also the time "manga journalism" took hold in Japanese society (Sharpe, 2008, p. 30-31). Engaging in political satire, it spread throughout Japanese magazines and newspapers. This platform was mainly used to push anti-government agenda by the Freedom

Movement and the People's Rights Movement. One notable example would be *Maru maru chimbun*, a satirical magazine published weekly by Fumio Nomura in 1877, which heavily criticized the Meiji government, the emperor, as well as the royal family. Because of this, Nomura was accused of violating *zanbōritsu* (Japanese slander laws) and *shimbunshi jōrei* (Japanese press laws). However, this only boosted the popularity and subsequently the sales of the magazine. Additionally, due to a number of technological innovations, like copperplate and zinc relief printing, photo engraving and lithography, magazines could be produced at an extremely low price. For those reasons, *Maru maru chimbun*, along with others, elevated manga journalism to a legitimate mass medium (Shimizu 1991, p. 53).

Since the opening of Japan's borders, cultural influences poured into the country and insinuated themselves into numerous aspects of Japanese culture, manga being one of them. In 1899, Rakuten Kitazawa (1876 - 1955) was hired to produce manga strips for the newspaper *Jiji shimpō* (Current events), after mainly drawing manga for *The Box of Curios*, an English-language magazine published weekly in Japan's foreign settlements. In 1905, Kitazawa created the first Japanese full-color manga magazine, called *Tokyo Pakku* (Tokyo Puck), which became an instant success. The name was an allusion to *Puck*, one of the first successful American satire magazines, created in the late nineteenth century. (Fig. 9) (McCarthy, 2014, p. 14 – 16)



Fig. 9: Typical cover of 'Puck' (left) and 'Tokyo Puck'

Around the same time, Ippei Okamoto (1886–1948) drew manga heavily influenced by Western cinema, since he was fascinated by *katsudō shashin* (moving pictures), the latest Western invention conquering Japanese culture. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, manga grew into an established medium in Japanese mass media, and artists like Okamoto and Kitazawa, among others, visited the United States, a land famous for comics and cartooning at the time. *The New World*, an American newspaper published by Joseph Pulitzer at the time, featured comic strips titled *The Yellow Kid*, which made Kitazawa realize that manga for children would be highly beneficial for newspaper subscriptions, so he decided to create a Japanese take on *The Yellow Kid* for the Sunday paper of *Jiji shimpō* (Sharpe, 2008, p. 32).

2.2.1 Warfare, Manga and Propaganda

During the Taishō Period in the early 1900s, Japan was continuing to become Westernized. The emergence of an erudite white-collar class, the overall increase of higher education, and urbanization were key factors during that time (Sharpe, 2008, p. 32). This period also marked the start of media regulation by the Japanese government in 1925. After the assassination of Prime Minister Tsuyoshi Inukai in



Fig. 10: Cover of 'Norakuro'

1932, the Japanese government also started repressing freedom of speech and thought, including the censorship of socialist, communist, and liberal sympathizers. On several occasions, mangaka were ordered to renounce their so-called "dangerous thoughts" (Sharpe, 2008, p. 32). The following years were indicative of the trend of rising militarism and nationalism. One popular mascot of the times could be found in *Norakuro* (Black Stray, 1931 - 1941), in which the protagonist, an anthropomorphized dog (inspired by the American icon Felix the Cat), joins the Japanese Imperial Army and achieves

greatness within it (Fig. 10). Another example reflecting Japanese expansionism can be found in *Bōken Dankichi* (Dankichi the Adventurer, 1933 - 1939), which

depicts a Japanese boy becoming the ruler of a Pacific island (Sharpe, 2008, p. 34).

1937 marked the escalation of Japanese totalitarian militarism with the start of the war with China. In consequence of the international outcry, the Government released a book to select Japanese officials, filled with anti-Japanese propaganda cartoons in order to show them what its adversaries really thought of them. In August 1940, the *Shin Nihon Mangaka Kyōkai* (New Japan Manga Artists' Association) was created. In October of the same year, they released their first journal, labelled *Manga*, filled with stories depicting the destruction of American and British forces. The journal would be considered a vital "current affairs magazine for the eyes" by the Japanese (Kawasaki, 1996, p. 129 – 130). One year later, in January of 1941, Hayao Miyazaki was born. He grew up during turbulent times, which unequivocally shaped his character and informed his peculiar fascination with technology and war. This would later be reflected in his art as well.

The situation only became worse, when Japan went to war with the United States, compelling the Japanese government to force artists to draw pro-war manga. Many artists were drafted and deployed in war zones, where they were forced to create "reports" for the Japanese public and propagandistic pamphlets for the locals. An integral part of Japanese propaganda at the time was the push for creation of "Original Manga for Promotion of Victory in the Sacred War" (Sharpe, 2008, p. 34). During this period, Japan also saw the emergence of a new manga genre called *zōshan manga* (increasing production comics), which was largely used by the Japanese government to increase and sustain the perpetual output of industrial workers. Etsurō Katō, who had previously created "left-wing manga" before the war, was now forced to support the Japanese government by means of publishing *Kinrōseinen ga egaita zōsan mangashū* (Collection of Zōshan Manga Drawn by Working Youth). Three years after the devastating atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the subsequent unconditional surrender, Etsurō Katō joined the Japanese Communist Party. During his time there, he decided to create manga delineating the current circumstances (Sharpe, 2008, p. 34-35).

After the war, the Japanese population was poor and demoralized, craving for food as well as entertainment. In the wake of this, several new manga magazines were established, including *Manga kurabu* (Manga Club), *VAN*, *Kodomo manga shimbun* (Children's Manga Newspaper) and *Kumanbati* (The Hornet), among others. Creators were gaining more freedom to process current affairs in a critical manner and satirize the government. There were still measures in place to prevent the ridicule of the general, but royal family members were frequently caricatured in manga like *Shinsō* (The Truth) and *Kumanbati* (Sharpe, 2008, p. 35).



Fig. 11: Osamu Tezuka

From 1950 onwards, Japan's industry received an upsurge due to high demand of Japanese goods from America due to the Korean War. By 1951, Japan's economy was nearly as healthy as prior to the war. During that time, children's and youth manga started to gain traction, with many classics being created at the time by artists like Osamu Tezuka (Fig. 11), Eiichi Fukui, and Shigeru Sugiura. Osamu Tezuka is considered one of the seminal individuals in the manga (and anime) industry. He is

also recognized as one of Hayao Miyazaki's key influences (Cavallaro 2006, p. 29). Tezuka was born in 1928, and dedicated himself to teaching peace and respect for life and humanity via manga, after experiencing the Second World War as a teenager. Influenced by a variety of media from abroad, he frequently employed cinematic techniques in his manga, such as cinematic camera angles, which subsequently would greatly influence upcoming mangaka. Story manga was flourishing as well, with popular American cartoons like *Popeye*, *Mickey Mouse*, *Donald Duck*, and *Superman* being translated for the Japanese market. Around this time, manga grew into a well-respected art form to be enjoyed by children and adults alike.

In 1957, a new category of manga saw the light of day, dubbed *gekiga* (drama pictures). This art form stands out against conventional manga through its focus on serious drama and highly realistic drawings. Mangaka like Yoshihiro Tatsumi and Takao Saitō coined the term, and were strong proponents of this recent trend,

appealing to junior and senior high school students, who were becoming too old for the children's manga popular at the time. One example of *gekiga* is *Ninja bugeichō* (Secret Martial Arts of the Ninja), a story dealing with social issues like stratification. The series was immensely popular with students and adults, since the story exhibited strong parallels to the tense situation with the United States at the time (Sharpe, 2008, p. 36).

2.2.2 The 1960s and Onwards

After 1956, the Japanese government declared the end of the postwar period. Subsequently, people started to become increasingly optimistic, and Japan's industry and economy continued to grow. The 1960s proved to be an immensely successful decade, with rapid growth of the gross domestic product and the hosting of the Olympic Games in 1964 (Ōtsuka, Eiji & Sasakibara, 2001; Reischauer, 1990). Around that time, several manga emerged, which were produced in a break from tradition, with one person writing the scenario, and another drawing the pages. This division of labor eventually led to manga being produced in the so-called "production system" (Sharpe, 2008, p. 38). This method of operation allowed for increased efficiency, enabling magazines to be published on a weekly basis.

Shōnen jampū (Boys' Jump), a magazine directed primarily towards boys and young male adults, was introduced in 1968 (Fig. 12). It was initially released bimonthly, but changed to a weekly format in the following year (Dahlberg-Dodd, 2018, p. 34). Numerous newcomers, like Gō Nagai and Hiroshi Motomiya, found their start with this magazine, which remains immensely popular



Fig. 12: cover of 'Shōnen jampū' issue no. 1 (1968)

to this day. Gō Nagai, a creator notorious for his impertinent and overtly sexualized stories, was criticized for his series *Harenchi gakuen* (Infamous School), which was featured among others in *Shōnen jampū*. It featured male students and teachers constantly trying to catch glimpses of naked bodies or girls' panties. Despite many protests by parents and women's associations throughout Japan (Ito, 2000; Schodt, 1988), *Shōnen jampū* continued to be one of the most popular magazines nationwide. In 2003, the magazine was introduced in the United States as well, and the December issue of 2004 saw record sales of over 6.530.000 copies (Sharpe, 2008, p. 38).

The apparent popularity of adult oriented content gave birth to numerous magazines aimed at adult audiences, not merely containing manga, but commentary, criticism and means for readers to submit their own works. This opened the gates for the creation of numerous magazines in the late 1960s, including *Manga panchi* (Manga Punch), *Manga akushon* (Manga Action), *Biggu komikku* (Big Comic), and *Purei komikku* (Play Comic). Many others followed, feeding into the manga and anime scene, which was now becoming increasingly interlinked and bigger than ever. Many manga series used the power of symbiotic marketing to cross-promote their brand with TV series and merchandise (Otsuka & Sasakibara, 2001; Schodt, 1988; Shimizu, 1991).

2.2.3 Diversification and Permeation of Culture

Appearing in the 1960s and truly blossoming in the early 1970s was a new genre of manga, called *shōjo manga* (girls' comics). This new subcategory dealt with stories about dreams and fantasies of female characters, and were often being supplemented with merchandise geared to a female audience, like stickers and paper dolls. At the time, girls "started hating ugly stuff, boys, and dirty, violent things" and collected "cute color pens, erasers, writing boards, folders, pencil cases, notebooks, etc." (Evers, 2001, p. 6). It is worth mentioning, that the emergence of *shōjo* is attributable to male mangaka. Early stories of the genre captured the imagination of numerous female readers, and by 1972, female *shōjo* artists started dominating the genre. An example of classic *shōjo* reading material would be *Berusaifu no bara* (The Rose of Versailles, 1972), a historical manga



Fig. 13: cover of 'Berusaiyu no bara' issue no. 1 (1968)

series by Riyoko Ikeda, dealing with the period leading up to the French revolution (Fig. 13). The story proved to be highly popular and was read by a multitude of women back in the day. Among others, historical figures like Marie Antoinette, her husband Louis XVI and Austria's Maria Theresa were brought to life with loving beauty.

By 1975, even Japanese men and the mass media took notice of the series, subsequently elevating it to a social phenomenon. The series even prompted the creation of a massively successful musical, and a live action movie filmed in Versailles, France (Sharpe, 2008, p. 41).

Shōjo manga later started to incorporate themes of male homosexuality. Girls fantasizing and engaging in sexual relationships with boys would frequently be substituted by homoerotic relationships between men. This subgenre is called *yaoi* (boys' love), a term coined by the otaku subculture in the 1970s (Sharpe, 2008, p. 42). "Otaku" is a Japanese term for individuals with obsessive interests, primarily anime and manga. In Western culture, it is mostly comparable to terms like "geek" or "nerd". Interestingly, the audience for *yaoi* was not gay men; rather it was written and read predominantly by girls and women. Despite the initial outcry from the – up until now – male dominated manga industry, who characterized this brand of story as a "violation" of manga, *yaoi* greatly stimulated the industry. It is also noteworthy that Japan now has a more tolerant attitude towards this issue. The depiction of homosexuality and aesthetically pleasing men is not foreign to Japanese culture. The all-male kabuki theater and the all-female Takarazuka theater, in which male actors frequently depict female characters and vice versa, has had numerous dedicated fans for a long time. There exist many openly gay actors, singers and other artists in the Japanese public sphere (Sharpe, 2008, p. 42).

Another trend started in the 1970s was *kyōyō manga* ("information manga", "expository manga", or "textbook manga"). These types of stories did not exhibit

any kind of narrative structure; the characters rather conveyed history or miscellaneous facts about food, liquor, and annual festivals by way of humorous illustrations and explanations. The United States' *Foucault for Beginners*, published by Lydia Alix Fillingham in 1993 would be a Western equivalent. *Kyōyō* manga would later be introduced to various Japanese universities and elementary schools in order to educate attendees on various topics. *Nihon keizai nyūmon* (Introduction to the Japanese economy) was an immensely popular educational manga, which was translated into English in 1988 and published by the University of California Press. After the publication of a French version in 1989, the success of this manga prompted an explosive growth of educational manga. *Kyōyō* manga would achieve such popularity, that even the Japanese Defense Ministry made use of this genre in 2004, by translating its annual defense white paper into easier digestible manga issues, in order to "enhance public understanding of Japan's defense needs" (Sharpe, 2008, p. 43).

The 1980s marked the true rise to popularity and legitimacy of manga in Japanese culture. Sales were increasing dramatically, with *Shōnen jampū* selling over 2.5 million copies in 1982, and later over 5 million copies in 1988 (Shimizu 1991, p. 38 - 39). Due to the current "bubble economy" and economic expansion, over 85 percent of Japan's population considered themselves middle class citizens, constituting a populous eager to buy entertainment (Sharpe, 2008, p. 43). Multitudes of manga magazines for adult audiences were being published, since manga was becoming synonymous with high earnings. The most recent genre of manga introduced to the scene were *Redikomi* or *Josei* (Ladies' Comics), consisting of stories targeted towards adult women. In 1986, the magazines *VAL* and *FEEL* were beginning to be published, containing explicit nudity. The uninhibited sexual nature of these comics became emblematic of early *Josei*. The popularity of the genre prompted the creation of several adult stories, dealing with themes of love, romance, sex and lust, but also more serious social and psychological issues like domestic violence, divorce, abortion, female diseases, and relations with parents-in-law. However, *Josei* released by major publishers typically eschewed explicit nudity and dark topics, rather focusing on sedate topics like the everyday life of college students, office workers and housewives. Many of these stories would also be adapted into television series by the late 1990s.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Japanese Ministry of Education issued an award for manga, elevating it to an officially acknowledged artistic and cultural resource of Japan. The first award was given to Osamu Tezuka, one year after his death in 1989 (Sharpe, 2008, p. 44). By the end of the same decade, *manga kissa* (manga cafés) became a popular commodity throughout Japan. Customers could pay an hourly fee to read a variety of manga magazines in a quiet, comfortable environment. By 1999, these establishments were rapidly displacing karaoke bars, and were approaching approximately 300 branches in Tokyo alone. There exist different types of *manga kissa*; establishments serving food and beverages and offering manga reading spaces for 60 to 90 minutes, and places serving no food, only charging hourly fees for reading manga. In the latter, customers are encouraged to bring their own food. *Manga kissa* are usually open 24 hours, with bigger stores having access to as many as thirty thousand copies of manga (Sharpe, 2008, p. 45-46).

Manga became a considerable part of Japan's cultural export, beginning to spread to several Western countries like France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and of course, the United States. The first independent Japanese manga corner was featured at the international book fair in Frankfurt, Germany, in 2002, and many video stores and bookstores started featuring a manga section. In Japan, manga continues to be a profitable and ubiquitous industry, and constitutes one of the most prevalent forms of popular culture. In 2004, there were reported to be 297 different manga magazines published, with a total of approximately 1.134.000.000 copies sold. In return, this increased cultural value, with the first school of cartoon and comic art being approved by the Japanese Education Ministry in 2000 (Sharpe, 2008, p. 46).

Manga proves to be a powerful medium of communication in Japanese culture, having the power to instruct, socialize, and provide political and social commentary. It is a commercial engine capable of creating economic and cultural impact, like inciting fads and inspiring trends like the obsession with tennis, likely created by popular manga series such as *Tennis no Ouji-sama* (Prince of Tennis, 1999 – 2008), *Baby Steps* (2007 – 2017), and *Sofuteni* (Soft Tennis, 2008 – 2012), all of which later received anime adaptations as well. Even criminals were being “inspired” by manga. An ex-employee of a loan company was being arrested for

extortion in 1999, stating that he got his ideas from reading the manga *Minami no teiō* (The King of Minami), a series following a business man affiliated with numerous Yakuza gangs in Osaka (Ito, 2000). The manga is ongoing to this day, with issue number 150 having been published on November 09, 2018 (Fig 14).



Fig. 14: cover of 'Minami no teiō' issue no. 150 (2018)

Furthermore, manga is closely linked to anime via commercial synergy. Many television programs and movies are being adapted from existing popular manga series, and are then exported to Western audiences. You might be familiar with the *Pokémon* franchise, whose anime adaptation, while not based on a manga but a video game, helped elevate it to a social phenomenon in 1999. Popularity was (and remains) extremely high, thus parents' were becoming increasingly concerned, since their children were addicted to the games, anime, movies and trading cards. In the following years, manga have also been the basis for the creation of many different types of media, such as soap operas, TV dramas and theater. Network executives are eager to pick up rights to popular manga series, since their adaption constitutes almost guaranteed financial success.

As technology advances, manga is becoming more ubiquitous than ever. Manga can be read digitally on PC, phones or tablets, giving the populous access to it anywhere, at any time. Cultural significance in the West is rising, with an increasing

number of websites offering translations of almost any series published in Japan. When there is no official translation being offered, or Western publishers are slow to keep up with Japanese release schedules, fans take it into their own hands by releasing unofficial fan-translations on websites of questionable legality. As the generation growing up with manga in the 1970s and 1980s grow older, we will likely see the emergence of new manga genres targeted to an even older audience. Manga most likely will remain a juggernaut of Japanese popular culture for the foreseeable future.

2.3 Anime

“Anime” (jap. アニメ) is a Japanese colloquialism derived from shortening the word “animation.” In Japan, the term is predominantly used for describing anything animated; just as in Western countries the word “cartoon” is virtually synonymous with animated works of any type. In Western circles, the term “anime” has been appropriated to refer to principally Japanese animation; furthermore, calling oneself an “anime fan” in the west typically implicates being a fan of not only Japanese animation, but the surrounding Japanese culture as well.

If adult Westerners not familiar with anime would be confronted with a cross section of Japanese animated media, they would register a pervasive difference to Western customs. The differences in dramatic structure, the general lack of musicals and anthropomorphized animal characters, the prevalent absence of prototypical slapstick oriented humor, as well as many other differences might frighten away people who are primarily familiarized with Western animation. If you would watch Japanese works like *Kaubōi bappu tenkū no tobira* (Cowboy Bebop - Knockin' on Heaven's Door, 2001), *Metoroporisu* (Metropolis, 2001), *Tokyo goddofāzāsu* (Tokyo Godfathers, 2003), *Kōkaku kidōtai* (Ghost in the Shell, 1995) or *Kidō keisatsu Patlabor* (Patlabor, 1989), you would get a drastically different experience than with contemporary Western animation. There would be no songs, no dance numbers or silly, cartoony antics, and no action without its fair share of graphic violence.

2.3.1 Genesis

How and why did all this start? The answer can be found when looking at the Meiji period, which extended from 1868 to 1912. During this time, an abundance of technical, as well as artistic knowledge was shared between Japanese, European,



Fig. 15: 'Imokawa Mukuzo genkanban no maki' (1917)

and American cultures. It was a time of change and diversification for a multitude of artistic media; the emergence of anime was merely a symptom of the times. The earliest recorded animated work was *Imokawa Mukuzo genkanban no maki* (Mukuzo Imokawa, the Doorman), released by Oten Shimokawa in 1917 (Fig. 15) (Patten, 2004, 369 – 370). At the time, animated works were merely shown in cinemas as addition to conventional feature films. This trend would not be broken until 1945, when the first Japanese animated feature, *Momotaro umi no shinpei* (Momotaro's Divine Sea Warriors) was released in Japanese cinemas (Fig. 16). The films inception was deeply entrenched in propagandistic purposes. With the



Fig. 16: 'Momotaro umi no shinpei' (1945)

conclusion of World War II, the horrors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the beginning of the post war period, the Japanese were in desperate need for uplifting distractions. Consequently, the Kaigun-shō (Japanese Naval Ministry) ordered Mitsuyo Seo to create a propaganda film, primarily to lift the spirits of the Japanese youth. Prior to this, the Japanese government did not consider animation to be an effective medium for propagandistic purposes (Hagihara, 1979).

Throughout the postwar period, Japanese society was struggling hard to recuperate itself, which naturally effected the Japanese film and animation industry as well. However, in the 1950s, with the recession of internal militaristic conservative influences, and the withdrawal of U.S. occupation forces, Japanese creative culture underwent a formidable upsurge, which, in conjunction with Japan's emergence as exporter of culture, would ultimately make Japan world famous for their entertainment culture (Sharpe, 2008, p. 49-50).

In 1958, the Toei Doga Company released Japan's second animated feature, *Hakujaden* (Panda and the Magic Serpent) (Fig. 17), which would prove to be highly inspirational for numerous Japanese adolescents, including Hayao Miyazaki (more on that chapter 3.1). The release of the movie was also demonstrating that domestically produced animated features were a sustainable commercial product. Prior to the release of *Hakujaden*, the vast majority of animated features shown in Japanese cinemas were produced by the United States and other foreign countries (Sharpe, 2008, p. 50).



Fig. 15: poster for 'Hakujaden' (1958)

2.3.2 The 1960s and Onwards

Arguably, the greatest influence on the production of anime was the introduction of television. Thanks to the explosive dissemination of this new medium, creatives throughout Japan were presented with a new opportunity to market their animations. In 1962, the first series made specifically for television, named *Otogi manga karendā* (Otogi Manga Calendar) was released. The series was composed of 312 episodes, each with a three-minute runtime, consisting of educational clips discussing Japanese history.

1963 marks the release of several half-hour television shows, establishing the now industry-standard format for anime in Japanese television. Some of the most popular and influential series released that year include *Tetsujin 28-gō* (Gigantor), *Eitoman* (8 Man), and *Tetsuwan Atom* (Astro Boy) (Fig. 18). The cultural significance of these shows is not only attributable to their popularity with Japanese audiences, but is also thanks to their positive reception in Western culture. They constitute some of the first Japanese-produced animations broadcast in the United States and parts of Europe (Sharpe, 2008, p. 50).



Fig. 16: *Tetsujin 28-gō*, *Eitoman*, *Tetsuwan Atom* (f.l.t.r.)

This period also marks the establishment of genres and themes in Japanese animation, many of which are still popular to this day. One major genre, as evidenced by the popularity of the aforementioned series, was science fiction. As opposed to live-action movies, where the use of sophisticated and expensive sets and special effects are needed, animation allows the creator to depict his fantasies without considerable increase in production cost. Another genre established in the 1960s, which would become a hallmark of Japanese animation, is called the “mecha” (メカ *meka*) genre, which can be considered a sub-genre of the quite broad science fiction genre. The “Giant Robot” genre is considered a subsection

of the mecha genre. Works of this particular genre gave children at the time a sense of overwhelming power, experienced vicariously through the characters on screen. Robots would either be controlled remotely, like in *Tetsujin 28-gō*, or piloted from within like *Majingā Zetto* (Mazinger Z, 1972). It could be argued that the great interest in the science fiction and mecha genre displayed by the Japanese served as some sort of escapism in light of the postwar era. The feeling of helplessness and resignation, bred by the atrocities of the Second World War, would be replaced by a feeling of agency, fantastic power and energizing positivity. The science fiction genre also addressed themes of humanness and civil rights through the use of artificial intelligence, a trend now more prevalent than ever, but already explored by *Astro Boy* in the 1960s. Osamu Tezuka, the creator of *Astro boy*, used the issue of “robot rights” as analogy for the civil rights conflicts in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s. Another popular staple of anime today is the *mahō shōjo* (magical girl) genre, which was launched in 1966 with the introduction of *Mahōtsukai Sarī* (Sally the Witch) (Fig. 19). Arguably the most popular incarnation of the *mahō shōjo* genre would later be *Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon* (Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon), which was adapted for television in 1992.



Fig. 17: *Mahōtsukai Sarī* (1966)

2.3.3 A Change of Pace

In the 1970s, the giant robot genre proliferated thanks to toy manufacturers' increased focus on marketing cheap robot toys. Therefore, the majority of anime created around that time served as vehicles to advertise their designs. This method of marketing was not a Japanese novelty; American companies used the practice as well, with the popular show *Transformers* being the most noteworthy example.

A failure to generate sufficient revenue via toy sales could also mean the cancelation of a TV series, as happened with the TV series *Kidō senshi Gandamu* (Mobile Suit Gundam) (Tomino, 2004, p. 8).

As Japan's target demographic for animated television series slowly matured, the landscape of anime changed accordingly. In addition to grade school kids, which, up to this point, constituted the majority of viewers, companies began to target middle school students with increasingly mature content. One of the noteworthy individuals indicative of this trend was Gō Nagai, who frequently injected erotic nuances into his manga (see chapter 2.2.2). He also ridiculed social institutions and furnished his adventure stories with a considerable amount of violence. To the displeasure of many parents, he was pushing the boundaries on what could still be considered "kids entertainment". However, the backlash did not stop him from becoming one of many successful creators in the 1970s. His most successful manga series, *Debiruman* (Devilman) and *Majingā Zetto* (Mazinger Z), were huge successes when they were adapted to television in 1972 (Sharpe, 2008, p. 52).

Later that decade, in 1979, the highly influential series *Kidō senshi Gandamu* (Mobile Suit Gundam) was released (Fig. 20). It played a central role in transforming the popular "giant robot" sub-genre into the "real robot" (リアルロボット *riaru robotto*) genre. Whereas the earlier "giant robot" sub-genre mainly focused on robots with fantastical and mythical superpowers, the real robot sub-genre rather focused on a realistic, albeit futuristic, portrayal of humanoid robots. They were often mass-produced machines used in wars on a massive scale. Furthermore, the real robot sub-genre also tends to discuss more mature themes than its ancestor, including complex characters having moral conflicts, as well as personal problems.



Fig. 18: *Kidō senshi Gandamu* (1979)

Mobile Suit Gundam dropped the light-hearted and uplifting nature of its predecessors in order to tell a complex and acutely political narrative, in which civilians get involved in a war between the Earth Federation and space colonies. Initially, the series was not received well, and low sales of the accompanying line of toys nearly prompted the series' cancellation. However, when rebroadcasted at a later time, viewership was quite high. It turned out that the series' sponsor marketed the show to the wrong demographic. The believed target demographic of young children turned out to consist primarily of late teens and young adults in their early twenties, who were too old for cheap plastic toys. They were, however, willing to buy highly detailed model kits, which could be sold at a high price. This proved that marketing to late teens and young adults could be extremely profitable, changing the approach in televised marketing via anime as a result (Tomino, 2004, p. 8).

There was also a decrease in fantastical science fiction tales in the 1970s, making way for more down to earth stories. *Ashita no Jō* (Tomorrow's Joe, 1970), now a cult classic in Japanese pop culture, was the story of a broken and empty young man, who becomes a successful boxer, thus growing into a better man (Fig. 21). It is a gritty story, which does not shy away from



Fig. 19: *Ashita no Jō* (1970)

portraying its protagonist as self-centered and cruel at the beginning. Depicting the highs and lows of the protagonist in sometimes painful intensity, *Ashita no Jō* is emblematic of the direction anime was going at the time. Another noteworthy example would be *Lupin III*, which was produced as a television show in 1971. It was adapted from an adult oriented manga series created by an artist with the peculiar pseudonym *Monkey Punch* (a.k.a. Kazuhiko Katō). In 1979, Hayao Miyazaki would direct a *Lupin III* feature film, which I will further elaborate on in chapter 3.2.

The last shift in Japanese anime culture occurring in the late 1970s I want to mention is the increased significance of music. Earlier, anime music tended to

consist of either 45-inch records with just two songs from a particular show, or long play records with music from a multitude of shows. Over time, this custom began to change, as companies began to publicize symphonic arrangements of whole soundtracks. This proved to be a successful strategy, prompting studios to further emphasize well-crafted and diverse soundtracks. Eventually, the trend of including a considerable amount of good music became standard practice in anime production. Some television shows were packed with such a high quantity of tunes and songs, that many of them would only occur once during the series (Sharpe, 2008, p. 52).

2.3.4 Coming of Age

As the audiences for anime continued to grow older, so did the industry itself. In the 1980s, continual marketing towards the high school and college student demographic resulted in a “coming of age” for the industry. An increasing amount of people growing up watching anime were reaching adulthood, thus being able to actively shape the creative output. Furthermore, the market had grown to a size where it became reasonable to establish small, independent studios to produce works for television. Although the medium was coming of age slower than its audience was, by the 1990s, production of adult oriented shows was common practice. There is also the fact that an increasing amount of adult oriented manga were being adapted into anime series, which was comparatively easy to do, since they were basically pre-written storyboards. It was also a financial risk to market an original idea that might not attract the viewership needed, as opposed to adapting a pre-existing franchise with a guaranteed audience.

This era marks the divergence from Western (i.e. American) animation, which primarily remained targeted to kids. There are, of course, exceptions to the rule with shows like *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy*, and similar situation comedies targeted at adults, but the majority of Western animation refrains from targeting anything but children, even to this day (Sharpe, 2008, p. 53).

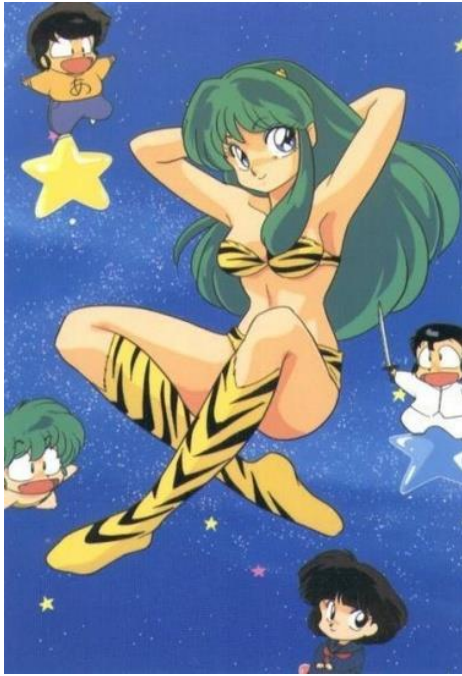


Fig. 20: Lum - 'Urusei Yatsura' (1981)

As new people entered the workforce, the anime landscape underwent further diversification. Manga adaptations like *Urusei Yatsura* (Those Obnoxious Aliens, 1981) and *Mezon ikkoku* (Ikkoku House, 1986) helped Rumiko Takahashi to become one of the most affluent mangaka at the time. *Urusei Yatsura* also provided the anime fandom with its first pinup girl. Its main character, Lum, an extraterrestrial princess, who usually wore a tiger-striped bikini would become an iconic figure in the anime scene (Fig. 22). Other noteworthy examples of formative works include *Kimagure orenji rōdo* (Kimagure Orange Road, 1987), a romantic

comedy with supernatural elements dealing with a love triangle between three teenagers, and *Shiteii huntā* (City Hunter, 1987), a story about an insanely competent hitman who would turn into a dimwitted debaucher in the presence of women.

In 1984, Hayao Miyazaki released his second feature film, and original idea written and directed by himself, called *Kaze no tani no Nausicaä* (Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind) (Fig. 23). In addition to breathtaking visuals and animation rich in detail, *Nausicaä* also tackled issues of war, human dignity and environmental ethics. Like most of his works, it was a huge success, and received praise from critics across the board. It was around this time, that Miyazaki would establish himself as critically acclaimed director and screenwriter.

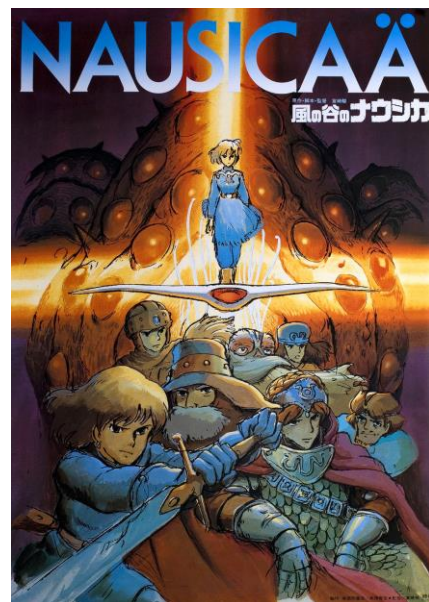


Fig. 21: Poster for 'Kaze no tani no Nausicaä' (1984)

Arguably the most significant development in the anime scene of the 1980s was the introduction of the OVA (Original Video Animation). The term refers to straight-to-video anime, which was created specifically to be released on home video cassettes. With the continuous progression of technology, VCRs were becoming an ordinary household item in an increased number of homes, paving the way for the concept of OVAs (Sharpe, 2008, p. 54). *Darosu* (Battle for Moon Station Dallos), was the first such anime released in 1983 (*Fig. 24*). Due to the lack of

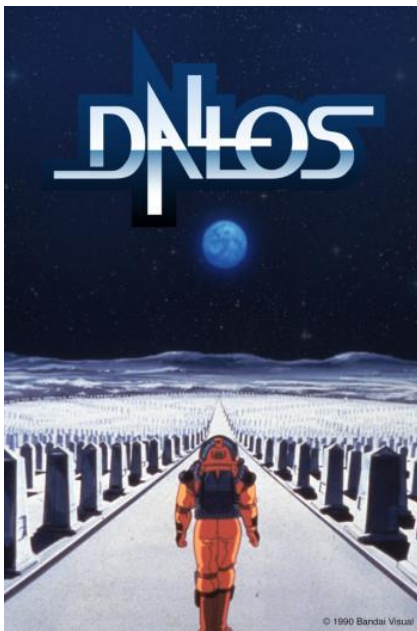


Fig. 22: Darosu (1983)

restrictions enforced by television networks, OVAs could break from the conventions of conventional marketing and appeal to specialized markets. Some of the works produced reached a massive level of popularity, prompting studios to adapt them into full-length television series. Over time, this turned into the practice of studios testing new concepts and innovative ideas, without having to take the risk of licensing a full television series with a network. A market for erotic anime was also facilitated by the popularization of direct-to-video releases, covering everything from works with tame and tasteful nudity, to material with an abundance of explicit vulgarities.

At the tail end of the 1980s, two movies were released to Japanese audiences, which absolutely have to be mentioned, due to their formative nature. The first one being *Akira* (1988), created and directed by Katsuhiro Ōtomo, the other one being *Oritsu uchūgun oneamisu no tsubasa* (Royal Space Force – Wings of Honneamise, 1987) (*Fig. 25*). Both films displayed an insane amount of technical prowess and visual complexity, nearly unheard of at the time. The release of these films raised the bar for studios throughout the industry, challenging them to prove themselves in an increasingly competitive market. *Akira* and *Oritsu uchūgun oneamisu no tsubasa* would go down in history as two of the most influential anime movies ever created. It is also noteworthy that the studio responsible for the creation of *Oritsu* accomplished this despite their previous lack of experience in

working within the commercial industry. The young team of animators managed to successfully convince the toy manufacturing giant Bandai to sponsor their endeavor, enabling them to produce the film without major financial concerns. In just a few years, their recently renamed company, Gainax, grew into a prominent player in the anime industry, as well as establishing itself in the video game and toy markets (Sharpe, 2008, p. 54-55).



Fig. 23: *Akira* (left), *Oritsu uchūgun oneamisu no tsubasa* (right)

2.3.5 Modern Times

The beginning of the 1990s marks the collapse of the Japanese economy, caused by an economic bubble from 1986 to 1991, in which real estate and stock market prices were inflated massively. After the bubble burst in 1992, the Japanese saw a considerable decline in disposable income, driving them increasingly to television and video, as they were prospecting for cheaper entertainment options. (Saxonhouse, 2004; Sharpe, 2008, p. 55)

Meanwhile, anime continued to mature with more titles being produced for older audiences as well as working men and women. Studio Gainax played a central role during that time, with works like *Fushigi no umi no Nadia* (Nadia, The Secret of Blue Water, 1990), a series based on Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the*

Sea, and *Otaku no bideo* (Otaku no Video, 1991), a two-part, mockumentary style OVA, which many now consider to be the “Bible of Otaku” ⁽¹⁵⁾. It is filled to the brim with references to virtually any noteworthy anime from the 1980s and earlier, and occasionally ridicules Gainax itself.



Fig. 24: *Shinseiki Evangerion* (1995)

Perhaps the most influential and critically acclaimed television series of the 1990s was *Shinseiki Evangerion* (Neon Genesis Evangelion), produced by Gainax in 1995 (Fig. 26). It was a mecha show with a complex story, which also broached the subject of psychological horror with deeply flawed and multilayered characters. Each episode would add to the multifarious story with information about the characters' past and new threats to deal with. The show was a massive financial and critical success even before its conclusion with the 26th episode in 1996. Laserdisc and DVD sales were incredibly high, even

lasting well over a decade. Gainax is able to successfully license *Evangelion* merchandise to this day, based on the cult following alone (Takeda, 2005, p. 164 – 166). The landscape of anime would change as well, with *Evangelion* opening the floodgates for original produced television series. Before 1995, most original anime, as well as niche productions, were limited to OVAs, with television being reserved for manga adaptations and long form content with much broader appeal. The success of *Evangelion*, however, gave more studios the confidence to market their original ideas for television as well, even though they held potentially less broad appeal.

The first signal of this trend could be found later that same year in *Kidou Senkan Nadesico* (Martial Successor Nadesico), a mecha parody show, which aims to deconstruct the tropes of old super robot shows, as well as otaku-oriented media

in general. In 1997 followed *Shoujo Kakumei Utena* (Revolutionary Girl Utena), which genuinely feels like the answer to *Evangelion*, but in the genre of magical girl shows instead. Its creator, Kunihiro Ikuhara, was friends with *Evangelion*'s creator Hideaki Anno (Fig. 27). The two of them had previously worked on episodes of *Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon* (Sailor Moon, 1992).



Fig. 25: Kunihiro Ikuhara (left) and Hideaki Anno (right)

With the turn of the millennium, the production process of anime underwent a substantial change, as the industry gradually turned its back on analogously prepared drawings in favor of digitally produced ones (Sharpe, 2008, p. 58). Previously, hand-drawn animation was primarily produced with plastic sheets called “cels”. For simple movements of a static object, they might just be moved frame-by-frame against a background. When dealing with dialogue, animators would cut costs by only animating the necessary parts, such as mouth movements. Of course, more effort would be put into certain parts of a show, mostly action and fight scenes, but due to the competitive scene, tight schedules and budgets, animators would often try to compensate with drastically reducing fidelity. All of the works being praised for their outstanding animation quality I cited earlier, were certainly exceptions to the rule. Most anime produced for television was still comparatively low fidelity, only occasionally protruding with more technically involved scenes. This may very well be the reason anime has earned its reputation for looking “bad” in general, when observed by non-fans from the west. The argument “it’s completely static, only the mouth moves” was a pervasive sentiment often repeated by Western observers, which was indeed a valid criticism to make, for that matter. The bulk of what average Western consumers would get to see on TV consisted of shows licensed by Western networks, who predominantly bought the rights to kids’ anime and “safe” works with broad appeal and guaranteed audiences. Works with high technical fidelity would generally be found in OVAs and feature films with a high budget. However, those works would rarely find its way to the average Western consumer not actively seeking out Japanese animation.



Fig. 26: Scene from 'Last Exile' (2003)
3D vehicle, 2D characters

With the advancement of technology, studios also increasingly used 3D-techniques to further increase the visual complexity of their shows without significantly increasing labor intensity. They would usually combine 2D techniques with 3D elements, in order to keep the intrusiveness of CG to a minimum, and stay true to the familiarity of traditional animation techniques. Elements like vehicles or scenery would be rendered in 3D, while the characters remained 2D (Fig. 28).

Creating moving landscapes and turning vehicles via traditional methods would be insanely time consuming, so studios sidestepped the issue by implementing CG renderings. Some works worth mentioning which utilize such techniques are *Last Exile* (2003), *Mahō tsukai ni taisetsu na koto* (Someday's Dreamers, 2003), *Kōkaku kidōtai inosensu* (Ghost in the Shell 2 Innocence, 2004), and *Kōkaku kidōtai Stand Alone Complex* (Ghost in the Shell Stand Alone Complex 1st and 2nd GIG, 2002, 2004) (Fig. 29).



Fig. 29: Scene from 'Kōkaku kidōtai Stand Alone Complex' (2004)
Notice the combination of CG (robot outside the car) and traditional animation (character behind the wheel)

Some studios would even make the leap to full CG anime, where even the characters are rendered in 3D. Noteworthy examples include *Berserk* (2016), *Sidonia no Kishi* (Knights of Sidonia, 2014), *Sanzoku no Musume Ronja* (Ronja Røvardotter, 2014) and *Houseki no Kuni* (Land of the Lustrous, 2017) (Fig. 30). This is



Fig. 27: *Houseki no Kuni* (2017)

generally a divisive topic within the anime community, where announcements of CG shows are met with a harsh, vocal negative reaction by a sizable portion of fans online. Just one look at YouTube comments for announcement trailers of CG shows make it clear that a considerable portion of the audience generally prefers the traditional aesthetic of 2D anime ⁽¹⁶⁾. This could be attributed to the fact that CG anime usually try to mimic the traditional look and feel of its 2D predecessors. 3D established its own visual language and style in mediums like Western animation and video games, but 2D anime already possesses a distinct look and feel, which 3D shows simply try to emulate. They do, however, fail to achieve this with perfect accuracy. Slight discrepancies in framerate, camera movement, line thickness and texturing create an uncanny valley effect, which is off-putting to the average anime fan, who is well accustomed to the visual customs of 2D anime.



Fig. 31: *Chihiro no kamikakushi* (2001)

Today, the anime market is growing swiftly, increasingly gaining international recognition. One feature film can be cited as a catalyst for this development - *Chihiro no kamikakushi* (Spirited Away, 2001), created by Hayao Miyazaki (Fig. 31). The film gained international recognition and praise when it won the Golden Bear Award at Berlin Film Festival 2002. One year later the film even managed to win an Oscar for Best Animated Feature Film. In 2004, however, Satoshi Kon's animated features *Sennen joyū* (2001) and *Tokyo Godfathers* (2003), both aimed at an adult, sophisticated movie going

crowd, were not approved for the Best Animated Feature category (Sharpe, 2008, p. 59). The success of these films was stifled by a limited release in the United States, indicating the prevailing Western perception of animation merely being a children's medium.

However, anime is growing rapidly all over the world, with the proliferation of online streaming platforms dedicated specifically to anime, like Crunchyroll. Netflix is increasingly licensing anime productions as well. The mere amount of shows released today is higher than ever, and there is no indication of slowdown.

3 Hayao Miyazaki

Although comprised of many hard working individuals demonstrating momentous contributions to the works produced, Studio Ghibli's creations are still very much the brainchild of Hayao Miyazaki himself. He constitutes a major creative force, thus, the visual language and themes of his movies can be dereferenced to his upbringing and his beliefs. Therefore, it is essential to particularize how he became the man he is today.

3.1 Early Life

Hayao Miyazaki was born on January 5th 1941, in the Bunkyo-ho district of Tokyo. At the time, his father, Katsuji Miyazaki, was a manager at a factory producing components for Japanese combat aircrafts that were deployed in World War II. Miyazaki (1996, p. 45) states that ever since he was a child, he had a tremendous fascination with military vehicles, including military planes, warships and tanks. He proceeds to describe the inner workings and intricacies of the machines in loving detail, illustrating the influence this particular part of his childhood had on his movies. Miyazaki's Mother posed a deep influence on him as well.

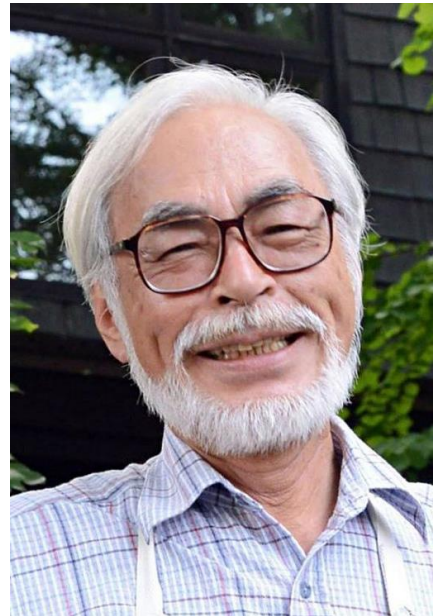


Fig. 32: Hayao Miyazaki

Her personality informed the strong, resourceful and emotional female protagonists his movies are so famous for. Furthermore, during his school years, Miyazaki's mother was diagnosed with spinal tuberculosis, forcing her to spend over two years in a hospital. This experience was patently formative for Miyazaki, as evidenced by the portrayal of a suspiciously similar situation in his 1988 movie *Tonari no Totoro*. This event also encouraged Miyazaki to start assuming more responsibilities at home. Even much later in his life, as a director at Studio Ghibli, he would diligently prepare meals for his coworkers, when working hours became

exceedingly brutal, due to tight production schedules (Cavallaro 2006, p. 29). Miyazaki also showed an attraction to floods, which was the inspiration for the scenario of one of his early works, *Panda Kopanda: Amerfuri circus no maki* (Panda! Go, Panda! Rainy-Day Circus, 1973) (Miyazaki, 1996, p. 65). This particular affinity would later influence his 2008 movie *Gake no Ue no Ponyo*.

Throughout his youth, Miyazaki was one of many teenagers influenced by Osamu Tezuka, thus considering pursuing a career as a comic book artist. Tezuka is considered one of the most influential individuals for Japan's postwar youth, inspiring an entire generation to pursue a creative career. Likewise, he fundamentally shaped the visual language for years to come. His first major success, *Shin Takarajima* (New Treasure Island) was the starting point for his career, inciting approaches by a number of Tokyo publishers. From 1947 onwards, the manga being published had such impact on young artists at the time, that many began to emulate and draw inspiration from his style. Some of the most noteworthy characters created by Osamu Tezuka include *Tetsuwan Atom* (Astro Boy), *Ribon Ni Kishi* (Princess Knight), and *Jungle Emperor Leo* (Kimba the White Lion), which was most likely used as inspiration by Disney to create *The Lion King* (1994). Though Disney's legal department to this day claims any similarities to *Jungle Emperor Leo* being present in *The Lion King* are merely coincidence, the assertion remains questionable. (Cavallaro 2006, p. 30). Miyazaki was so creatively dependent on Tezuka's oeuvre, that only his hiring as animator at Toei Animation Studios in 1963 would segregate his artistic identity from Tezuka's.

Miyazaki's love for animation was kindled by the aforementioned *Hakujaden* (Legend of the White Serpent, 1958), Japan's first colored theatrical release. He was so infatuated with the movie's heroine, *Bai-Niang*, that he actually thought of her as his girlfriend at the time, and went to see the movie multiple times. It was *Hakujaden*, which instilled in Miyazaki his unrelenting desire to produce movies with children as focal point. Before, Miyazaki was primarily focused on *gekiga*, darker story-oriented manga, but after seeing this movie, he became doubtful of his direction as an artist, and began to focus on kid-oriented entertainment instead. This tendency can be found throughout most of his work at Studio Ghibli.

“When I saw Hakujiaden, it was as if the scales fell from my eyes; I realized that I should depict the honesty and goodness of children in my work. [...] With that as my starting point, I have spent the last twenty years trying to do this. The key to my work is to create what I wanted to see when I was in the third grade, when I was waiting eagerly for the next Disney or Soviet animated movie.”

[Miyazaki, 1996, p. 50]

However, Miyazaki was not merely influenced by Japanese media; his work was informed by influences from a many different parts of the earth. Others include Winsor McCay, an American cartoonist and animator known for works like *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, *Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend*, as well as *Gertie the Dinosaur*, the first successful attempt at creating an animated character in 1914; the American animator Max Fleischer, known for his seminal character of *Betty Boop*,



Fig. 33: La Bergère et le Ramoneur (left), Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro (right)

who first appeared in 1930; and Paul Grimault, a French director who was responsible for *La Bergère et le Ramoneur* (The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep, 1952), a movie which demonstrated to Miyazaki how an animated production can be made with an adult audience in mind. The movie also influenced the architectural style of the castle in his film *Lupin III: The Castle*

of Cagliostro (Fig. 33). Miyazaki's list of influences continues; others include the Russian animated feature *Snezhnaya Koroleva* (Snow Queen, 1957, directed by Lev Atamanov), Frédéric Back, a Canadian illustrator and animator, and Jean Giono, whose film *The Man Who Planted Trees* (1954) was partly responsible for Miyazaki's affinity of including nature and landscapes in his works. We can also mention the Russian animator Yuri Norstein, responsible for the movie *Tale of Tales* (1979); Jonathan Swift, an Anglo-Irish writer and satirist, and Maurice

Leblanc, a French novelist and writer of short stories. Miyazaki even admits to liking early Disney shorts like Silly Symphonies (1934), despite his adamant rejection of the approach to filmmaking Disney would pursue for its later works. (Cavallaro 2006, p. 30-31)

This demonstrates that Miyazaki's style and general approach to making movies is rooted in influences from a multitude of different places, each with their own visual style and identity. Miyazaki's style constitutes an amalgamation of multicultural imprints, which is, in part, what makes his movies so incomparable to others working in the same field.

3.2 Encounter with Isao Takahata

In 1963, Miyazaki started his career at Toei Animation Studios, where he would first meet his future lifelong partner and friend, Isao Takahata (Fig. 34). Two years later, Takahata was directing his first movie, *The Adventures of Hols, Prince of the Sun*, a.k.a. *Taiyou no Ouji - Horusu no Daibouken* (Little Norse Prince



Fig. 34: Miyazaki (left), Takahata (right)

Valiant), in which Miyazaki was appointed as scene designer and key animator. Three years later, the film was completed, illustrating the skill of Miyazaki and Takahata. Unfortunately, this also marked the beginning of the problematic and restrictive nature of Studio Toei, as evidenced by comments from Miyazaki:

“The company told us various things, such as ‘kids would love to see small animals,’ or ‘well, you say so, but unless you do a well-known classic story, tickets won’t sell.’ So it was easy for us to fight against the company.”

[Miyazaki, Interview Kinema Junpo Special Issue, Number 1166; July 16th, 1995]

In 1971, Miyazaki and Takahata parted ways with Toei Animation, to start work at A-Pro Studios, only to move on after two years to start working at Nippon Animation (Cavallaro 2006, p. 31). There, Miyazaki helped with producing the animated television series *World Masterpiece Theatre* for five years as scene designer and organizer, as well as key animator. This included, among others, *Arupusu no Shoujo Haiji* (Heidi, Girl of the Alps, January 6th, 1974 - December 29th, 1974), *Haha wo Tazunete Sanzenri* (Three Thousand Miles In Search of Mother, January 4th, 1976 - December 26th, 1976) and *Akage no An* (Anne of Green Gables, January 7th, 1979 - December 30th, 1979) (Fig. 35). Most of these stories took place in Europe, since they were based on classic Western literature.



Fig. 35: *Arupusu no Shoujo Haiji*, *Haha wo Tazunete Sanzenri*, *Akage no An* (f.l.t.r.)

1979 marks Miyazaki's directorial debut with *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro*, in which he brazenly disregarded the adult and raunchy tone of the source material, to replace it with his own, more approachable interpretation of the character. Though the movie was made on a comparatively small budget, it nonetheless displays formidable attention to detail in both animation, as well as art direction. Though lighter in tone than his subsequent works, *Lupin III* already displayed visual devices and themes, that would become one of the hallmarks of Miyazaki's work with Studio Ghibli; from high octane aerial action scenes, a setting so meticulously crafted that you can easily map it out in your own head, to musings on the relationship between human civilization and the natural environment.

3.3 Studio Ghibli

In 1985, Studio Ghibli was officially founded to facilitate the production of *Laputa: Castle in the sky*. However, the idea was born in 1983, when Tokuma Shoten, the publishing company Miyazaki was working with, to publish the manga series *Nausicaä*, pushed for the creation of a feature-length theatrical release of the same series. *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* proved to be an enormous success, so Miyazaki and Takahata decided to follow through with their plans to establish their own studio (Cavallaro 2006, p. 40). The term “Ghibli” refers to two things. On the one hand, it references a Mediterranean wind occurring in the Sahara desert; on the other hand, it is a reference to the “AMX International AMX”, an Italian-Brazilian ground-attack aircraft, dubbed “A-11 Ghibli” by the Italians. A fitting and rather unsurprising choice, given Miyazaki’s affinity for aviation and European cities.



Fig. 36: Studio Ghibli – logo incorporating the iconic character Totoro

Studio Ghibli has made it its mission to categorically only produce feature films based on original ideas. This fact alone already sets it apart from Disney Animation Studios, which primarily focuses on adapting pre-existing fairy tales. Financially speaking, this mode of operation is quite a risky stance to take for an animation studio, since predicting success based on original ideas is a nearly futile endeavor. This is why, as a general rule, animation studios primarily focus on producing TV series, only to occasionally invest time and money to produce a feature-length theatrical release based on a preexisting intellectual property. Because of this, many had doubts in Studio Ghibli’s sustainability, even members of its own staff.

“The idea was to dedicate full energy into each piece of work with sufficient budget and time, never compromising on the quality or content. ... To be honest, none of us thought that Studio Ghibli would survive for this long a time. ‘Make one film. If that succeeds, make another. If that flops, that ends it’”

[Toshio Suzuki, speech delivered at Annecy International Animated Film Festival 1995]

To prevent eventual losses, Studio Ghibli refrained from hiring full-time employees. In order to reduce production costs, they resorted to hiring temporary employees tasked to work one movie at a time. After completion, the team – consisting of about seventy people - would be disbanded. Likewise, Ghibli’s office was not particularly spacious; it consisted of only one floor, which was rented in an office complex in Kichijoji, a suburb of Tokyo. This practice would continue until 1991, when Miyazaki proposed to hire regular full-time workers for the studio.

In 1984, Studio Ghibli released *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, which attracted approximately 915 000 viewers into movie theaters. Two years later, in 1986, *Laputa: Castle in the sky* was released to cinemas, attracting approximately 775 000 viewers into cinemas (Cavallaro 2006, p. 41). What followed in 1988 turned out to be a highly stressful undertaking: the simultaneous release of two feature films, *My Neighbor Totoro*, directed by Miyazaki, and *Grave of the Fireflies*, directed by Takahata. Despite his general aversion to interference in the studio’s decision making process, the president of Studio Ghibli at the time, Yasuyoshi Tokuma, played an integral part in promoting the simultaneous release of the two movies, considering the unique marketing opportunity. Unfortunately, Tokuma’s efforts failed to pay off, as neither of the two films were particularly successful at the box office, due to poorly scheduled release dates. Both movies were released on April 16th, which was slightly too early to capture the attention of the summer movie crowds (Cavallaro 2006, p. 41).

However, since Studio Ghibli did not compromise quality in the slightest, both films still received critical acclaim for their technical achievements and their incredible

Miyazaki's talent and affinity to planning and designing sophisticated machines and structures would also become useful to Studio Ghibli itself. While working on *Kurenai no Buta*, Miyazaki also began conceptualizing the blueprint for a new, improved studio space. Miyazaki's keen attention to detail and pedantic tendencies compelled him to pick all the materials used for the new studio himself. After *Kurenai no Buta* concluded its production and was released to cinemas, the new studio was moved to Koganei, a suburb of the Tokyo metropolitan area. The new studio space, like productions by Studio Ghibli, is quite anomalous, as it's brimming with natural light sources and plant life. Furthermore, the purposely designed small parking lot is equipped with bicycle parking racks, and on the studio's roof, a recreational garden space with feral flora was installed to function as a break room. A considerable amount of glass can be found implemented throughout the three floors; even rooms not directly connected to the outside have windows lovingly painted on their walls (Cavallaro 2006, p. 42). All these design decisions reflect Miyazaki's environmentalist propensity, which is also a common theme throughout Ghibli's movies. We can get a fairly comprehensive idea of Miyazaki's personality on account of his strong tenaciousness, which manifests in all of his creative endeavors, whether it is his movie productions, or his insistence on creating the studio itself.



Fig. 38: Front of Studio Ghibli's main building

4 Walt Disney

To effectively compare the works of Hayao Miyazaki with those of Walt Disney Animation Studios, it is important to take a closer look at the man who started it all. Walt Disney, the individual who essentially built the American animated film industry from scratch, is one of the most influential people of American popular culture, embodying a father figure to millions of baby boomers. He not only built a major motion picture studio, an animation studio, a television production arm, a distribution company and a theme park, Though the movies I'm citing for the sake of this comparison were produced well after his death in 1966, Disney's work ethics and mentality can still be detected in the productions of his animation studio.

4.1 Early Life

Walter Elias Disney was born on December 5th 1901 in Chicago, Illinois. His father, Elias Charles Disney, was Irish-Canadian and his mother, Flora Call Disney, was of German-American descent. Raised with four siblings in a lower middle-class household, Walt Disney had a comparatively strict father. Elias was an impatient and quick-tempered man, but also displayed a high sense of entrepreneurship and hard work ethics, which was a great influence to young Walt. In 1906, Elias was becoming weary of the stressful life in the crime and corruption-ridden town of Chicago, yearning for a simple country life, so the Disney family moved to Marceline, Missouri, a small town with only 2.500 residents. They settled down at a farm with a two-story house and a big yard, which had a formative influence on Walt at the time (Lenburg, 2011, p. 12-14). Surrounded by the beauty of nature and an abundance of different farm animals like chickens, cows, horses and pigs, Walt developed a deep appreciation for the beauty of nature and animals, which is reflected in his works as filmmaker.



Fig. 39: Walt Disney

Walt started to develop his interest in drawing at age seven. He would sketch pictures of his neighbors' horses, and was given additional encouragement by his Aunt Margaret, who would buy him drawing utensils and showered him with praise whenever she could. When his second-grade teacher became sick, Walt would make his first foray into the world of animation by drawing a flipbook for her, depicting figures moving in sequence (Lenburg, 2011, p. 16).

In general, Walt's childhood was characterized by a passion for drawing, and heavy exposure to entrepreneurship and operating businesses through his father. He was put to work by his father delivering newspapers at a young age, and would later try to make pocket money with a friend selling lemonade to passerby. At age 14, Walt persuaded his father to let him partake in art classes for two winters. At the same time, he further developed his entrepreneurial spirit by working as a news butcher (late 1900s: young boys selling newspapers without a fixed newsstand). He considered his work at the time a "very exciting thing", despite the hardships that came with it (Lenburg, 2011, p. 19).



*Fig. 40: Walt Disney (left)
and Ub Iwerks (right)*

In October 1919, Walt was hired at Pesmen-Rubin Commercial Art Studio, marking the inception of his professional career in art, drawing chickens, cows, eggs and other farm appliances for paper advertisements. Working there, he also became acquainted with Ubbe Ert Iwerks (who later changed his name to Ub Iwerks), who would later take on the important role as head animator at Walt Disney

Animation Studios (*Fig 40*). Walt enjoyed his work, but was constantly craving for more, as he would work as a mail carrier for the Kansas City Post office while looking for another commercial art employment at the same time. He and his friend Ub even tried to establish their own business, "Iwerks-Disney Commercial Artists", in 1920. Unfortunately, despite Walt's strong entrepreneurial spirit, they had to close their business after only a few of months (Lenburg, 2011, p. 23).

4.2 Walt Disney Animation Studios

In 1923, Walt and his brother Roy founded the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio (later changed to “Walt Disney Studio”), launching their venture to become what is now considered a leading force in the American animation industry (Lenburg, 2011, p. 32).



Fig. 41: Walt Disney Animation Studios - logo

Before the characters widely known and beloved today were created, Walt Disney Studio released several shorts, starting with the “Alice Comedies”, featuring live action footage mixed with cartoon characters. The protagonist, Alice, would go on adventures in an animated world with “Julius the Cat” her animated, “funny animal” friend. “Julius the Cat” displayed a striking resemblance to “Felix the Lucky Cat”, which was intentional, given the popularity of characters like Felix. Shortly after, the character dubbed “Oswald the Lucky Rabbit” was created, with his first appearance in a short called “Trolley Troubles”, directed and produced by Walt Disney. Due to creative differences with Winkler Pictures, who owned the rights to the character at the time, Walt Disney Studio stopped producing shorts featuring the character and went on to create “Mickey Mouse”, whose first appearance was in a short called “Steamboat Willie” in 1928 (Gabler, 2006). This short also was the first to feature sound synchronized with the actions on screen, which became a fundamental building block of the “Classic Disney” aesthetic. This term has evolved over time taking many different meanings in the process (Pallant, 2011, p.35), but for the sake of this thesis, I will use it to refer to the aesthetic created by the early Disney features *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), *Fantasia* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* (1942).

The Classic Disney era is characterized by a great desire to achieve technical mastery and emulation of real life.

“Fundamentally, the Disney-Formalist ideology prioritized artistic sophistication, ‘realism’ in characters and contexts, and, above all, believability.”

[Pallant, 2011, p.35]

Ever since the production of *Snow White*, Walt Disney was keen on developing the technical prowess of his staff, by establishing not only an animation studio, but an education facility as well. The expansion of the studio would be supplemented with orientation training and education classes, supervised by the head animators Les Clark, Norm Ferguson, and Art Babbitt, and taught by Donald Graham, a fine artist and art instructor from the Chouinard Art Institute (Thomas, 1991, p. 66). During these classes, budding animators developed a multitude of techniques that would become some of the building blocks of traditional animation (*Fig. 42*).

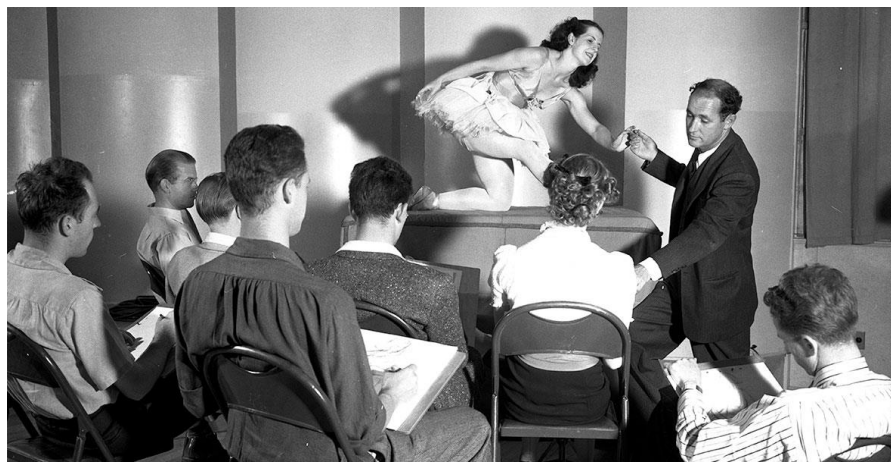


Fig. 42: Donald Graham teaching young animators

Animators experimented with the creation of realistic human characters, diverging from the cartoony, fictitious look of early cartoons, and tried their hands at new technologies, such as the multiplane camera, a technology allowing the artists to move the camera more naturally through a scene by splitting the background artwork into several layers (Lenburg, 2011, p. 65).

The massive financial success of *Snow White* allowed Walt to create a new, bigger studio at Buena Vista Street in Burbank, which continues to be the studio's headquarters even today ⁽¹⁷⁾. There, the production of *Pinocchio* started, a film initially not a financial, but a critical success, winning two Oscars for Best Original Song and Best Original Score respectively (Roberts,



Fig. 43: Installation of the 'Fantasound' system

2006, p. 134). *Fantasia*, released in 1940, was no financial success either, but it was celebrated for its push for innovation with the introduction of the "Fantasound" system, an invention by engineers of Walt Disney Studios, allowing a stereoscopic soundtrack to be used for the movie (Lenburg, 2011, p. 77) (Fig. 43).

In 1941, a sizable portion of the studio's animators initiated a severe labor strike. This was due to a disagreement regarding fair profit shares, which were promised since the success of *Snow White*, but never seemed to arise. Art Babbitt, the studio's highest-paid animator at the time, who was leading the strike at the time, was laid off by Walt Disney, among hundreds of other union workers. Walt was not fond of the development of labor unions, even mentioning in a letter that the strike "cleaned house at our studio" and got rid of "the chip-on-the-shoulder boys and the world-owes-mea-living lads." (Lenburg, 2011, p. 83) During the strike of the animators, the feature *Dumbo* was released in theaters. The film was a financial success, only costing half as much as *Snow White* and even less than *Fantasia*.

After the release of *Bambi* in 1942, the production of feature-length animated movies slowed to a halt, due to repercussions of World War II. The financier of the studio at the time, Bank of America, would only fund the production of short movies, due to the recent financial flops and the disappearance of most of the overseas film market. Therefore, the production of features like *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan* and *Lady and the Tramp* were postponed until the war was over. Of course, the war had other ramifications for the studio as well; several animators were

pressured to produce propaganda cartoons, depicting military training exercises and overtly patriotic messages (Gabler, 2006, p. 375 – 377).

During the 1950s and onwards, the company fell into recession. Walt was focusing predominantly on live-action productions and the creation of his theme park, *Disneyland*, leaving the production of animated features in the hand of the “Nine Old Men”, the core animators of Walt Disney Animation studios (Barrier, 2007, p. 273 – 374) (*Fig. 44*). In 1959, after considerable delay, the feature *Sleeping Beauty* was finally released. The film cost the studio 6 million dollars, the studio’s most expensive endeavor at the time, but did not turn out to be a financial success at the box office, resulting in the first annual loss for the studio in a decade (Thomas, 1976, p. 294 – 295).



Fig. 44: Disney’s Nine Old Men

What followed was a decline in output of feature length productions, and further layoffs. The production of the famous shorts slowly came to an end as well, with most of the staff responsible for production being reassigned to different departments of the company. The classic shorts, initially dominating the Short Film category of the Academy awards, were slowly being supplanted by the emergence of competitors like the *Tom and Jerry* cartoons by MGM, and *Looney Tunes* and *Merrie Melodies* by the Warner Brothers. The stylized and flat animation style of these shorts was being praised as a welcome alternative to the style of “classic Disney” (Barrier, 1999, p. 526 – 532). The production of shorts finally ceased in 1969 with *It’s Tough to Be a Bird*. From this date forward, the only forays into short film territory would be highly infrequent, with the last notable example being

Paperman (2012), an experimental, black-and-white computer-cel animated short film.

Between 1950 and 1980, the Disney company greatly diversified their output, producing more live-action and television works, as well as several theme parks. Thus, the significance of animation diminished considerably. After Walt Disney's death in December 1966, Disney's son Roy assigned Michael Eisner as the new CEO of the company, after many years of corporate takeover attempts. The 1985 movie *The Black Cauldron* was considered "rock bottom" for Disney's animation department, as it was a commercial and critical failure (Hahn, 2009). It was the first movie rated PG, due to its darker tone than previous films, but the abysmal performance prompted the studio to stick to more child friendly subject matters.

Later the same year, the Disney's animation division was moved from Burbank to Glendale, California, where they took residence in several hangars and warehouses. *The Great Mouse Detective*, released in 1986, proved to be somewhat of a critical and commercial success, so the studio executives regained confidence in the animation department. Thus, the studio underwent restructuring, with the aim to produce a new animated feature film every year (Hahn, 2009). This eventually led to what is now considered to be the "Disney Renaissance", arguably the most distinctive and representative era of Disney animation, whose films also serve as the foundation of my comparative analysis.

4.2.1 The Disney Renaissance

After the studio's stagnation after World War II and Walt Disney's death, this period marks the return to the original artistic proficiency and ideology of early "classic" Disney. This era of Disney feature animation can be demarcated by the films released between 1989 and 1999. These films are *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *The Rescuers Down Under* (1990), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *The Lion King* (1994), *Pocahontas* (1995), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996), *Hercules* (1997), *Mulan* (1998) and *Tarzan* (1999) (Pallant, 2011, p.89).

While this delineation is widely accepted as accurate when looking at various fan-sites, wikis and articles across the internet, they usually only give a superficial

overview without critically engaging with what made this period special in the first place.

Perhaps the most influential individual responsible for the Disney Renaissance was Don Bluth (1937), an American animator, film director and producer (among many others), who started working at Walt Disney Animation Studios in 1955. Dissatisfied with the artistic direction of the studio, Bluth departed in 1979 to enter partnership with Amblimation, the animation production arm of Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, where he directed two movies, *An American Tail* (1986) and *The Land Before Time* (1988) (Pallant, 2011, p.74, 90). The animation style of these movies was heavily influenced by the hyperrealistic approach of early Disney animated features. *An American Tail* and *The Land Before Time* financially outperformed Disney's *The Great Mouse Detective* (1986) and *Oliver and Company* (1988), putting pressure on the company to stay relevant (Fig. 45).

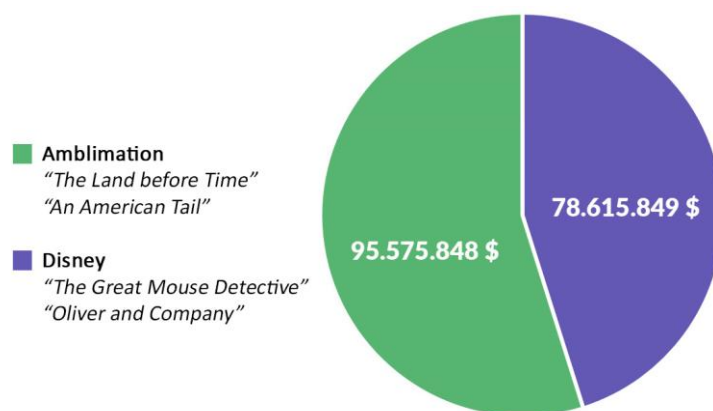


Fig. 45: Box office performances of Amblimation and Disney
(derived from boxofficemojo.com)

Disney, still recovering from its stagnant period, was put under additional stress by the monumental success of *The Simpsons* (1989 – to date), which singlehandedly reconceived the American sitcom format. It is also important to mention that Japanese animation gained more recognition than ever in the West with *Akira* (1988), and Hayao Miyazaki's *Tonari no Totoro* (1988), *Majo no Takkyūbin* (1989) and *Kurenai no Buta* (1992). All of these factors combined renewed Disney's commitment to their animated feature production, heralding the start of what is now known as the Disney Renaissance (Pallant, 2011, p.90 – 91).

The most perspicuous way to delineate the Disney Renaissance period is by way of box office. With the exception of *The Rescuers Down Under*, every film released during the period was a massive financial success. If we compare the domestic gross of the movies *The Black Cauldron* (1985), *The Great Mouse Detective* (1986) and *Oliver and Company* (1988) with the first feature released during the Disney Renaissance (*The Little Mermaid*), the rise in financial success becomes evident. The little Mermaid alone almost reaches the revenue of all three Pre-Renaissance movies combined (Fig. 46).

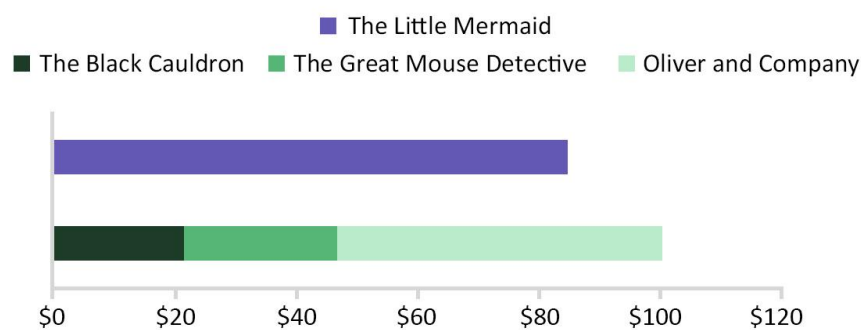


Fig. 46: 'The Little Mermaid' vs. Pre-Renaissance box office in million \$
(derived from boxofficemojo.com)

The subsequent movie *The Rescuers Down Under* did not perform as well as the others, most likely due to a combination of different variables. For one, the movie poses as sequel to *The Rescuers* (1977), diverging from the Disney's tendency to market such movies as straight-to-video material. Furthermore, the release of the highest grossing film of 1990, *Home Alone*, likely hogged the limelight at the time, since it was released just a week before *The Rescuers Down Under*.

Nevertheless, every other movie released during the Renaissance period proved to be an incredible financial success, peaking with *The Lion King* in 1994, which grossed 312.855.561\$ (Pallant, 2011, p.94).

From a technical perspective, the introduction of CAPS (Computer Aided Production System) cannot be underestimated. Although Disney previously experimented with the integration of CGI in their movies, like in *The Black Cauldron*, and *The Great Mouse Detective*, it was not until *The Little Mermaid* the studio fully embraced this new technology. For the first time, the computer was used for the creation of the final image, acting not merely as assistance to traditional cel animation. Animators could still create cels in a traditional manner, but the subsequent painting and composing would happen entirely on the computer. CAPS also provided a way for the animators to place 2D animated characters within 3D environments, a technique used in the famous ballroom sequence from *Beauty and the Beast*. Directors at Disney were also looking for ways to depict highly crowded scenes with more realism and believability. The answer was found in Craig Reynolds's behavioural model, which he invented for his short computer animation *Stanley and Stella* in 1987. In his animation, a flock of birds would interact dynamically with each other, changing their position not by hand, but based on a set of pre-defined rules. This system was integrated by Disney during the Renaissance Era and used in shots like the famous wildebeests scene in *The Lion King* and scenes of fighting Huns in *Mulan*. Disney was enhancing the fidelity of crowd shots in in general. If we compare the crowds from *Cinderella* (1950) with the Renaissance Era's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, we can clearly see the increase in detail and animation density (Fig. 47).



Fig. 47: animated crowd in 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame' (1996)(left)
vs. static crowd in 'Cinderella' (1950)(right)

Animating crowd scenes of this magnitude were previously a highly labor intensive task for the animators, compelling them to include parts of the crowd in the static background layer. Only a few people in the crowd were actually animated, saving the studio a great amount of time. With CAPS and behavioural modeling, the animators could greatly enhance the realism and liveliness in crowd shots during the Renaissance Era. The last noteworthy technical advancement during this era was the program “Deep Canvas”. It allowed the animators to achieve a level of dynamicity and fluidity never seen before in traditional animation (Pallant, 2011, p.100). We can find countless examples of the program’s implementation in Disney’s *Tarzan*, in the sequences depicting Tarzan “skating” through the jungle and swinging from vine to vine (*Fig. 48*). Deep Canvas combined the ability to map paintings accurately onto a 3D environment, while allowing the camera to freely move throughout the scene. This provided the animators with real time control, greatly enhancing the achievable complexity of camera movement.



Fig. 48: 'Deep Canvas' in Disney's 'Tarzan' (1999)

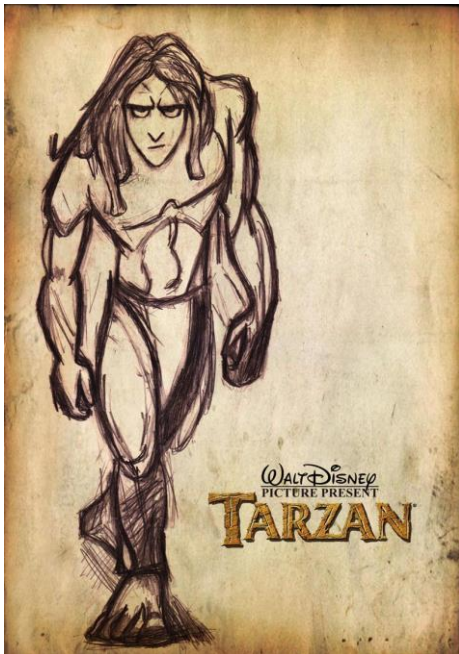


Fig. 49: Poster for Disney's 'Tarzan' (1999)

Despite the pivotal role they played, Disney downplayed all of the aforementioned technologies during the marketing of their films. Other movies released during this era, like *Jurassic Park* (1993) and *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* (1999), prided themselves on their technical sophistication; however, Disney deliberately focused on the “classic” and “traditional” aspect of their movies. One of the official posters for *Tarzan* depicted him in sketched form, emphasizing the traditional qualities of classic Disney, actively hiding the technical accomplishment the movie was representing (Pallant, 2011, p.102) (Fig. 49).

In conclusion, the Disney Renaissance demonstrates a corroboration the formula that seemed to work well for their previous movies. Aside from the technical advancements and the implementation of computer-aided animation, we can observe practices like frequent use of musical elements, with protagonists and antagonists alike bursting into song, the implementation of comic relief characters to entertain the younger subset of the audience, and the evil villain, who is ultimately defeated, often rather gruesomely. All points to the fact that by now, the Disney machine was well established and was able to produce profitable and marketable content in fairly short intervals.

5 Analyzing Differences

Now, after we have taken a closer look at the history and influences of both studio Ghibli and Walt Disney Animation Studios respectively, we can break down in what ways their movies display overarching differences. Both Miyazaki's and Disney's oeuvre exhibit general tendencies in story structure, themes and messages, as well as visual language, which I will discuss in the following chapters.

5.1 Cultural Distinction

As evidenced by my research, manga and anime permeates Japanese culture in every aspect. Visual arts have been meticulously developed for centuries, entrenching itself deeply in Japanese consciousness. From recreation, education to government institutions making use of the medium, this aspect of popular culture is deeply ingrained in Japanese civilization. The emergence and continuing popularity of numerous genres covering a multitude of different audiences shows the omnipresence anime and manga possesses in Japanese culture.

By contrast, In the United States, comics and cartoons may be a popular pastime activity; however, they are not an intrinsic part of Western culture. Animated entertainment was - and still is - seen predominantly as a medium suited best for young children and teenagers, and is treated as such. After the enormous success of characters like Felix the Cat and later, Mickey Mouse, the association of cartoons being a children's medium solidified in Western culture. During the 1930s and 40s, a number of movie theaters would promote events like the "Mickey Mouse Club", or the "Popeye Club" to persuade children into spending time at their local establishment (Cline, 1984, p. vii). Movies and TV series are primarily produced for children and teenagers, with some sitcoms oriented towards adults being the exception to the rule. Foreign movies receive limited releases in the States, and are not taken properly into consideration for award shows like the Oscars. The Academy Award for Best Animated Feature is utterly dominated by works of Walt Disney Animation Studios and Pixar, which have dedicated themselves to producing exclusively family entertainment. When popular long-form anime series like *Pokémon*, *Naruto*, *One Piece* and *Yu-Gi-Oh!* got localized for Western audiences in the late 1990s, they were initially licensed by networks dealing with

children's programming. Therefore, the series were heavily censored, since the vehement nature of the imagery was deemed inappropriate for the target demographic. There exist countless examples of censoring, like the removal of blood and firearms, the tempering of explicit dialogue, and the replacement of alcoholic beverages with juice (Fig. 50). This illustrates the general attitude towards animated content by the Western public, and reinforces the self-perpetuating sentiment of "animation is for kids".



*Fig. 50: Examples of censorship
in 'Dragon Ball', 'Naruto' and
'Yu-Gi-Oh!'*

*Left side: original Japanese
release*

*Right side: censored american
release*

Unlike in American entertainment, Japanese animated media presents many genres in manga and anime aimed towards adult audiences. There exist considerably more stories in animation covering social and ethical issues, stories dealing with violence and sexuality, and stories covering many other topics without trying to appeal to young audiences at all.

Throughout the works of Ghibli, we can observe this propensity to cater to a more sophisticated audience. Since animation in Japan is of greater cultural significance than in the United States, it allows for the production and distribution of works that cater to more than just children. In contrast to Disney's films, Miyazaki tends to paint his worlds more nuanced, depicting characters without ostensibly clear motivations. His worlds, including the characters inhabiting it, exhibit both good and evil propensities, as opposed to Disney movies, who overwhelmingly portray a dichotomy of "good" and "evil" (which will be further discussed in chapter 5.2.1). Protagonists predominantly exhibit simple, straightforward motivations, and villains are usually evil due to simple reasons like "greed", "envy" or "just because". This demonstrates the significance Western culture has placed on animation. It is primarily used as a vehicle to entertain and teach simple moral values to children, while Japanese storytelling frequently tackles more intricate and nuanced topics.

5.2 Religious and Thematic Distinction

Since some themes of Miyazaki's films are closely linked to the religious identity of Japanese culture, it would be counterproductive to separate them from their religious influences into separate chapters. So instead, I am first going to particularize the religious aspects of Disney's works from the Renaissance Era, and then contrast this with the underlying cultural belief system indigenous to Japanese culture, *Shintō*.

5.2.1 Religious Themes in Disney's Renaissance Era

Let us start with taking a closer look at the religious background of Walt Disney. Despite his Western Judeo-Christian upbringing via his father, Walt never showed a personal tendency or desire to depict religious elements in his movies. In fact,

he actively abstained from incorporating any particular representation of religious material, because he feared that part of the audience would likely be displeased by the depiction of a particular denomination (Pinsky, 2004, p. 1). This is why there is hardly any explicit Judeo-Christian symbolism in Disney's oeuvre (with Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* being a noticeable exception). However, the fact remains that Disney's animated movies are pervasively imbued with theological vocabulary such as *faith*, *believe*, *blessing*, *divine*, *sacrifice*, and *miracle*. These allusions to Christianity without sectarian definitude was partly a marketing strategy by the Disney company to keep their films accessible to a broader audience (Pinsky, 2004, p. 3).

One of the general underpinnings of Christianity, more specifically American Christianity, can be described as "faith in faith" (Pinsky, 2004, p. 8). One of the core propensities found in almost every Disney movie is the sense that you need to believe in some sort of transcendent power, which, in Disney's universe, is magic (*"when you wish upon a star"*). This is a direct reflection to the divine power of Christian faith, or "praying for a miracle", though with a clear antinomy. In the Disney universe, one usually manipulates spiritual forces to achieve a desired outcome (i.e. magic). In contrast, throughout conventional Christian faith, one has to surrender to the spiritual forces, so they can act through the individual as they desire.

Another foundational facet of the Christian faith is the clear demarcation of good and evil with God being the ultimate good and Satan being the ultimate evil. This predisposition to ultimacy is congruent with the ethos of Walt Disney, and subsequently, his movies.

"Life is composed of lights and shadows, and we would be untruthful, insincere and saccharine if we tried to pretend there were no shadows. Most things are good, and they are the strongest things; but there are evil things too, and you are not doing a child a favor by trying to shield them from reality. The important thing is to teach a child that good can always triumph over evil, and that is what our pictures attempt to do."

[Walt Disney, for a 1962 "Guideposts" article - Pinsky, 2004, p. 2]

This philosophy could be found even in the early silent era of Walt's work, with Mickey Mouse being described as "the symbol of common humanity in struggle against the forces of evil" in the 1954 Time Magazine cover story. This theme of untainted good versus quintessential evil still constitutes a significant fundamental building block throughout virtually every Disney movie, even far after Walt Disney's death in 1966. Without exception, every movie from Disney's Renaissance period features an archetypical villain, who is ultimately defeated. Out of the ten movies in Disney's Renaissance Era, seven of the villains die (*Fig. 51*).



*Fig. 51: Defeat of
villains in Disney
movies*

Fig. 51: From left to right, top to bottom:

*Ursula – The little Mermaid (1989)
Gets Stabbed by Boat*

*Percival McLeach – The Rescuers Down Under (1990)
Falls to his death via waterfall*

*Gaston LeGume – Beauty and the Beast (1991)
Falls to his death*

*Jafar – Aladdin (1992)
Gets Trapped in a Lamp as a Genie*

*Scar – The Lion King (1994)
Gets mauled to death by hyenas*

*John Ratcliffe – Pocahontas (1995)
Gets detained by his own men*

*Claude Frollo – The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1996)
Falls to his death*

*Hades – Hercules (1997)
Falls into the Styx (River of the dead)*

*Shan Yu – Mulan (1998)
Gets blown to pieces by fireworks*

*William Cecil Clayton – Tarzan (1999)
Accidentally hangs himself with a vine*

Although it is reasonable to ascribe this conjuncture to traditional Western storytelling conventions, this nonetheless thoroughly conforms to Christian philosophy, which is illustrated by the religious connotations of Frollo's death in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. In dramatic irony, he proclaims "And He shall smite the wicked and plunge them into the fiery pit!" right before he falls to his death.

When comparing Disney's *Tarzan* with Ghibli's *Mononoke Hime*, the discrepancy in ideology becomes clear. Although these movies display similarities, like dealing with themes of difference and otherness, the dangers of technological progress, and environmental issues, there is a substantial difference in the ideological messages and narrative strategies on display. In order to give children a reassuring message, Disney's *Tarzan* simplifies the nuanced issues of its source material by pitting "good" humans and animals against "evil" humans and animals. Jane and

her father are accompanied by the evil hunter, Clayton, who wants to capture the apes and Tarzan to display them in the civilized world. In the end, good naturally triumphs over evil. The film attempts to erase the notion of difference between nature and humankind, with Jane and her father ultimately deciding to stay with Tarzan in the jungle. The philosophy on display is rather anthropocentric, with humans and human-like characters playing gleefully in their natural environment, which mainly serves as a beautiful backdrop. The gorilla family adopting Tarzan are depicted with humanlike expressions, corroborated by the song *Two Worlds* by Phil Collins, which features lyrics like “*paradise untouched by man*” and “*two worlds – one family*”. In fact, all of the “good” Animals are highly anthropomorphized, like Tarzan’s friends Terk and Tantor, yet the “evil” leopard Sabor remains comparatively feral.



Fig. 52: ‘*Mononoke Hime*’ (left) vs. ‘*Tarzan*’ (right)

Mononoke Hime portrays an entirely different ideological message. Whereas *Tarzan* attempts to erase the notion of difference and otherness via simplification, *Mononoke Hime* enforces the idea. The animals in Miyazaki’s film are not anthropomorphized, as evidenced by the design of Moro, the surrogate mother of San. She may be caring, but she displays none of the indulgent coddling like Tarzan’s surrogate mother Kala. Towards the end of the film, her disembodied head bites off the arm of Lady Eboshi, which stands in direct contrast with Disney’s *Tarzan*, where Kala reaches out for Jane’s hand in an effort to socialize (Fig. 52). Lady Eboshi represents a threat in form of technological progress, which is presented as inevitability that cannot be ignored. *Tarzan*’s villain Clayton threatens the natural world as well, but the movie ignores the technological aspect completely, focusing solely on his sadistic, “evil” character.

5.2.2 Religion and Environmentalism in Miyazaki's Work

Hayao Miyazaki never explicitly declared himself as a religious person, nevertheless, his movies indicate that his views are deeply entrenched in *Shintō*, which is Japan's indigenous religion and closely linked to Buddhism. *Shintō* can be translated as "way of the Gods" (Nakamura, 2013, p. 23), albeit from a Western perspective, God is not really a fitting description. More fitting would be "spirit", "deity" or "essence", which are the beings who can dwell in nearly every inanimate object, and are often conceived as part of nature, such as trees, rocks, rivers and mountains. These beings (*Kami*) display neither good nor evil tendencies; they are ambivalent in nature. Traditionally speaking, *Kami* and nature are the same, since in *Shintō*, no distinction is being made between the material and the divine (Nakamura, 2013, p.12). The divine interconnectedness of these beings is an integral part of understanding *Shintō*, and by extension the philosophy of Miyazaki's films.

While only a small percentage of the Japanese identify as *Shintoists*, almost 80% of the population still actively participates in *Shintō* practices ⁽¹⁸⁾, indicating the fundamental connection Japanese culture has to this ancient religion. By comparison, in the United States, about 70% of the population identifies as Christian, with only 53% describing their faith as "very important" to them ⁽¹⁹⁾. Therefore, it comes as no surprise, that Miyazaki's films exhibit an elemental and self-evident connection to this part of Japanese culture.

Judeo-Christian faith generally teaches that man must subjugate nature:

"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

[Genesis 1:28]

Shintō, however, believes that everything possesses a spiritual component, therefore, the religion can be described non-anthropocentric, meaning humankind is not the central component to the faith, but merely a part of the divine whole. In

Miyazaki's films, this belief manifests in themes of peace and love between nature and humankind.

This spiritual propensity to environmentalism can be overstated, like in the battle between the humans and the spirits of the forest in *Mononoke Hime*, or the battle between human armies and giant mutant insects in *Kaze no Tani no Nausicaä*. The protagonists of these movies display a deeply rooted desire to make peace between worlds and to unify the opposing forces. The naturalness of *Shintō* in Miyazaki's work becomes even clearer if we take a look at the classic *Tonari no Totoro*. The character Totoro perfectly embodies the Japanese definition of a Kami. He is a guardian of the forest, who possesses his own shrine. He is able control the wind, give life (tree-growing scene at 00:57:00 - 00:59:20), and appears only to people he deems worthy. Nevertheless, neither is he omnipotent like the God of Christianity, nor is he good or evil; he just exists.

Aside from Totoro himself, Spirituality is embedded in several different ways throughout the movie. Mei initially finds Totoro after traversing a tunnel made from branches and vines, which coincides with *Shintō* belief, where tunnels represent a passageway to the spirit world. The same can be observed in *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, where the entire story effectively begins and concludes via traversal of a tunnel (Fig. 53).



Fig. 53: Tunnels in 'Chihiro no Kamikakushi' (left) and 'Tonari no Totoro' (right)

In *Tonari no Totoro*, we can observe more references to *Shintō* in various moments throughout the film. When the Kusakabe family first moves into their country house, they encounter soot sprites, a swarm of little Kami inhabiting the old residence. Instead of being treated as other-worldly, one of the locals treats them with casualness, like a familiar wildlife. Kami aren't to be feared, they are a part of

everyday life. This casual acceptance of Spirit's place in the world is reflected several times, like when Satsuki is giving thanks to a local shrine for providing shelter from the rain, or when the Kusakabe family pays respects to the tree in which Totoro resides, after the children claimed to have met him.

Miyazaki subverts traditional Western views of the environment. Like stated before, throughout Western culture, people have historically treated the land in terms of its instrumental value, meaning the land is functioning merely a means to an end. This is especially evident in American colonialism, where the idea of "taming" the wild is a central element. *Shintō*, and by extension Miyazaki's oeuvre, calls this relationship into question, treating the land as another living being with agency in form of Kami. How these two perspectives fail to meet defines the root of conflict in Miyazaki's films. In *Gake no Ue no Ponyo*, we can observe this in the character of Fujimoto. The magician opposes Ponyo's desire to become human because he resents humanity for their instrumentalization of the ocean. In fact, Ponyo only meets Sousuke due to a fishing boat sweeping her up in a net while trawling the ocean. When Fujimoto recovers Ponyo later in the film, he harshly criticizes humanity for their treatment of the ocean. This clash between intrinsic and instrumental values manifests in dire consequences throughout the film. When Fujimoto refuses to let his daughter Ponyo become a human, and Ponyo refuses to remain a fish, the natural order of the world begins to collapse. The moon begins to fall, the waves take on a life of their own, and the whole town gets flooded. In the end, Sousuke and Ponyo overcome the conflict by proving that humans are indeed capable of loving nature for itself, with Sousuke representing humankind's capability to value nature.

While *Gake no Ue no Ponyo* choses to frame this disparity of values by telling an innocent "love" story between two children, more often Miyazaki choses to embody this conflict via clash of technology and nature. In *Mononoke Hime*, prince Ashitaka travels to Tatara (Iron Town), an industrial settlement led by Lady Eboshi, in order to find out why the spirits of the forest became cursed. It turns out that Lady Eboshi has ordered the clearing of the forest in order to bolster the town's iron supply. By choosing their own material gain over the sanctity of the forest, the residents of Tatara have angered the spirits, rendering them corrupted. The protagonist,

Ashitaka, is determined to stop the conflict and bring peace to the realm. The townspeople view iron and their technology as a means to progress society, ignoring the intrinsic spiritual value of their environment, causing Kami to become angry and corrupted. This clash of “Western” colonialism and Japanese ideology is the driving force for the conflict of the movie.

Another fundamental trait of *Shintō* is the idea of purity and impurity. It is believed that committing certain deeds results in a spiritual impurity, which can only be rescind by partaking in a ritual cleansing. It is important to segregate this from the Christian faith, where “sin” is inherently bad and will put you on a path to hell. Spiritual impurity should be removed for one’s personal peace of mind and good fortune, not because it is intrinsically “bad”. (Sugimoto, 1997, p. 230 – 231).



Fig. 54: Literal cleansing in
'Chihiro no Kamikakushi'

This theme of cleansing, or self-improvement, can be found throughout Miyazaki's works. In *Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, a river spirit is literally being cleansed of human corruption by Chihiro, who pulls a plethora of human waste out of his body (Fig. 54). In the story of *Kaze no tani no Nausicaä*, the Sea of Decay isolating the civilizations from one another is described by Miyazaki as “created by humans a thousand years earlier to cleanse the environment” (1996, p. 169). The tsunami and subsequent flooding of the town in *Gake no Ue no Ponyo* can be seen as a cleansing event in wake of the human abuse inflicted to the ocean. *Mononoke Hime* gives form to impurity through the curse inflicting Ashitaka, which he has to cleanse his body from. Likewise, the Kami are corrupted, albeit by human influence, and must be propitiated, or cleansed.

In *Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, another reference to Japanese spirituality can be found. When Chihiro begins to work in the spirit Bathhouse for the witch Yubaba, she signs a contract with her name in kanji (荻野千尋). Yubaba then proceeds to take the kanji off the page with her magic, leaving only 千, or “sen”, allotting it as a new name for Chihiro (Fig. 55). The Japanese believe that kami dwell within words, and that names reflect one's distinct personality. With this in mind, a name represents the essence of one's soul, so Yubaba “taking” the name is a reflection of her imprisoning Chihiro's core identity, or soul, in the spirit world (Nakamura, 2013, p. 85).

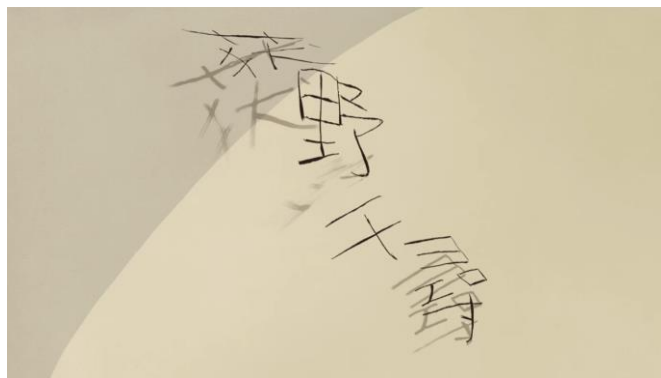


Fig. 55: Removal of Chihiro's name in '*Chihiro no Kamikakushi*'

5.3 Ambivalence vs. Perspicuity

Particularly interesting is the theme of ambivalence depicted in Miyazaki's movies. Take a look at Miyazaki's most violent feature, *Mononoke Hime*, with the primary conflict of the movie being the war between Tatara, the burgeoning industrial mining town, and the natural environment of the gods. The depiction of this war makes it clear that the audience is not meant to root for one particular side of the conflict. For instance, Tatara's leader, Lady Eboshi, is not characterized as a villain; she treats her wounded, provides shelter and work for social outcasts, empowers women, and generally has the townspeople's best interests at heart, qualities for which the residents of Tatara are extremely grateful. On the other hand, the forest spirits are just trying to defend their natural habitat, but do so with extensively violent means, even though they are theoretically capable of

communicating with their human adversaries. To the audience, the film conveys a passive attitude about the conflict, with neither of the fractions ever gaining moral high ground. The viewer is just sort of thrown in the middle of it all, not knowing who to side with. This ambiguity can be exemplified by a scene, where a leprosy patient talks to Ashitaka about Lady Eboshi, urging him to refrain from judging her too harshly (00:41:01). Interestingly, the movie does not show Ashitaka's reaction to this statement. It is never clarified how he feels about what he's just been told, the scene just ends right there, leaving the audience with a feeling of uncertainty.

This theme of ambivalence can be found throughout most of Miyazaki's movies. The story of *Chihiro no Kamikakushi* plays almost entirely in the spirit world, which is depicted as a beautiful and fantastical place. However, it exists in the husk of an abandoned amusement park, referencing the burst of Japan's bubble economy in the early 1990s. The main location of the movie is a colorful, vibrant bathhouse, filled with humorous looking characters, yet it is all powered by the ceaseless work of one character, Kamaji, and his soot sprite workers, who are effectively performing slave work. The staff of the bathhouse is fun and cheerful, but simultaneously obsessed with gold. It also seems like they are involuntarily tied to the bathhouse. The combination of these elements creates an ambivalent atmosphere, depicting a place with simultaneously inviting and ominous characteristics. The characters we meet are also depicted in ambiguous ways, like Haku, who initially helps Chihiro adjusting to the unfamiliar spirit world, but is intermittently shown to be a dubious and unlikable character. Chihiro meets the monstrous *Kaonashi* (No-Face), who initially represents an antagonistic force, but later transforms into a supporting character. Initially depicted as some sort of grotesque monster of greed and consumption, Kaonashi later turns out to be just the product of his environment. Later throughout the movie, when not being exposed to greedy and selfish people, Kaonashi transforms into a docile spirit who is just along for the ride. Furthermore, Yubaba, the proprietor of the Bathhouse and main antagonist of the movie, comes to Chihiro's aid without hesitation, when she realizes Chihiro needs assistance with the treatment of the River God. Near the end of the movie, Chihiro even calls her "grandma". Interestingly, this ambivalence is only felt by the audience, as Chihiro never questions the events or characters she meets. She just goes with it, with only the goal of finding her parents in mind.

Perhaps the most representative scene of the movie's ambivalent nature can be found in the train ride Chihiro takes towards the end of the movie (*Fig. 56*). She receives a one-way train ticket from Kamajī, to travel to a place completely unknown to her, yet Chihiro is not shown to be perturbed in any way. When she boards the train together with Kaonashi, we can observe shadowy, transparent figures with ambiguous destinations populating the train. The scene emits tranquility, but also eeriness, as Chihiro just sits with placid expression, lost in thought. The audience is left with their own feelings, since nothing is ever explained.



Fig. 56: Train ride in 'Chihiro no Kamikakushi'

We can find further elements of ambivalence in other works of Studio Ghibli, like *Tonari no Totoro*. The entire movie has little drama or action, exuding a comfortable and homelike atmosphere. The cozy ambience is subverted when Satsuki and Mei visit their mother in the hospital. It is suggested that Totoro, the spirit of the forest, appears to the children to deal with the sickness of their mother, but the sickness is never depicted as the main conflict of the movie. The children are not shown to be sad about their mother's condition, the movie does not spend much time at the hospital, nor do we learn about the nature and severity of the mother's illness.

The town depicted in *Gake no Ue no Ponyo* gets completely flooded as a result of the imbalance Ponyo's decision to stay in the human world causes, yet its residents don't seem to be concerned about the situation at all. When Sosuke and Ponyo meet some of the town's inhabitants (01:15:08 – 01:20:00), they treat the apocalyptic flood like a minor inconvenience, seemingly not concerned by the

situation at all. The movie's tone remains blithe, and the severity of the situation is completely ignored. This natural disaster, which would customarily be a considerable source of conflict and dramatic tension, becomes effectively an afterthought, transforming into a lighthearted, colorful backdrop for the personal story of Sosuke and Ponyo.

Howl no Ugoku Shiro deals less with ambivalent themes, but there is a war happening in the background, which is never explicitly shown. The powerful wizard Howl keeps avoiding it, and the viewer is left questioning whether he is a pacifist or just a coward. None of the characters directly addresses Howl's involvement in the war either. It just exists, leaving the viewer with a feeling of unease.

In Miyazaki's film *Kaze Tachinu* (2013), technology is not presented as something to be feared, rather as something that just "is". As opposed to *Mononoke Hime*, where technology seems to be the driving force for discord, the conflict in this movie is caused by nature, in form of a massive earthquake and disease. The plot revolves around Jirou, a designer for fighter planes for World War II, however, the war itself is never explicitly shown, nor is it portrayed in a negative light. The movie is completely ambivalent towards the war, which merely acts as incidental backdrop for the biopic the movie is trying to tell. The planes designed by Jirou, while being machines used for war, are of strictly romantic and artistic interest to him, mirroring Miyazaki's own childlike fascination with aviation (Fig. 57).



Fig. 57: Planes described in 'Kaze Tachinu'

If we look at Disney's oeuvre in comparison, a completely different picture is being painted. In contrast to Miyazaki's ambivalence, the word best describing the undercurrents of Disney's animations is perspicuity, or clarity. Situations and character motivations are not depicted in an ambiguous fashion; they are usually very straightforward and conclusive, and are reinforced by every aspect of the movie. This is particularized by the unyielding, definitive intrinsic desires of the main characters, which are more often than not spelled out in unobscured detail for the audience. In Disney's animated features, this is often achieved via song, with the protagonist unambiguously stating their feelings and desires. For instance, the first characterization of Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* features her singing *Part of your world*, which spells out her desire to explore the human world quite clearly.

“When's it my turn?
Wouldn't I love
Love to explore that shore above?
Out of the sea
Wish I could be
Part of that world”
[*Part of your World – The Little Mermaid*. 1989]

Similarly, in *The Lion King*, Simba spells out his initial desire to grow up and become king by the conveniently titled song *I Just Can't Wait to Be King*. The lyrics in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* are not quite as blatant, yet still clearly illustrate Quasimodo's desire for being loved and accepted within society. Furthermore, when we get introduced to Quasimodo, he helps a baby bird take flight and join with the others, stating that “Nobody wants to be cooped up here forever.” This is followed by a sad expression and a view over Paris, drawing clear parallels to Quasimodo's own situation. *Mulan* tackles the topic of forced identity and gender stereotypes with the song *Reflection*:

*"Who is that girl I see
Staring straight, back at me
Why is my reflection someone I don't know
Somehow I cannot hide
Who I am
Though I've tried
When will my reflection show who I am inside"*
[Reflection – Mulan, 1998]

Aladdin muses about his place in Agrabah's society in the reprise of *One Jump*

*Ahead:
"Riffraff," "Street rat"
I don't buy that
If only they'd look closer
Would they see a poor boy?
No, sirrey
They'd find out
There's so much more to me..."*
[One Jump Ahead (Reprise) – Aladdin, 1992]

Sometimes, the protagonist of the story is not proclaiming his inner motivations and desires via song himself, like in the movie *Tarzan*. However, the inner conflict of Tarzan is still being expressed via song, mainly *Two Worlds* written by Phil Collins. The song appears multiple times throughout the movie, reinforcing the notion of Tarzan being born between worlds, one being the human family who birthed him, and the other being the family of gorillas that raised him.

Perspicuity is reinforced not only in the song lyrics of the movies, but also in the character design. In Disney movies, you can usually tell with certainty who the villain of the story is, just by looking at their design. In contrast to Ghibli's movies, where straightforward villains rarely exist, or are not instantaneously identifiable through obvious character design, the facial characteristics and mannerisms of Disney's villains are immediately denoting the status of said characters. If we look

at all of the villains of the Renaissance Era, we can observe vivid commonalities like sharp facial features, darkness around the eyes, and frowns or maniac grins (which are not unique to the pictures being shown, but permanent character traits). It becomes clear that Disney is not trying to hide the nature of these characters; they rather choose to reinforce the archetype via character design (*Fig. 58, p. 77*).

If we compare these designs to some of the villains from Miyazaki's movies, we can see that there is no clear intimation of "evil", nor is there distinct cohesion between designs (*Fig. 59, p. 78*). Most of the antagonists are hardly classifiable as villains, and some Movies, like *Tonari no Totoro*, *Majo no Takkyūbin* and *Kaze Tachinu* do not feature any antagonists at all. One could point to Yubaba's design in *Chihiro no Kamikakushi* for presenting an archetypal "evil witch" (*Fig. 59 bottom left*), but the movie subverts this through the existence of Zeniba, her identical twin sister (*Fig. 59 bottom right*). While Yubaba generally embodies what could be construed as villainous, her sister is a completely moral supporting character, contradicting her character design.



*Fig. 58: Villain designs in Disney's Renaissance films
Notice the similarities: pointed facial structure, dark eyelids, permanent frowns*



*Fig. 59: 'Villain' designs in Miyazaki's films
Notice the lack in consistent facial features*

*The Witch of the Waste (Howl no Ugoku Shiro) (top left & top right)
transforms into a supporting character throughout the movie*

*Lady Eboshi (Mononoke Hime) (middle left) and Kaonashi (Chihiro no
kamikakushi) (middle right) can hardly beclassified as villains*

*Yubaba (Chihiro no kamikakushi) (bottom left) and Zeniba (Chihiro no
kamikakushi) (bottom right) are completely different, despite their identical
appearance*

5.3.1 On Female Body Types

Similar to the designs of the villains, Disney has streamlined the character designs of their female protagonists as well. If we analyze the body types of Disney's heroines, we can observe a consistent use of the double triangle, or "hourglass" shape. In animation, this anatomical structure represents balance, which coincides with conventional Western beauty standards (Moreno Brito, 2017, p. 92) (*Fig. 60*).



Fig. 60: uniform body types in Disney's female characters

In contrast, the character designs of Studio Ghibli are not homogenized, the female protagonists exhibit a variety of different foundational shapes, including triangle, rectangle, and occasionally hourglass. This exemplifies Ghibli's refusal to depict traditional archetypes throughout their stories, as opposed to Disney's homogenization of female body types (*Fig. 61*).



Fig. 61: diverse body types in Ghibli's female characters

5.4 Animation Style

There is an elementary difference in the way Disney approaches animation in contrast to Ghibli. The two studios exhibit fundamentally different philosophies when it comes to creating the illusion of life and movement in their animated features.

For Disney Animated Studios, the most characteristic facet of their productions is the tendency to depict realism through animation. This might sound paradox, since animation is an intrinsically fictitious medium. One cannot hope to accurately depict realism in animation simply by drawing consecutive images on cels; nevertheless, the features of Walt Disney Animated Studios strive for realism. Early Disney productions were characterized by so called “rubber hose” animation, and exaggerated squash and stretch physics, partly due to technical limitations at the time, but after the success of *Snow White* in 1937, Disney’s animation philosophy would shift to what can be described as “hyperrealism” (Pallant, 2011, p. 39 - 40). One of the most significant aspect of hyperrealism is the lifelike and accurate representation of movement of the character animation. Like discussed earlier, Walt Disney exhibited a great fondness of nature and wildlife, which could be the



Fig. 62: real life reference for Disney’s
‘*Snow White*’

reason he frequently advocated for real life references to be used as basis for the animators. In the studio’s formative years, animators would frequently attend life-drawing classes to achieve a better understanding of the idiosyncrasies of real life character movement, which would then be implemented in the production of Disney’s features.

The production staff of *Snow White* used real life models as reference to directly translate the movement into animation (Fig. 62). For the production of *Bambi* (1942), Walt Disney set great value on the realism of the various animals featured in the movie, so he arranged for real life deer, as well as other woodland critters, to be kept at the production facility.

With real life reference, animators could translate the movements and mannerisms into animation as effectively as possible (Finch, 1995, p. 209) (*Fig. 63*).



Fig. 63: real animals on set for Disney's 'Bambi'

This philosophy of aspiring realism can be found throughout most of the subsequent works of Disney Animated Studios. For the production of *The Lion King* (1994), the studio worked together with Jim Fowler, a renowned wildlife expert. He would visit the studio on several times to showcase an assortment of lions and other animals to serve as reference for the animators (*Fig. 64*). They would discuss behaviors and study movement, in order to enhance the authenticity of the character animation (Finch, 1995, p. 165 - 193). For the production of *Tarzan*, the production crew took a trip to Africa, to study how various jungle inhabitants moved and behaved. They also studied sculptures and anatomy to keep a sense of realism in the animated world (Keen, 1999, "The Making of *Tarzan*") (*Fig. 65*). Virtually all of the character animation in the films released during the Disney Renaissance features this tendency to illustrate realism, which seems to be the underpinning principle for animation applied in Walt Disney Animation studios.



Fig. 64: Lions on set for Disney's 'The Lion King'



Fig. 65: Anatomical study for Disney's 'Tarzan'

Studio Ghibli exhibits a stark contrast to the approach I just described. Rather than the aspiration for realism, Ghibli (also Japanese works in general) puts its primary focus on the emotional aspect of the animation. In fact, the whole idea of referencing real-life models to achieve greater levels of realism in animation never established itself in the Japanese anime production industry. Miyazaki takes a hardline stance on the issue, stating that he “hates this technique” and “if animators become slaves to live action their enjoyment of their work plummets by half” (Miyazaki, 1996, p. 75). Accordingly, the production ethos of Ghibli is predominantly underpinned by intuition and subjective feelings.

Throughout Miyazaki’s films, the reliance on intuition and emphasis on the subjective emotional aspect of animation can be felt in a variety of places. Perhaps most characterizing is the depiction of tears in his films. Whenever a character cries, tears do not stream down their face in a realistic manner; they rather tend to behave surreal and overemphasized, building up in the eyes, only to stream down in big, isolated droplets. We can observe this for example in *Karigurashi no Arrietty* (2010), *Howl no Ugoku Shiro* (2004), *Kaze Tachinu* (2013), *Gake no Ue no Ponyo* (2008) and *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* (2001) (Fig. 66).



Fig. 66: Tears in Ghibli’s films

Hair is also frequently used to depict emotional content in Ghibli films. Despite the absence of external forces, character's hair can "puff up" when a strong emotion is being communicated to the viewer (*Fig. 67*). This is not reserved for a specific emotion, rather used as a visual metaphor for a variety of emotions like anger or glee.



Fig. 67: Ashitaka's hair being moved by strong emotion in 'Mononoke Hime'

Depictions of environments are also subject of creative freedom, like the surreal earthquake scene in *Kaze Tachinu*. The ground's distortion is animated far from realistic; it rather aims for a dreamlike and surreal feeling, which is reinforced by the scene's soundscape, which is comprised entirely of noises generated by mouth. *Gake no Ue no Ponyo* features coastal landscapes with water drawn to be like it has a mind of its own.



Fig. 68: Water in 'Gake no Ue no Ponyo' and earthquake in 'Kaze Tachinu'

Altogether, the character animations of Ghibli films, while still following basic principles of animation and exhibiting a formidable level of technical aptitude by the animators, refrains to mimic the "Disney-esque" deliberation of emulating real life as closely as possible. Characters still display complexity in their movement and idiosyncrasies in every aspect of their actions, but it is done with a sense of abstract intuition, that, while difficult to particularize, still is clearly visible in contrast to Disney's animated features.

5.5 Structural Differences

Every film's main goal is to elicit emotions in the viewer. To achieve this, a film usually tells some sort of story, which can be defined by a succession of dramatic actions, or "plot". The way these actions are arranged and how they create tension and resolve is called storytelling, which is one of the key elements of any successful movie. If we look at the overall narrative structure of Disney's and Ghibli's oeuvre, we can observe a substantially different approach to storytelling. Disney's Renaissance Era movies are aimed predominantly at children; their stories are usually based on predictable outcomes, featuring similar plots with a moral protagonist and an evil antagonist with simple goals, who is ultimately defeated. The structure can be described as linear. In contrast, Ghibli's films don't feature similar plots, each movie features a unique plot without clear cut protagonists, antagonists, or conclusions, often drifting into flashbacks and even surreal territory, making the narrative structure a nonlinear one (Moreno Brito, 2017, p. 41 – 42) (Fig. 69).

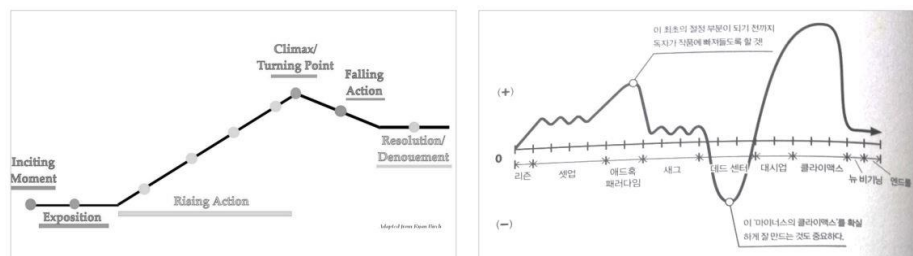


Fig. 69: linear structure (Disney) vs. nonlinear structure (Ghibli)

This poses the question: why is there such a disparity between the two studios' approach to storytelling? Aside from the cultural and religious differences discussed earlier, I believe it is imperative to acknowledge the structural differences of the filmmaking process as well.

The Disney process for creating a feature film can be described as fairly traditional. Since almost every Disney animated feature is an adaption of an existing, classic fairy-tale, the story has to be adapted for it to work as a children's movie. If we take Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, for example, the original story, written by French novelist Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve in 1740, presents a rather

sedentary tale. There are few thrilling or humorous moments present in this version, so it had to be “disneyfied”, meaning simplified and sentimentalized to be more accessible for a general audience (*Tale as Old as Time: The Making of 'Beauty and the Beast'*, 2002).

Production for Disney animated features, can be described as happening one step at a time. Of course, there is fluidity between the different stages of production, like in any filmmaking process, but generally speaking, production at Disney displays distinct chronology. The main staff assigned to the film first develops the scenario, and a storyboard. Storyboard sequences are being pitched to the directors, with the artists playing out the motions of the scene. The scene is then either approved, restructured or scrapped. This process is repeated several times, with the approved sequences then being assembled into an animatic, to get a better understanding of the narrative movements. This process will undergo several revisions, until the team is happy with the scenario; only then, the actual animation process commences (Miyazaki, 1996, p. 59, *Tale as Old as Time: The Making of 'Beauty and the Beast'*, 2002).

“...the directors and the writers and the story artists are literally trying to hammer out the story, figure out the structure for the film, and it’s much easier for us to do that – to experiment – before animation begins.”

[Gregory Perler, editor of 'Tarzan', "The Making of Tarzan, 1999]

“... and then we'll pitch that to each other. The story artists will come up and kind of go through it. [...] That process allows us to work out a lot of the bugs in the story, before we ever get to the time-consuming task of actually animating the characters.”

[Don Hahn, producer of 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame', The Making of Disney's 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame', 1996]

In contrast, the production process at Studio Ghibli is fundamentally different. Miyazaki's movies are not scripted in advance; they are based on his continuity sketches, which serve as inspiration for the scenarios. Initially, Miyazaki tried conceptualizing his stories in advance, but when being translated into a storyboard sequence, everything usually fell apart (Miyazaki, 1996, p. 103). Therefore, he now refrains from planning out the story in advance.

Furthermore, the key animation for Miyazaki's movies is done simultaneously, while the story is still being developed. This approach makes it possible to develop a better understanding of the character's motivations through the movements they exhibit. Miyazaki has stated that this process of creating a film is quite precarious, and not necessarily his preferred mode of operation, but time constraints do not allow for a different approach. He also claimed that "...this is the way my brain has been trained to work" (Miyazaki, 1996, p. 103).

"I find myself continually ruminating on the continuity sketches I have drawn. And in trying to create a continuity of time and space based on the flow established by the sketches, I find that I can't replicate the scenes that I had originally imagined in my mind.

...

*We find ourselves in the ridiculous situation of trying to simultaneously create the story and the scenario and the continuity sketches, and then, when the film is finished, we actually **do** have a story and a screenplay ...[laughter]"*

[Miyazaki, 1996, p. 103-104]

Another noteworthy aspect of Ghibli's production process is the direct and unrelenting involvement of Miyazaki at almost every stage. He acts as director, storyboard artist, scenarist, as well as chief animator, and personally supervises his staff on every occasion (McCarthy, 1999, p. 42). For this reason, he exerts more authorship on his movies than any typical Western production.

In this fundamental structural difference, I believe lies one of the reasons Miyazaki's films feel so different from Disney's animated features. Since they are not planned out in advance according to the conventions of a linear three-act story structure, they convey a more ephemeral, dreamlike and phantasmagoric tone. Combined with Miyazaki's deep involvement on every creative level, he becomes more of an auteur than a simple director, meaning his films become more personal and do not display many of the conspicuous commonalities present in Disney's animated features.

5.6 Humor

An interesting aspect to look at when contrasting Disney's and Ghibli's films, is how they approach humor. In general, Disney's animated features exhibit a more humorous tone than Miyazaki's films. Due to their firmly established formula of creating a movie, the films of Disney's Renaissance Era almost always feature non-human characters dedicated for comic relief. These "gag characters" are often used to bring comicality to situations that may not be humorous in nature. They achieve this usually by way of slapstick-oriented antics, funny expressions and voices. Characters that would classify as comic relief include Mushu and Cri-Kee (*Mulan*), Victor, Hugo, and Laverne, (the gargoyles from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*), Sebastian (*The Little Mermaid*), the animated household items and LeFou (the antagonist's sidekick from *Beauty and the Beast*), Timon and Pumbaa (*The Lion King*), The Genie (*Aladdin*), Meeko (the raccoon in *Pocahontas*) and Pain & Panic (*Hercules*).



Fig. 70: Comic relief characters from Disney's Renaissance Era

In contrast, while not completely absent in Ghibli's productions, humor plays a substantially smaller part in their movies. There aren't any characters simply serving as comic relief; humor is handled in a more subdued and discreet manner. Miyazaki finds humor not in zany characters with over expressive facial features, but in the subtle intricacies of social interactions. In fact, he is very outspoken about his distaste for gag characters who bring humor to situations simply by slipping up or falling down (Miyazaki, 1996, p. 22). Comedy in his movies can be found in very simple situations, like the way Satsuki interacts with the local boy Kanta in *Tonari*



Fig. 71: Chihiro's facial expression

no Totoro. He is at first shy and rude to her, just behaving the way a kid his age would when interacting with a girl his age. As the film progresses and he gets to know Satsuki better, he becomes increasingly kind and develops a friendship with her. Other examples would just be the way characters react to unusual or unfamiliar situations, like Chihiro's reaction to the initial repulsive smell of the River God in *Chihiro no Kamikakushi* (Fig. 71). While comparatively more exaggerated than in other scenes of the movie, her

expression is not portrayed in a profusely zany and over-expressive manner. Compared to the facial expressions to Disney's characters (comic relief or otherwise), facial expressions in Ghibli movies remain rather tame. The humor arises from the empathy we feel when sensing the humanity of the characters. They react how we as an audience would react to any given situation, making us empathize with the character.

5.7 Focus: Characters vs. Worlds

Like discussed in chapter 5.3, the movies of Disney's Renaissance Era exhibit a strong propensity to particularize the motivations and desires of their main characters. Therefore, Disney movies, like most modern Western animation, can be described as a cult of characters. When watching these movies, the audience is predominantly directed at the characters, so they can empathize with their struggles. If we look at Pixar's 22 rules of storytelling ⁽²⁰⁾, the thirteenth rule states:

“Give your characters opinions. Passive/malleable might seem likable to you as you write, but it’s poison to the audience.” However, when looking at Chihiro from Miyazaki’s *Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, she is exactly that, passive and malleable, but in the context of the movie this works, since a great amount of time and effort was spent on creating her surroundings with an extraordinary level of verisimilitude. By keeping the stories ambivalent, Ghibli’s movies pull the focus of the audience away from the characters and let them experience the world instead. Since their stories don’t spell out character relations, like “what does Chihiro think about the spirit world”, or in case of *Mononoke Hime*, “does Ashitaka disapprove of Lady Eboshi?”, the audience is left to answer these questions themselves. What remains on screen is a greater focus on the worlds the characters inhabit and the mechanisms thereof.

The value Miyazaki places on immersive world building becomes apparent when examining the first volume of his original manga for *Kaze no tani no Nausicaä*. It includes a fold-out map of the world immediately after the cover page, reminiscent of classical fantasy novels with extensive world building like J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* series, or C.S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Naria* (Fig. 72).

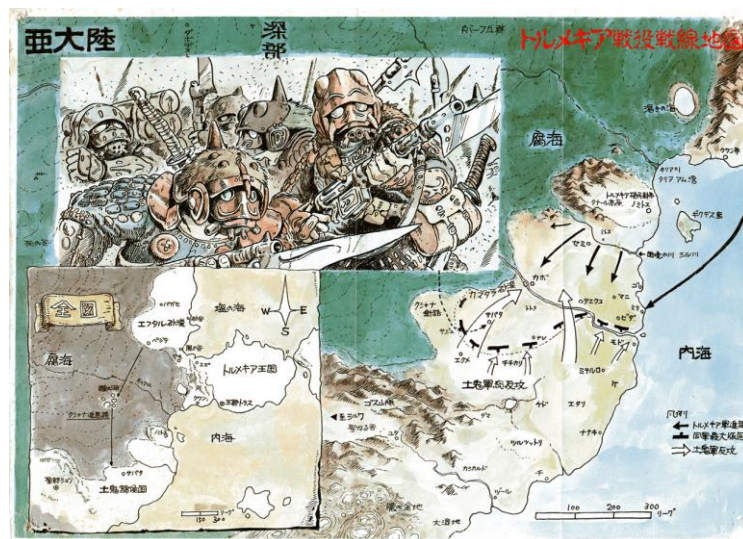


Fig. 72: World map in the manga version of 'Kaze no tani no Nausicaä'

“Anime may depict fictional worlds, but I nonetheless believe that at its core it must have a certain realism. Even if the world depicted is a lie, the trick is to make it seem as real as possible. Stated another way, the animator must fabricate a lie that seems so real viewers will think the world depicted might possibly exist.”

[Miyazaki, 1996, p. 21]

The depiction of worlds and places with extreme levels of detail and cohesion is one of Miyazaki's greatest strengths. The settings of his films overwhelmingly emit a sense of authenticity, giving the viewer a sense of familiarity and spatial awareness crucial for the believability of the setting. He achieves this by frequently using wide-angle shots to show as much of the environment as possible. At the beginning of *Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, we see Chihiro being guided by Haku to the boiler room, where she ultimately meets Kamajī (00:16:32 – 00:23:08). This is depicted predominantly through wide-angle shots rich with highly detailed backgrounds, making it easy to understand the spatial relations of the setting (Fig. 73). Once in the boiler room, we get to see it from a multitude of different angles, while observing Kamajī's work in detail. We are being shown a multitude of employees, sleeping quarters, a coal powered furnace for heating the baths, different kinds of soap for different visitors, and even the mechanism for calling upon the different kinds of soap. Despite being a fictional place, the bathhouse becomes a fully realized complex that feels alive and real, since the audience is being shown almost every aspect of its mode of operation.



Fig. 73: journey to the boiler room in ‘Chihiro no Kamikakushi’

In *Howl no Ugoku Shiro*, the moving castle is drawn in exorbitantly high detail, and there are many scenes just focusing on the castle walking, not being concerned with moving the plot along (Fig. 74). The town in *Gake no Ue no Ponyo* is meticulously crafted in a way that it becomes easy to mentally trace the route Sosuke's mother takes when driving to the nursing home on the adjacent hilltop. Throughout Miyazaki's films, the highly developed and detailed nature of the environments depicted makes it feel like there are untold stories unfolding in the background. There exists depth and richness in the world, elevating it to more than a façade for the convenience of the plot.



Fig. 74: the castle in 'Howl no Ugoku Shiro'

If we compare this with Disney's oeuvre, the locations depicted are detailed and beautiful in their own right, but less screen time is spent on representing their functionality, since their stories are more focused on characters. The jungle in *Tarzan* is detailed and beautiful, but the sense of cohesion between the different locations of the film gets lost quickly, when we're following Tarzan through the jungle as he swings from vine to vine. A case for strong world building could be made for the location of *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, since it is based on Paris on the 1400s and densely populated, making it seem like a real place. However, throughout the movie, we never see the citizens acting autonomous without immediate relevancy to the plot. Everything we get to see of the city and its inhabitants has a purpose for the progression of the story, so we never get time to just absorb the everyday life of the town, detracting from the verisimilitude of the film's setting.

6 Seceding Ghibli from Contemporary Anime

At the very beginning of this thesis, I brought forward the argument that it is counterproductive and regressive to lump works of art together based merely on a superficial commonality like exhibiting the same style of animation. It is important to particularize the nuances a medium is able to express, and to distinguish between them. Therefore, I would be remiss if I did not point out Miyazaki's refusal to indulge in many of the tropes found in contemporary anime today. Just like generalizing his oeuvre by calling him the Walt Disney of Japan, it would be equally unfair to simply classify his films as anime, or "anime-esque". His directing and animation style leaves a distinctive impression on the viewer, contrary to modern TV anime. Usually employing a number of tropes to create an emotional response in the viewer, contemporary anime has developed tropes, which have become synonymous with the medium over the years. Miyazaki has problems with the anime industry, and has openly spoken about his distaste for the direction it seems to be going; from the cost-cutting methods utilized by many studios, to the self-indulgence and subsequent reinforcement of the tropes people came to associate with modern anime.

"Mass production has changed everything. The emotions and thoughts that should be so moving have given way to showiness, nervousness and titillation. And work that should be done lovingly by hand has been whittled away at within organized production systems that focus on straight work for hire. I frankly despise the truncated word 'anime' because to me it only symbolizes the current desolation of our industry."

[Miyazaki, 1988, p. 72]

6.1 Over-expressive Animation Style

Many anime today tend to portray emotions of characters in an overly comedic, often highly exaggerated fashion. To communicate the emotions of a character or a scene to the audience, characters don't just emote; they become a caricature of themselves. Characters don't just cry, they are depicted with waterfalls pouring out of their eyes. When people are shocked, their faces often change art style completely, emphasizing the emotion in a comedic fashion. Nervous characters are drawn with a conspicuous sweat droplet on their temple; angry characters show a cartoony vein on their forehead, etcetera. This is often illustrated via still frames, accompanied by a sound effect to further indulge in the moment. Of course, there exist anime, which do not resort to these tactics and demonstrate a much more serious atmosphere, but it is reasonable to assert that so-called face faults, or "anime faces", are emblematic of the medium and permeate the landscape of modern anime (*Fig. 75*).



Fig. 75: expressions in contemporary anime

Seemingly the most characteristic attribute of anime are the profusely oversized eyes with an overabundance of detail. Though not every anime makes use of this design choice, it has become virtually synonymous with the anime aesthetic in Western culture. The origin can be traced back to Osamu Tezuka, one of the most influential faces in the manga industry, who was heavily influenced by classical

animated icons like *Betty Boop*, who was depicted with disproportionately large eyes as well (Brenner, 2007, p. 6 - 7). The big eyes remain a prevalent part of anime aesthetics, which could be linked to the *moe* movement in otaku culture, which is a popular trend in anime and manga, due to the self-indulgent and self-referential nature of the medium. *Moe* is a Japanese otaku slang derived from *moeru* (budding, to sprout/bloom), which usually means "cute", "huggable", or "endearing". Characters with *moe* aesthetic are predominantly depicted as youthful, innocent, shy, and submissive, since they are meant to instill a desire to adore, protect and comfort them in the viewer, sometimes conflating with sexual or fetishistic undertones. Essentially, exaggerated "cuteness" is a primary facet of the aesthetic of these types of characters, and big eyes are an integral component to this.

Miyazaki demonstrates a conscious effort to avoid these characteristics of contemporary anime. He tends to avoid large, flashy moments and exaggerated emotions in his animations; he rather focuses on the subdued, subtle intricacies of his characters' movements and emotions. This can be shown by seemingly minor details, like a character walking on their knees to avoid making a carpet dirty, or the way a character taps their shoes to make them fit correctly. His human character designs are primarily realistically proportioned, featuring regular-sized eyes. As stated earlier, Miyazaki's belief is that at the core of animation - even when depicting fantastical elements - there has to be a sense of realism. For this reason, he adamantly refuses to incorporate cartoony over-expressiveness into his works.

6.2 Sexuality and Fanservice

Japan has had a long history with eroticism, which is distinct to Western, especially North American, sensibilities. Like stated earlier in this thesis (p. 9) Japanese erotic art dates back to the Edo period, where *shunga* was a popular commodity. To this day, sexuality permeates a number of genres in manga and anime, as evidenced by *shōjo* and *josei*, for example. There also exists *hentai* (meaning "pervert" or "perversion" in Japanese), which refers to a separate genre of sexually explicit

manga and anime. However, I am referring to the sexual and titillating undercurrents of non-pornographic shows, which is a prevalent occurrence in Japanese anime.

A popular genre in Japanese media is called *ecchi* (Japanese pronunciation of the letter “H”, derived from *hentai*), which refers to sexually suggestive anime and manga. Creators of these series focus on tantalizing and provocative imagery and subject matters, riding the line between sexually explicit content and merely suggestive content, in order to still be considered acceptable for Japanese public television. *Moe*, like stated in chapter 6.1, can also describe shows with sexual undertones, albeit not as ostentatious in nature.

Since the topic of sexuality has diverging significance in Japan, as opposed to the Western world, even genres normally targeted to teenagers and children can exhibit scenes with sexual undercurrents. This is generally referred to as “fanservice”, which is a concept not limited to manga and anime, but was popularized by the anime community. It can also refer to non-sexual “crowd pleaser” moments in media, but has predominantly sexual connotations. This discrepancy with Western sensibilities becomes clear, when we take a look at children’s anime licensed for broadcast in the United States. Series are licensed for children, and have to be continually edited in distribution, in order to appease American censors. For example, the American release of the popular series *One Piece* would depict scantily dressed characters with more clothing (Fig. 76). Some episodes would be completely withheld from American audiences, like episode eighteen of the original *Pokémon* anime, in which the characters were mainly depicted with bikinis, including



Fig. 76: censorship in ‘One Piece’
Japanese (left) vs. Western (right)

a male antagonist, James, who was depicted with artificial breasts. In the American release of *Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon*, a number of scenes were deemed to be provocative for young audiences, so censors utilized several censorship techniques, like tinting slightly transparent water to be fully opaque (Fig. 77).

Miyazaki's works invariably refrain from indulging in this pervasive trend of sexual undercurrents. His young female characters are strong and autonomous, not shying away from forceful acts while



*Fig. 77: censorship in 'Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon'
Japanese (left) vs. Western (right)*

still condemning violence. They are seldom portrayed to be involved in romantic relationships, and are not eroticized. When romantic love is portrayed in his movies, he strictly depicts the aspect of romanticism, but never resorts to sexually charged moments. One could argue that there exists a "sexual" scene in *Howl no Ugoku Shiro*, where Sophie gets embarrassed when seeing Howl's naked body, but unlike contemporary anime, which would over-exaggerate the moment and play it for laughs, perhaps depicting the scene in a provocative manner, Miyazaki handles the scene with dignity and restraint, treating the scene with implicit normality not succumbing to the expected trends of the medium.

6.3 Setting

There exists a common trend in anime, where real world locations are directly referenced and incorporated into the fictional world. This often happens in anime with contemporary settings, like modern Tokyo. This includes landmarks, street corners and school buildings. Locations are usually directly referenced, sometimes to such a degree of specificity, that it is no stretch to assert they are just photos manipulated to look like digitally drawn backgrounds. There exist a plethora of examples; Kyoto Animation, for example, is one of the studios employing this technique in a number of anime. The city featured in *K-On!* (2009), albeit an unnamed fictional city, is clearly based on Kyoto, as evidenced by countless direct references to street corners, buildings and storefronts. Sakuragaoka High School, where a majority of the *K-On!*'s story takes place, is almost a one-to-one recreation of Toyosato Elementary School, located in a rural town in the Inukami District, the Shiga Prefecture of Japan (*Fig. 78*).



Fig. 78: real world (left) vs. 'K-On!' (right)

Suzumiya Haruhi no Yuuutsu (2006) is based on a light novel written by Nagaru Tanigawa. Though never explicitly naming it, he used his hometown of Nishinomiya as setting for the story, describing the locations with loving detail. Naturally, the background artists working on the anime adaption painstakingly recreated the setting with immense attention to detail (Fig. 79).



Fig. 79: real world (left) vs. 'Suzumiya Haruhi no Yuuutsu' (right)

In contrast to all this, Miyazaki's work never directly copies real world locales. His settings may be inspired by real places, but like most aspects of his work, he and his team only capture the mood, or put another way, the visceral emotions the places are meant to evoke. They are merely used as inspiration for original artwork.

6.4 Time and Space Dilation

Nothing is more indicative of Japanese Anime than the seemingly infinite deformation of space and time. This style of engaging the viewer with the medium did not start with anime; it can be traced back to the 1600s, where *kōdan* was a popular way of oral storytelling. Initially reserved for high-class individuals, and later appropriated for a more general audience, it drew on the limitless distortion of time and space. Twisting time and space allowed *kōdan* storytellers to create a world, which was vastly more fantastic and magical, thus capturing the listeners' imagination more effectively. This also posed as breeding grounds for the notion that abstract human drive and tenacity can be more powerful than real physical power, which is also a sentiment prevailing especially in *shōnen* (contemporary manga and anime aimed at male teenagers). This sentiment seems to be deeply ingrained in Japanese culture. Even ancient ninja used *mizugumo* (lit. water spider), which were circular pods allowing them to walk on water (Miyazaki, 1996, p. 100). Europeans were not convinced by the concept, referring to the principle of Archimedes as a reason. Japanese, however, were inclined to believe that with just enough training and persistence, they could achieve walking on water. Whether or not the technique actually worked is irrelevant, it is indicative of the mentality of "mind over body" that runs extraordinarily deep within Eastern culture.

Miyazaki believes that the distortion of time and space is one of the hallmarks of Japanese entertainment (Miyazaki, 1996, p. 99). In contemporary anime, it is used predominantly in fast-paced scenes; the action can slow to a grinding halt, usually to transition to an inner monologue of the character's motivations and thoughts at the time. This is often a byproduct from translating existing manga to Anime. In manga, it is easy to depict an action scene while simultaneously giving the involved characters intricate thoughts through text bubbles. Due to the nature of the medium, the flow of the scene is not interrupted. In animation, however, the action has to be stretched to a ridiculous degree, so the show has time to describe the inner thoughts of the character on screen. However, in anime, this is not perceived as detrimental; it is used as a stylistic choice that can engage the viewer in a different kind of way.

A perfect early example of excessive time stretching would be the 1968 baseball-themed anime *Kyojin no Hoshi* (Star of the Giants). In one of the episodes, Hyūma, the protagonist of the show, throws a pitch, while pondering every decision that led to this moment. While the ball is travelling, Hyūma recollects everything about his life. This goes on for the entirety of the episode. A somewhat recent example would be a scene in the anime adaption of the manga *Death Note* (2003), in which two of the main characters - Yagami Light and L - are engaged in a highly tense and advanced match of tennis. They both try to gauge the intentions of their adversary, which is shown through inner monologue.

However, time stretching is not a phenomenon reserved strictly to manga adaptations; it occurs everywhere in anime. From simple scenes, like two characters with opposing viewpoints walking past each other, to action scenes, where specific hits and impacts are elongated to accentuate visual impact.

Despite Miyazaki's belief in the ubiquitous nature of the trope (Miyazaki, 1996, p. 99-100), techniques like these are largely absent in his own works. He refrains from spelling out the inner motivations of his characters, be it in action scenes or any other situation. Instead, he chooses to show his characters reacting to situations around them merely by animating the idiosyncrasies of their body language and facial expressions. Moreover, in terms of pacing and passage of time, Miyazaki's action scenes are comparatively realistic, never resorting to artificial time dilation to heighten the tension or impact of his scenes.

7 Final Thoughts and Conclusion

Disney has managed to streamline and commodify the production of their animated features, which is exemplified by their formulaic approach to filmmaking. The similar designs of their heroines, the standardization of archetypes, the frequent musical numbers elucidating character motivations, and the use of characters dedicated to specific assigned roles (the villain, the comic relief, the sidekick, the heroine), communicates consistency and standardization. Therefore, it becomes easy to identify a film as “Disney-esque”, despite the lack of any singular individual writing and directing all their films.

In contrast, the films produced by Studio Ghibli do not present any of the unifying proclivities found in the works of Walt Disney Animation Studios. Although undoubtedly exhibiting commonalities themselves, like frequent use of kami, themes of environmentalism and ambivalent storytelling, these similarities are ascribable to the individual, Hayao Miyazaki. The overlap of storytelling devices and themes are not conspicuous like in Disney’s animated works, they are discreetly hidden behind uniquely crafted stories vastly differing in tone. Miyazaki exposes his audience to colorful, child friendly fantasy, gruesome, sanguinary large-scale conflicts, and even biopics devoid of supernatural elements. Without taking time to particularize commonalities, it proves difficult to identify any of Miyazaki’s films as particularly “Ghibli-esque”.

This implicates genre becoming a limiting factor for the collaborative creative effort of any particular studio. Just as classic Hollywood genres like Western, Horror, or Film Noir connote the use of similar, unifying tropes (Neale, 2000, p. 31 – 47), “Disney-esque” movies set up expectations and resolve them in ways similar to each other. Miyazaki’s use of wayward, complex characters, stories and narrative devices are, at least partly, possible due to his obstinate personality and heavy involvement on every stage of the creative process.

All things considered, my initial proposition that Studio Ghibli’s oeuvre cannot be equated with Disney’s films persists, since their oeuvre displays fundamental differences in almost every aspect. Furthermore, Miyazaki’s vocal aversion for many of the practices deployed by Disney, as well as his disapproval for the term

“Japanese Disney”, further supports the notion that Disney’s and Ghibli’s works should be contrasted, rather than equated, when discussion of the subject occurs.

Whether or not Japanese culture exerts greater influence on Ghibli’s productions than Western culture does on Disney’s films, proved to be a nuanced question. Both Ghibli’s and Disney’s films are clearly saturated with elements indigenous to their respective culture, making it difficult to ascribe particular quantities of specific cultural origins. However, since Japanese culture is more innately spiritual than Western culture, the religious (or spiritual) influences exhibited in Miyazaki’s work are more pronounced. In the United States, religion plays a moderate role in society, so regardless of Walt Disney’s faith, or the beliefs of any particular director from the Renaissance Era, religious influences are not pervasive throughout every aspect of Disney’s final products. By contrast, Japanese society was established with substantial connection to their spiritual beliefs, manifesting in nearly every aspect of their culture. Hayao Miyazaki may not be overtly religious; however, his films show that he incorporates spiritual elements and ideas with greater implicitness. The frequent use of kami, the conflicts between nature and humanity, the reverence for stunning and detailed environments, as well as the contemplative, slow pacing of his films, can all be attributed to the spiritual predisposition of Japanese culture.

In conclusion, since *Shintō* exerts greater influence on Japanese society than Christianity does on Western society, it is justifiable to assert that Japanese society exerts greater influence on Miyazaki’s films than Western society does on Disney’s films.

Furthermore, based on Studio Ghibli’s active rejection of tropes seen in a majority of contemporary Japanese anime, it is reasonable to classify their movies as not distinctly “anime-esque” as well. Miyazaki’s strong creative voice is felt throughout his work, and elevates the films produced by his studio to a unique and unpaired oeuvre, which cannot be equated with works of any other studio operating today.

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Fig. 40	https://explorerdiariesacademy.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/1tucrook7uf4bgsc3ngsmlq1748853906.jpg
Fig. 41	https://www.opportunitydiary.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Walt_Disney_Animation_Studios-1024x733.png
Fig. 42	https://cdn.d23.com/cdn2015/wp-content/uploads/1932/11/15NOV-art-school-formed-at-disney-studios-TDID1180x600.jpg
Fig. 43	https://nichimassa.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/ins_www_animation_fantasoundinstallation1.jpg
Fig. 44	https://cdn.d23.com/cdn2015/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/nine-old-men-1180x600-1180x600.jpg
Fig. 45	-
Fig. 46	-
Fig. 47	Stills from <i>"The Hunchback of Notre Dame"</i> (1996) and <i>"Cinderella"</i> (1950)
Fig. 48	https://youtu.be/TOcyrSoXMA8
Fig. 49	http://moviepostersandanimationart.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/tarzan-big.jpg
Fig. 50	Stills from <i>"Dragon Ball"</i> , <i>"Naruto"</i> and <i>"Yu-Gi-Oh!"</i> - Japanese & American release
Fig. 51	Stills from <i>"The Little Mermaid"</i> (1989), <i>"The Rescuers Down Under"</i> (1990), <i>"Beauty and the Beast"</i> (1991), <i>"Aladdin"</i> (1992), <i>"The Lion King"</i> (1994), <i>"Pocahontas"</i> (1995), <i>"The Hunchback of Notre Dame"</i> (1996), <i>"Hercules"</i> (1997), <i>"Mulan"</i> (1998) and <i>"Tarzan"</i> (1999)
Fig. 52	Stills from <i>"Mononoke Hime"</i> (1997) and <i>"Tarzan"</i> (1999)
Fig. 53	Stills from <i>"Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi"</i> (2001) and <i>"Tonari no Totoro"</i> (1988)
Fig. 54	Still from <i>"Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi"</i> (2001)

Fig. 55	Still from “ <i>Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi</i> ” (2001)
Fig. 56	Still from “ <i>Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi</i> ” (2001)
Fig. 57	Still from “ <i>Kaze Tachinu</i> ” (2013)
Fig. 58	Stills from “ <i>The Little Mermaid</i> ” (1989), “ <i>The Rescuers Down Under</i> ” (1990), “ <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> ” (1991), “ <i>Aladdin</i> ” (1992), “ <i>The Lion King</i> ” (1994), “ <i>Pocahontas</i> ” (1995), “ <i>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> ” (1996), “ <i>Hercules</i> ” (1997), “ <i>Mulan</i> ” (1998) and “ <i>Tarzan</i> ” (1999)
Fig. 59	Stills from “ <i>Howl no Ugoku Shiro</i> ” (2004), “ <i>Mononoke Hime</i> ” (1997) and “ <i>Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi</i> ” (2001)
Fig. 60	Illustrations from “ <i>The Little Mermaid</i> ” (1989), “ <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> ” (1991), “ <i>Aladdin</i> ” (1992), “ <i>Pocahontas</i> ” (1995), “ <i>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> ” (1996), “ <i>Hercules</i> ” (1997), “ <i>Mulan</i> ” (1998) and “ <i>Tarzan</i> ” (1999)
Fig. 61	Stills from “ <i>Majo no Takkyūbin</i> ” (1989), “ <i>Kaze no tani no Nausicaä</i> ” (1984), “ <i>Howl no Ugoku Shiro</i> ” (2004), “ <i>Mononoke Hime</i> ” (1997), “ <i>Gake no Ue no Ponyo</i> ” (2008), “ <i>Tonari no Totoro</i> ” (1988) and “ <i>Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi</i> ” (2001)
Fig. 62	https://youtu.be/a7X8u-EjADw
Fig. 63	https://youtu.be/YMhXgkFfWjI
Fig. 64	https://youtu.be/rkb0r2-vYK0
Fig. 65	https://youtu.be/vdwByOaft3o
Fig. 66	Stills from “ <i>Howl no Ugoku Shiro</i> ” (2004), “ <i>Kaze Tachinu</i> ” (2013), “ <i>Gake no Ue no Ponyo</i> ” (2008) and “ <i>Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi</i> ” (2001)
Fig. 67	Stills from “ <i>Mononoke Hime</i> ” (1997)
Fig. 68	Stills from “ <i>Gake no Ue no Ponyo</i> ” (2008) and “ <i>Kaze Tachinu</i> ” (2013)
Fig. 69	Moreno Brito, 2017, p. 41
Fig. 70	Stills from “ <i>Mulan</i> ” (1998), “ <i>The Lion King</i> ” (1994), “ <i>Hercules</i> ” (1997), “ <i>The Little Mermaid</i> ” (1989), “ <i>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> ” (1996)
Fig. 71	Still from “ <i>Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi</i> ” (2001)
Fig. 72	https://i.4pcdn.org/tg/1526421708066.jpg
Fig. 73	Stills from “ <i>Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi</i> ” (2001)
Fig. 74	Still from “ <i>Howl no Ugoku Shiro</i> ” (2004)
Fig. 75	https://myanimelist.net/featured/1819/The_Many_Expressions_of_Anime_Faces
Fig. 76	Still from “ <i>One Piece</i> ” (1999) Japanese & American release
Fig. 77	Still from “ <i>Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon</i> ” (1992) Japanese & American release
Fig. 78	https://infinitemirai.wordpress.com/2012/04/27/toyosato-high-school-home-of-k-on/
Fig. 79	https://infinitemirai.wordpress.com/2012/04/27/nishinomiya-hyogo-home-of-the-melancholy-of-suzumiya-haruhi/