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Krommenhoek, Reg

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A Comparative Analysis of Character Animation and Performance between American and Japanese Feature Film Animation

University of the Witwatersrand

School of Digital Arts

Animation Masters

Name: Reg Krommenhoek

Student Number: 325490

Supervisor: Stephen Cloete

Abstract

This research paper seeks to gain a better understanding of the disparity in character animation and performance between Japanese and American animation through a comparative analysis of feature films by Studio Ghibli and Disney. The analysis incorporates an investigation into the cultural and historical elements that influenced the development of the medium in both regions as well as the individuals that pioneered animation techniques and approaches to performance that contributed to both studios' unique styles. Beyond the textual and technological readings of animation, this research paper engages with performance theory and seeks to explore the disparity in animation based on performative differences. By gaining, a nuanced understanding of performance *in* animation and the characteristics of these forms of performance one can gain a greater understanding of how each studio approaches character animation and performance, and why these approaches differ. This is achieved through identifying the difference in ideology regarding movement and the processes by which these movements are rendered. The identification of the key performance models -figurative or embodied- and their use by each studio is then re-integrated into the greater discussion regarding the textual and technological readings of animation and how the textual and technological elements help reinforce the unique style and approach to each performance mode. Thus gaining a nuanced understanding of the medium in both regions in regards to animation production and the disparity in animation on a performative level.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my loving family who always support me no matter the endeavour.

I would also like to thank my supervisor and the Digital Arts faculty of Wits University for their guidance and support throughout my academic career.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Digital Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Reg Krommenhoek_____ 15th day of February 2018

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Introduction

> Animation is not the art of drawings that move but the art of movements that are drawn; what happens between each frame is much more important than what exists on each frame; animation is therefore the art of manipulating the invisible interstices that lie between frames. (Furniss, 2007)

The movement of bodies is the heart and soul of character animation. How these animated bodies move and their presentation is influenced by a range of aspects that inform the performance. This facet of animation allows for a new investigation into the movement of bodies, or rather, the performance of bodies through character animation by analysing movement-the raw material of animated films. By analysing movement as one would analyse music "through its melody or rhythm, or a painting through colour, line and shape" (Bishko, 2007, p. 34) one can understand and discern visible differences in Western and Eastern approaches to character animation and performance.

Differences between Western and Eastern animation extend beyond the types of stories they tell and the aesthetic they use. The purpose of this research paper is to focus on character animation and performance in Japanese and American feature animation. Japanese and American animation arguably constitute the two biggest representatives of mainstream narrative animation, this is not to downplay other large animation industries (e.g. the French animation industry) but rather to focus on the two most prominent; yet their approach and understanding of the medium is different. The goal is not to assign any value judgement on which approach is better in one form or another but rather to gain a greater understanding of performance in animation, the processes by which they are rendered and the traditions and cultures that influence their development. Nor is the goal of the research to reduce Japanese animation or American animation's complexity down to 'Japaneseness' or 'Americanness', but rather to engage with the differing qualities of movement and performance in their animations and identify elements that may contribute to their similarities or differences whether

cultural, economic or technical. The engagement with this study into character animation and performance through analysis is from an etic perspective on both forms as I am not a member of either culture. Therefore, throughout the research paper, I attempt to engage with and understand the historical, cultural, traditional and economic aspects of Japanese and American animation; however, the potential remains for nuanced elements to be lost in 'translation'.

It is often stated that what separates anime[1] from other animation forms is its deliberate lack of fluidity and use of limited animation. Although these elements do contribute to its unique aesthetic approach, I believe that if one were to compare feature films from Japan and America that use the same animation technique, in this case full or at least full-limited animation[2] one would still be able to identify a discernible difference in the way characters move and perform. For instance, American animation, namely the works of Disney will often express a characters emotional state through physical actions whereas Studio Ghibli, Disney's spiritual counterpart in Japan, may express the same emotional state through other means that may be less physical and more figurative in depiction. This subtle difference in performance could be attributed to a range of influences ranging from the animation process used to the thematic and cultural qualities of the production, but beyond these factors is an underlying ideology or approach that informs animated character performance.

What prompted interest in this topic was twofold my own interest as a fan and practitioner of animation and the multitude of articles written on the topic from the academic to the non-academic. One particular article written by animation historian Michael Barrier caught my interest, in which he discussed

[1] Anime is the most common modern term used to define animation in Japan but it only came to fruition in the middle of the twentieth century and went by other names in earlier periods (Clements, 2013, p. 1). In contemporary terms anime, refers to animation from Japan (Clements & McCarthy, 2015, p. 30).

[2] The distinction between full and limited animation is discussed in detail in the Limited Animation vs. Full Animation section.

Studio Ghibli and famed Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki. Michael Barrier remarked that:

> After watching six of Hayao Miyazaki's animated features…I've concluded that this extravagantly praised Japanese filmmaker is above all a great effects animator…The downside of a preoccupation with effects is that everything in between turns into a sort of stuffing, the character animation in particular. In Miyazaki films it suffers from Japanese animation's endemic reticence where the illumination of personality is concerned. This or that character may express extreme emotion, but always with the stylized extravagance of Kabuki. Too many Miyazaki characters – the doll like heroes and heroines, the raw boned comic relief pirates and labourers - look and behave too much alike (Barrier, 2006).

Michael Barrier's statement is rather harsh and dismissive of both Hayao Miyazaki's work and Japanese animation as a whole on the principle of character animation. I disagree with his observation, but nonetheless his statement raises an interesting point pertinent to the introduction to the discussion of this thesis. Barrier makes a veiled comparison, although not directly stated, when he compares Japanese character animation to that of non-Japanese, possibly American character animation. This highlights an embedded cultural bias in his assessment that utilises the American approach to animation and performance as a standard from which to assess anime. Character animation or the lack thereof, as far as Barrier is concerned, is tied to the regional output of Japanese animation. Barrier identifies a difference in how characters perform emotion and how emotion is handled and to some degree identifies a lack of 'personality' in the animation, not emotion, and correlates this difference to the theatre traditions of Japan. Amid Amidi of *Animation Blast* shares a similar notion and bias to Michael Barrier in regards to the performance of characters and their personality animation when writing that:

> Certain aspects of Japanese cartoons…turn me off, and surprisingly these elements remain consistent throughout all of the anime I've seen, whether it's a cheaply-produced OAV[sic] or a classy Miyazaki production. Namely, it is the unappealing and cold nature of their character designs, and the general lack of dynamics and complexity in their personality animation (Osmond, 2000).

Both identify a difference between American and Japanese animation based on personality animation and the difference in performance as a result. What is particularly interesting from their assessments is that they completely remove production and budgetary elements from the assessment and potential traditional and cultural aspects that would influence the performance as whole. Their assessment purely focuses on the performance of characters, based on the standardised tradition of Disney's "illusion of life" or personality animation, highlighting a core separation between both territories' approach to character animation and performance.

The notion of difference in style and performance of character between the two nations provides an avenue worth investigating and shares more than one similarity to the approach used by Mark Langer. Mark Langer conducted a study in which he identified differences in the character animation and performance of characters between East Coast and West Coast animations in America during the 1940's. Mark Langer specifically identified a difference in the character animation tradition in Disney's own work during the 1930's – 1940's. He identified two different styles of animation at Disney during this period the aforementioned East (New York style) and West coast (Hollywood) styles.

> New York style was a form of discourse that preceded and stood in opposition to the dominant West Coast style in use by Walt Disney Productions. While West Coast animation was more consistent with the codes of classical Hollywood cinema, the New York style violated those codes through its emphasis on the artificial quality of animation (Langer, 1990, p. 306).

What Langer identified, without using the terminology, is what Crafton describes as figurative and embodied performances. The East Coast style is figurative and the West Coast style is embodied. By identifying these two different animation traditions, he effectively identified two different modes of performance in classic American cartoons driven by regionalism. This separation in regionalism, according to Langer, attributed to the difference in approach to animation as it influenced the type of character performance, narratives, settings and the overall mise-en-scene of the animation. As these regions had different ideological, cultural and conventional expectations of the art form. Most viewers can tell the difference between an animation from Fleischer Studios and Disney based solely on the performance and the same is true for the works of American animation and Japanese animation. The importance of Langer's observation then is that in many ways it resembles a similar separation between Japanese and American animation and is echoed, to some degree, in Barrier's and Amid Amidi's statement in regards to how character's performance is handled between American and Japanese animation.

While Langer's focus was on the difference in animation tradition due to regionalism within America, this research paper will focus on the performativity of characters in feature animation from Japan and America and the influences of production, culture and artistic traditions on character animation and performativity. As stated previously, the separation between Japanese and American animation extends beyond the visual aesthetic and is an engrained part in how animation is approached and movement is presented. Using examples from Walt Disney's 'Renaissance Period[3]' and Studio Ghibli's library of work from the late 80's and 90's, this essay will seek to analyse character performance and the approach to character performance

[3] The renaissance period reflects a period of aesthetic and industrial growth at Disney animation studios between 1989 and 1999. This period saw Disney animated productions return to the "artistic ideologies of the Disney-Formalist period" (Pallant, 2011, p. 89). The films that constitute the Disney Renaissance 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).

within these films. Donald Crafton's theory of animation performativity will be used as a base to critically engage and analyse performance in the selected examples. Historical accounts of the development of both the American and Japanese industries will be given to gain further insight and help identify core artistic traditions and cultures that influenced animation and character performativity of each Studio.

The selection of Studio Ghibli and Disney films are based on their use of full animation and traditional cel animation. Additionally both studios films are considered orthodox animation due to their use of the narrative form and a reliance on configuration or the use of recognizable character models of people or animals (Wells, 1998, p. 35). Thus, Studio Ghibli's productions mirror those of Disney in regards to animation and production, at least close enough to allow for a closer analysis.

Limited Animation vs. Full Animation

At this juncture it is important to address the distinction between full animation and limited animation.

> The distinction between full animation and limited animation is central to the study of animation, and accounts frequently characterize anime as a distinctive form of limited animation that began in earnest with the production of animated television series in the early 1960's (Lamarre, 2009, p. 184).

A basic understanding of the two aesthetic approaches is required as it plays a fundamental role in how movement is rendered and therefore affects character animation and performance, and the audience's interpretation of these performances.

The main separation between limited and full animation is the amount of frames used to render a character's movement. Furniss however identifies four main criteria: the movement of images, number of frames, and the metamorphosis of images and the density of visual and aural components (Furniss, 2007, p. 133). Furniss notes that limited and full animation "are quantitative measures, but they have acquired misleading qualitative connotations. Full and limited animations are two stylistic tendencies that can achieve different aesthetic results, with neither being inherently pleasing nor repellent" (Furniss, 2007, p. 133). This sentiment is expressed by Lamarre when discussing limited and full animation and problems associated with the distinction, stating that "there has been a tendency to think of full animation as *the* art of animation and to depict limited animation as an *artistically* limited and even failed version of full animation" (Lamarre, 2009, p. 184).

Film is projected at 24 frames per second. Full animation primarily refers to the number of drawings used to animate the movement of a character. It's characterised by high quality, smooth animation as it employs constant movement with cycles kept to a minimum as the "re-use of drawings is anathema to full animation" (Furniss, 2007, p. 133). In 'true' full animation each drawing is only used once and the greatest fluidity is achieved by using

24 different images for each second of running time. This however is not always required based on the scope of the action or movement required in animation. Thomas Lamarre points out that the "Disney average, which created the norms for full animation, is said to be about eighteen drawings per second" (Lamarre, 2009, p. 64). Furniss also points out that animation on ones and twos[4] is consistent with full animation whereas animation on threes or higher is regarded as limited animation (Furniss, 2007, p. 134). Furniss also highlights the importance of camera movement in limited animation to create motion and reduce the amount of animation required. Highlighting the importance of composition and staging in limited animation sequences as the camera tends to hold on characters for longer periods. This is not to say that staging and composition are not equally important in full animation but rather that in limited animation the focus is shifted away from the movement of characters. In other words, limited and full animation prioritize and focus on different aspects.

Full animation places focus on the animation and visuals as opposed to sound and stillness of limited animation (Furniss, 2007, p. 134). Lamarre highlights the tendency of distinguishing between full and limited animation in terms of movement versus stasis as problematic (Lamarre, 2009, p. 184). "Limited animation is not seen as a different way of animating, of generating movement, but as an absence of movement, a lack of animation, as a series of static images" (Lamarre, 2009, p. 184). For this reason Lamarre believes it is impossible to engage in analysis of the dynamism of limited animation and anime if framed on the model of stasis and stillness. Rather Lamarre proposes that one understands full animation and limited animation as either classic or modern (Lamarre, 2009, p. 186). He proposes that Limited animation is an art movement, similar to UPA's experimentation and development of limited

[4] To achieve full animation and the greatest fluidity in movement 24 different images are used for each second of running time, this is referred to as animating on ones. If an animator were to animate half of the number of images, or 12 images per second of running time he or she is animating on twos. Animating on threes involves animating 8 images per second of running time. Animating on ones and twos is consistent with full animation production while animating on threes, fours and fives is consistent with limited animation production.

animation techniques, “a modern art of animation in contrast to the classicism of full animation” (Lamarre, 2009, p. 188).

Thus in summation, full and limited animation is defined by the number of frames used per running second of animation and the smoothness or lack thereof as a result of which approach is used. Each process places emphasis on separate aspects that define the portrayal of motion. One may question the validity of discussing limited animation at all when the analysis will focus on full animated features from Disney and Studio Ghibli and the answer is rather simple, limited animation plays a large role in anime’s formation and the development of both Japan’s and Studio Ghibli’s animation history. Understanding the difference between full and limited animation is pivotal to engaging with the separation between the two streams of anime, and Japan’s development from full-animated Disney-like productions to the more limited animated productions. Limited animation occupies the position of a true alternative to full animation due to its development as an alternative to full animation, but where did full animation come from and how did it become the global standard? As stated, Disney defined the norms of what constitutes full animation and the trajectory of animation performance, therefore it would make sense to engage further with the period in which these norms were developed and defined and came to represent the ‘standard’ by which other animations would be compared.

Disney and the Golden Age

The focus of American animation history will be on the development of Disney's 'illusion of life' and their approach to character animation and performativity between the 1930's and 1940's rather than the early development of American animation. The intention is not to underplay the contributions of other highly important figures in animation history but rather to emphasize a particular period in which Disney defined how characters are animated and perform. Disney pioneered strong characterisation (personality animation), linear effects, comic and visual affects during this period. The pivotal developments of this period would shape Disney's animation and the development of the animation industry as a whole. In many ways the guiding metaphor of American animation, in particular Disney animation, was that the animator is an actor imparting life to inanimate objects (bringing them to life). The focus and emphasis was on the performance and how the audience would react and connect with these animated characters. Although this period was marked with a multitude of developments in terms of technique and technology, the most important development during this period was Disney's transition from figurative performances to embodied performances. In the process, creating the fundamentals of their aesthetic and their approach to movement that would become the 'standard' for the animation.

'During animation's 'Golden Age' the Studio [Disney] was instrumental in formalizing a number of principles' (Pallant, 2011, p. 16). Disney became synonymous with a particular set of formalized animation mechanics outlined in *Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life* (Thomas & Johnson, 1995, p. 17). Thomas and Johnson outline twelve animation principles that were encouraged at the Disney Studio as they added a greater sense of 'realism' to Disney's animation. These principles were formalized in the studios production as Thomas and Johnson state that as

> each of these processes acquired a name, it was analysed and perfected and talked about, and when new artists joined the staff they were taught these practices as if they were the rules of the trade. To

> everyone's surprise, they became the fundamental principles of animation (1995, p. 47).

The formalized existence and nature of these principles illustrated Disney's desire to industrialize and further centralised Disney's contribution to the evolution of animation and industrial practice (Pallant, 2011, p. 17). Hence Chris Pallant refers to this as Disney Formalism, fundamentally "the Disney-Formalist ideology prioritized artistic sophistication, 'realism' in characters and contexts and, above all, believability" (2011, p. 35).

Steven Watts identifies *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937*), Pinocchio* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* (1942) as the films that established the 'creative high-watermark' of the Disney Studio (Watts, 1997, p. 35). *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in particular played an instrumental role in the development of Disney Formalism and the solidification of principles that would govern Disney's feature film development. Snow White's success 'profoundly altered the studio' (Pallant, 2011, p. 39) and ultimately led to it becoming the aesthetic 'blueprint' or template for the formalist period. 'The artistic paradigm promoted by Snow White has since become known as 'hyperrealism' (Pallant, 2011, p. 40). This echoes Maureen Furniss' statement that, in 1937, Disney achieved one of its greatest technological and aesthetic feats with the release of its first feature film (Furniss, 2007, p. 112).

"Hyperrealism…has come to define a mode of animation which, despite the medium's obvious artifice, strives for 'realism'" (Pallant, 2011, p. 40). Pallant utilises Paul Wells' definition of Disneyesque hyperrealism to define Disney's attempt to represent reality in a medium based on artificiality. This 'hyperrealism' is seen 'as the yardstick by which other kinds of animation may be measured for its relative degree of "realism" (Wells, 1998, p. 25). If one recalls Mark Langer who identified a separation between the East Coast (New York) and West Coast (Hollywood) animation styles, ultimately what Langer defined as West Coast animation is Disney's hyperrealism.

> The most significant element of Disney-Formalist hyperrealism is the lifelike movement – or motor function – of the animation, which reflects

> both the actual movements of live-action models and the skill of the animator (Pallant, 2011, p. 41).

Donald Crafton however defines this approach to Disneyesque hyperrealism as the pursuit of embodied acting and thus identifies Langer's identification of the separation between West Coast and East Coast as differences in performance registers. It must be noted at this juncture that a discussion of realism stretches beyond the scope of this research paper. Hyperrealism within the context of the research paper will refer to a style of animation developed during the Disney Formalist period which prioritizes believability and present "verisimilitude in…characters, contexts and narratives" (Wells, 1998, p. 23). Wells states that:

> The construction of the 'body', even in the most determinedly hyperrealist animation (most specifically, Disney), is a complex issue, largely because animation has the capacity to resist 'realism' and the orthodoxies of the physical world, redefining the body as a fluid and indestructible form (Wells, 1996, p. 185).

Disney realised that it was impossible to depict a realistic human figure in traditional animation as the medium foregrounds its artifice. This resulted in believability being the driving principle of Disney Hyperrealism rather than 'realism'. This is echoed in a statement made by Ollie Johnson and Frank Thomas in regards to the realism and accuracy of movement in rotoscoping, "it was impossible to become emotionally involved with this eerie, shadowy creature who was never a real inhabitant of our fantasy world" (Thomas & Johnson, 1995, p. 323). In essence Disney wanted to enhance the verisimilitude between movement and the animated fantasy world. To achieve this 'realism' (believability) the use of filmed live action sequences was used as guides, as rotoscoped[5,6] animation has "a tendency to lose the illusion of life" (Pallant, 2011, p. 41) and contrasted the studios approach to 'realism'. Maureen Furniss highlights the importance of Donald Graham's suggestion

[5] Max Fleischer patented the Rotoscope in 1917.
[6] Rotoscoping is the process of animation in which animators trace filmed footage, frame by frame, resulting in movements with a high degree of realism.

that animators watch films of both live action and animated movement, to gain a greater understanding of how actions occur in reality and how other animators rendered these actions (Furniss, 2007, p. 113). Don Graham played a vital role and greatly influenced the look of Disney animation through his 'action analyses' classes (Furniss, 2007, p. 112), his exact role and influence on Disney animated character performance will be discussed in the *Performance in Animation* section. Langer highlights an important facet of Graham's teachings that are inherently tied to Disney's hyperrealism when he states that:

> Graham distinguished between caricature and cartoon, noting that caricature was rooted in a detailed observation of the physical world and natural action. Cartoon was based on the study of other cartoons. Caricature, rather than cartoon was to be the goal of Disney production (Langer, 1990, p. 306).

This statement echoes a similar statement by Walt Disney in a studio memo stating that the:

> First duty of cartoons is not to picture or duplicate real action or things as they actually happen – but to give a caricature of both life and action…The point must be made clear to the men that our study of the actual is not so that we may be able to accomplish the actual, but so that we may have a basis upon which to go into the fantastic, the unreal, the imaginative – and yet to let it have a foundation of fact, in order that it may more richly possess sincerity and contact with the public…I definitely feel that we cannot do the fantastical things, based on the real, unless we first know the real (Watts, 1997, p. 108).

Caricature and the exploration of motivation and its emphasis of personality came to define a key aspect of Disney 'realism' or as Disney referred to it "the possible impossible". Disney believed that animation relied on strong action, but if one were to engage with it on a deeper level, animation should explore the reason or motivation for the action. "The driving force behind action is the mood, the personality, the attitude of the character – or all three"

(Watts, 1997, p. 108). Personality animation thus became a cornerstone of Disney's hyperrealism and the formalisation of these rules and approaches helped continue this trademark of performance.

This wasn't always the case, however, as Disney's earlier work did not pursue the benchmark of 'realism' and featured exaggerated physics and 'cartoonal' metamorphosis. Langer defines this style of animation as East Coast/New York style animation, a cartoony style where the artificiality was emphasized through design, movement and dialogue (Langer, 1990, p. 308). Donald Crafton, on the other hand refers to this earlier form of performance as figurative, but this will be addressed in more detail in the *Performance in Animation* section. To achieve this formalism, Disney intensified its efforts to integrate live-action Hollywood conventions into their productions, visible in the increased complexity of staging, camera movement, and character movement (Furniss, 2007, p. 111). According to Chris Pallant, the pinnacle of the Disney Formalist period was the feature film *Bambi* (1942) as it was the culmination of advancements made in previous Disney feature films condensed into a single production. As an example, this excerpt by Thomas and Johnson, illustrates the lengths the Studio went too to create their hyperrealism:

> Compared to Mickey or the dwarfs, the Bambi eyes appear to be very realistic. They are caricatures of a real deer's eyes rather than being cartoon eyes. We had the suggestion of tear duct and had carefully drawn upper eyelid with a thickness to it that fits over the eyeball. The pupil with the dark centre and the highlight made the eye the most detailed we had ever drawn (Thomas & Johnson, 1995, pp. 448 - 499).

This was just one of many facets that informed the performance in Bambi, as the deer's mechanical movements were starkly different to previous Disney films. The trajectory of this development towards hyperrealism however was less than linear as evidenced by the development of *Dumbo* (1941) which preceded *Bambi*, and featured both Disney's embodied (Hollywood influenced, hyper-realist style) and figurative acting (New York, rubber hose style). Dumbo was a film of animation hybridity, a mixing of both West coast and East

coast animation styles, contrasting Disney formalist hyperrealism. Dumbo's movements when not in flight bear all the hallmarks of Disney hyperrealism, revealing a "careful study of live action animal motor function" (Pallant, 2011, p. 47). The most emblematic sequence of the New York style in Dumbo would undoubtedly be the pink elephants sequence employing surreal aesthetics that are rarely seen in Disney films as a whole, let alone the Disney-Formalist period. Langer identifies three animators responsible for this sequence Dick Huemer, Joe Grant and Norman Ferguson, all of whom started their animation careers in New York and favoured figurative performances (Langer, 1990, p. 48). Dumbo thus stands as a testament to the less than linear development of Disney hyperrealism.

Disney's 'hyperrealism' approach did become a source of inspiration for other animation studios and animators seeking 'to generate a similar level of verisimilitude in their animation' (Pallant, 2011, p. 43). In the process Disney became the most visible studio in American animation due to their pursuit of greater verisimilitude in their productions. Paul Wells makes the statement that

> it might properly be argued that all cartoon animation that follows the Disney output is a *reaction* to Disney, aesthetically, technically, and ideologically…American animation is effectively a history of responses to Disney's usurpation of the form in the period between 1933 and 1941 (2002, p. 45).

Not all responses to Disney Formalism were of praise however, as metamorphosis, the ability of an image to change to a different image through the 'evolution of the line' (Wells, 1998, p. 69) was reduced or lost. Arguably, one of the most important responses to Disney's cinematic realism output was United Productions of America (UPA), which would have direct and lasting influences on animation and the formation of anime. While Langer defined, the West Coast style as modern in comparison to that of the East Coast style, UPA would also take a similar stance influenced by modernism and would have a profound influence of its own in the 1950's in direct opposition Disney's

hyperrealism. UPA's limited animation arose as a new style of animation and became the new modern while Disney's full animation became classic.

> Postwar animation studio United Productions of America (UPA) is credited with bringing a modern art sensibility to the American cartoon, a simplified, abstract style that transformed the look of studio animation throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Bashara, 2015, p. 81).

Using minimalist designs and stylised colour, UPA garnered great critical acclaim (Furniss, 2007, p. 136). If the core underpinning of Disney's hyperrealism was greater verisimilitude through realism then UPA was the departure from this pursuit, ushering in new forms of character animation and performance. Paul Wells claims that UPA "represent the quasi-Europeanisation of what had become an intrinsically American art-form" (Wells, 1998, p. 100), using this rhetoric one can state that anime is the qausi-Japanification of an American art form. Thomas Lamarre shares a similar viewpoint that "in the instance of anime at least, the operative relation between Japan and the West is not a monolithic one of resistance, opposition and rupture. On the contrary, the relation involves processes of multiplication of, departure from and mutation within sources and models for animation" (Lamarre, 2002, p. 336). Thus the next step on this journey would be to investigate animation in Japan.

Japanese Animation History

Anime is often defined by its form, iconography, thematic genres and its cultural and social contexts. For this reason, it is vital to engage with the historical development of Japanese art forms when exploring the aesthetic, performing, and ideological frameworks of Japanese animation. Animation in Japan is a dominant cinematic art form unlike animation in the United States and Europe, which is arguably the result of its close relation to other media formats such as manga and videogames. In this section, traditional art forms and ideological frameworks will be discussed in relation to the post-World War 2 development of Japanese animation. Japan's post-World War 2 animation development is arguably its most important. It was during this period that Japanese animation developed into an industry and its stylistic and aesthetic frameworks were created. Post-World War 2 Japanese animation developments can be narrowed down to the formation of Toei Animation Studios and the rise of manga and its adaption into anime by Osamu Tezuka. Overall, this period in Japan's history was characterized by rapid modernization, economic growth and radical social-cultural shift, much in the same way that the golden age of American animation saw similar shifts.

In the period directly after the Second World War the animation medium was kept alive in Japan by Toho but this period was rather tremulous with multiple companies being merged and regrouped resulting in animators and their sponsors adapting to various changes in the industry, one such shift was the creation of a new film conglomerate. Toei Animation was formed in mid-1956 after Toei purchased and integrated *Nihon Dōga Eiga* (Japan Animated Films) as Toei Doga, which eventually became Toei Animation (G.Hu, 2010, p. 82). "Tokyo Motion Picture Distribution Company, in short, Toei" took the mantle from pervious main sponsors Toho and Shochiku (G.Hu, 2010, p. 82). Toho and Shochiku were the main sponsors and investors during the 2nd World War. Toei

however played the important role of not only keeping the medium alive post World War 2 but for creating a new image for Japanese animation.

> In the post-war era, it made sense to let a "new player" regroup and rejuvenate the industry so as to present a fresh image or, at least and at best, obscure the inglorious wartime propaganda film projects that had previously been taken on by the animators. One such player who had a resolute determination to take on this task and even accomplished more was Toei (G.Hu, 2010, p. 82).

Toei was positioned as the Disney of the East, seeking to engage in the business of creating animated features of the same standard as Disney's productions. "Toei Animation modelled itself in the image of Disney Studios. From its industrial, mass-production methods, to its aspiration to cinematic realism (using full animation to generate realism in motion, and the multiplane camera to generate a sense of cinematic depth), to its use of fairy-tales as the source material for its narratives, Toei aspired to be the 'Disney of the Orient'" (Steinberg, 2006, p. 196). In fact Toei was so resolute in their objective of Disney standard feature animation that they built a "Disney-like animation studio with multitask facilities to produce Asia's first colour animated feature films." (G.Hu, 2010, p. 83). In essence Toei animation sought to adopt Disney's 'illusion of life' approach, and produce hyperrealist films similar to Disney. Not only adopting the use of folktale narratives but also to some degree adopting the ways in which characters are animated, and by association perform.

Their first colour feature film was *Hakujadan* (*Legend of the White Snake*) (1958), based on a Chinese folktale. *Hakujaden* was a success and proved that the studio was capable of producing high standard productions; however the film did receive mixed reactions from the Japanese reviewers for its "un-Chineseness" and "un-Japaneseness" (G.Hu, 2010, p. 94). These critiques were not aimed at just the designs of characters but at the performances of characters as well. The simplification of the original folk tale's conclusion also drew the ire of the Japanese public in addition to their critique of

adapting a classic Chinese tale rather than a classic Japanese tale. In many ways the animated film's conclusion deviated from the original source material to a more Disneyesque conclusion adhering to the 'happily ever after' formula. "*Legend of the White Snake* points to a calculative desired course of creation, which had already been tested and manifested by a much admired distant party, most notably the institution of Disney-made films" (G.Hu, 2010, p. 89). Regardless of the reception, Toei Animation successfully entered the feature film industry and commercial entertainment releasing six animation features from 1958 to 1963 (Ono, 2006, p. 104). According to Kosei Ono, Toei remained in a relatively uncontested position until the rise of Osamu Tezuka and television animation in 1956.

"Tezuka occupies a huge place in the Japanese imaginary and the history of its postwar mass culture in that he lays claim to being the creator of both manga and anime as we know them" (Steinberg, 2006, p. 195). The late Osamu Tezuka was born in 1928 and is heralded as the 'God of Manga'. It may seem odd to discuss a highly prolific comic book artist in a discussion of Japanese animation and character performance, but just as American comic strips played an important role in the creation of early cartoons and its icons, so too did manga in the development of Japanese television animation a trend which still continues to this day.

Tezuka said he first became infatuated with animation after watching *Momotarō umi no shinpei* (1945), a Japanese World War 2 propaganda film released in 1945. His first attempt at pursuing a career in animation was met with failure as "his work was rejected due to its manga-like approach and was instead praised for its print publishing potential" (G.Hu, 2010, p. 96). While attending medical school he decided to take up the challenge and by 1947 had started publishing his work; by the time of his graduation in 1951 from medical school his manga were a common sight in Japan. Tezuka revolutionized the manga industry by incorporating a long story format and cinematic framing techniques (Steinberg, 2006, p. 196). He transformed the frame-by-frame presentation of the comic narrative by changing the page

layout to become more fluid and creative. This was achieved by increasing the presence of sound effects by "harkening back to the Japanese tradition of picture sound combination" (Phillips, 2008, p. 68) and experimenting "with close-ups and different angles" (Schodt, 1983, p. 63) from European and America cinema in order to "emphasize action and the mental states of the characters" (G.Hu, 2010, p. 97). Another vital aspect of Tezuka's manga revolution was the incorporation of "filmic-like effects with strong emphasis on shadows and shades" (G.Hu, 2010, p. 97).

It was only years later after seeing *Hakujaden* that his interest in animation was reawakened. During this time, Tezuka had built an oeuvre of popular works and his aspirations had grown past the print industry. Tezuka was an avid fan of Disney, having said to have watched every "pre-war Disney-made production" (G.Hu, 2010, p. 96). According to Schodt, Osamu Tezuka was a "fanatical fan" (L.Schodt, 1983, p. 160). "Following in the footsteps of Disney who owned a kingdom of well-loved cartoon characters, Tezuka had by the late 1950s created his own pool of characters based on his successful manga stories" (G.Hu, 2010, p. 96). His best-known manga works were *New Treasure Island* (1947), *Jungle Taitei* (1950) and *Tetsuwan Atomu* (1952). His success and popularity in publishing resulted in Toei adapting his manga *Saiyuki* (1960) into an animated feature. Like *Hakujaden* it was based on a Chinese folktale and like *Hakujaden* it did not strictly adhere to the folktale, which aligned with Toei animation's export-orientated approach of the time (G.Hu, 2010, p. 96).

In 1961, Osamu Tezuka established his own animation studio. Their first production was adapting his manga *Tetsuwan Atomu* (*Astroboy*) into an animated television series. "With the arrival of television as a popular tool of mass communication in the early 1960s, Tezuka's manga works were to influence the development of Japanese animation, leading to the birth of a new genre called *anime"* (G.Hu, 2010, p. 97). Not only was *Astroboy* Tezuka's first animated television series, it was also the first Japanese animated TV

series produced in Japan, airing on Fuji Television in January 1936 (G.Hu, 2010, p. 98).

Steinberg highlights two 'streams' of anime, and identifies *Astroboy*'s development as the formation of one stream of anime, the other stream is identified as the "Disney-influenced, full-animation, feature-length animated film stream that comes out of Toei" (Steinberg, 2006, p. 196). This second stream culminates with Studio Ghibli and Hayao Miyazaki, who started his career at Toei Animation and continues the tradition of producing feature length, full-animated films. Lamarre defines the two streams according to the position held by Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli, that of the manga film and anime. The manga film is full animation and anime is limited animation, a distinction that elevates the big screen over the small screen.

> On the scene of Japanese animation today, Studio Ghibli in particular pushes such connotations, insisting that the works of its directors, such as Takahata Isao and Miyazaki Hayao, are not anime but *manga eiga* or manga films. The result is an entrenched *opposition* between feature-length full animation films (manga film) and animated television series (anime) (Lamarre, 2009, p. 184).

Steinberg furthers this notion by suggesting that one think of the Toei stream as a style of animation composed of a "relation between animation and cinema (mediated by the cinematic style of Disney animation) whose physical apparatus was the film theatre. The other stream, anime proper, which finds its beginnings in *Astroboy*, is developed from the relation between animation and manga (in its postwar narrative-comics manifestation), whose physical apparatus was the new medium of television" (Steinberg, 2006, p. 197). Manga films are not adaptations of manga but feature-length animated films, largely geared to children or general audiences, such as those produced by Toei Studios in the 1950s and 1960s, often referred to as Toei *doga* (literally "moving pictures" or "moving drawings")" (Lamarre, 2009).

Astroboy was the first animation based on the relation between manga and animation, thus as a result became the inspirational source for thematic

elements and a new visual culture, and in the process introduced a new form of performance and character movement that strongly relates to the figurative mode. This is similar to how *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* became the template for Disney animations and early Toei animations.

Tezuka and Mushi Productions in a sense created a 'new' aesthetic style of limited animation. Limited animation as a set of techniques and visual style or aesthetic of animation had existed prior to Tezuka's engagement with animation (Steinberg, 2006, p. 197). It had been in use since the 1940's after UPA's (United Production of America) popularization of the technique (Butler, 1994, p. 278). Regardless Tezuka's approach to limited animation created a unique performance aesthetic focusing on immobility rather than motion. Limited animation reduced not only the cost of production but reduced production time for a 30-minute episode. These will be briefly covered to gain a greater grasp of the processes used to render movement and in part the visual aesthetic of anime in contrast to traditional animation:

- Shooting on threes (San-koma tori) –Using only eight frames per second.
- Stop images (Tome) – A still image or frame used for a sequence. e.g. Establishing shots, crowd scenes etc.
- Pull cells (Hiki-cel) –Creating the impression of movement by pulling a background image behind a foreground image.
- Repetition (Kurikaeshi) – Using looped animation. This technique is sometimes used in conjunction with pull cells to create walking sequences etc.
- Sectioning (Bubun) – Essential parts of the body move while less essential parts remain still or immobile. 'Prime examples include kuchi-paku [mouth flaps], in which the mouth is animated separately from the face, allowing for a limited set of three or four mouth positions to be cycled in place, thus creating the illusion that the character is speaking' (Clements, 2013, p. 118).

- Combined use/ Cell bank (Kenyo) – An archive of cels from previous animations eliminating the need to redraw images. These could include backgrounds and character animations such as talking scenes.
- Short Cuts –Longer shots require more animation while shorter sequences require less and could utilize a single image stretched out across the shortened length.

If one were to compare the panels from *Astroboy's: The Birth of Astroboy* manga (Figure 1) and the first episode of *Astroboy* (Figure 2), one would identify the strong use of tome (still images) in the animated car crash sequence. These tome (still images) are essentially the equivalent of the manga's panels, utilizing the same visual language from the manga source material. The only separation is the use of diegetic audio, slight movement of layers and camera movement (pans and zooms) to create the impression of movement but if one were to remove these elements it could function as a panel in the manga. In many ways, this serves as useful visual shorthand for audiences used to reading manga. In addition to the shift in how character movement is generated Lamarre notes how Japanese animators, as a result of the economic 'climate', began to place emphasis on particular poses that were the most visually and emotionally important and resulted in a staple of anime in which characters are presented with extreme emotion with minimal movement (Lamarre, 2002, p. 335).



Figure 1: Manga panels from Astroboy Volume 1, The Birth of Astroboy.

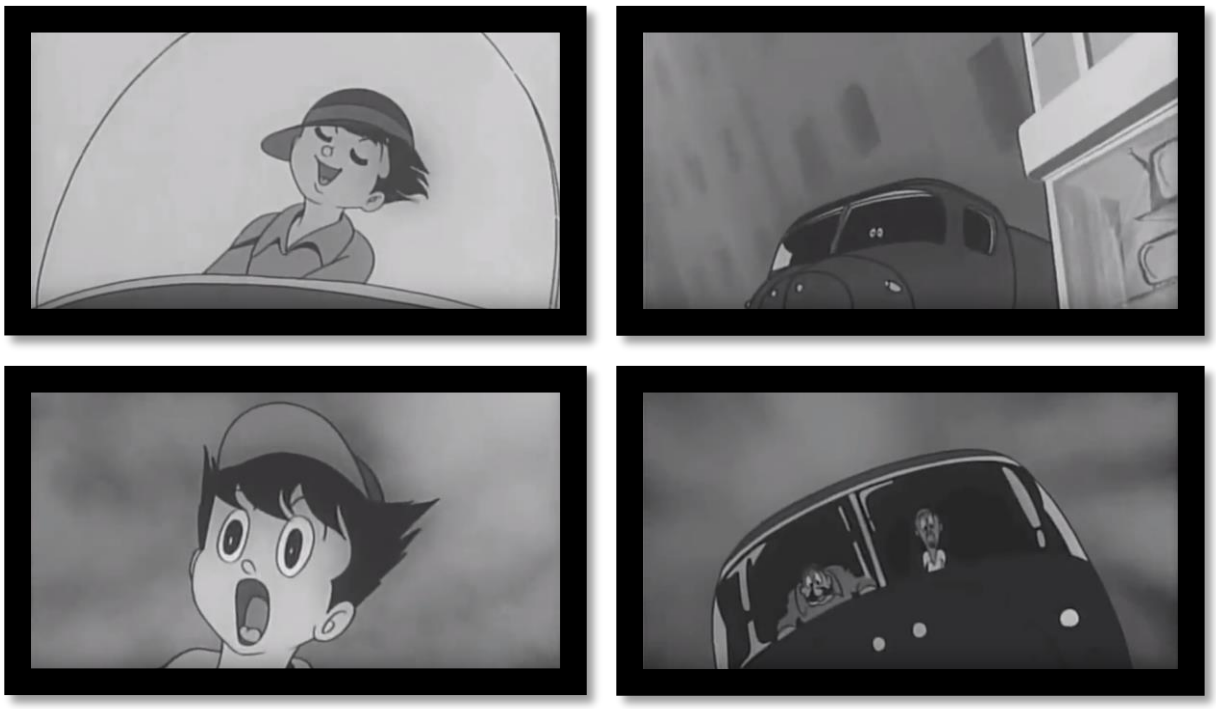




Figure 2: Astroboy and the use of several Tome.

Anime Historical Predecessors

Economic limitations were not the only elements influencing anime's development. Tze-G.Hu and Steinberg both highlight the Kamishibai as a cultural and historic predecessor to anime. Sakamoto Yusaku, one of Tezuka's key collaborators, highlighted the popular open-air theatre prevalent in Japan during the 1940's and 1950's in which children were narrated stories along with accompanying picture cards. According to Tada Michitaro, not only was the Kamishibai the predecessor of the still image in 'animation' but the use of stop images and pull cells of anime stylistically resemble that of Kamishibai (Clements, 2013, p. 120). Hu furthers the notion of artistic tradition related to anime's lack of mobility and favouring of strong poses when she states that:

> Astro Boy's limited and so-called "stiff" movements in animated television frames, in a way, are similar to the slow acting pace of a *nō* actor. The external spectacle may be resting in an inert pose and mode,

> but what matters most is the innate psychological state of the character that is being portrayed (G.Hu, 2010, p. 100).

American animation had a wealth of influences acting upon its early development some of the most prominent being comics and Western theatre traditions such as Vaudeville and the physical comedy of silent era mainstays, such as Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. Japan's animation influences were just as varied and derived not only from Western animation but its own domestic theatre traditions and visual culture. Susan Napier notes that:

> Anime is a popular cultural form that clearly builds on previous high cultural traditions. Not only does the medium show influences from such Japanese traditional arts as Kabuki and the woodblock print (originally popular culture phenomena themselves), but it also makes use of worldwide artistic traditions of the twentieth century cinema and photography (J.Napier, 2005, p. 4).

Antonia Levi highlights the developmental sources for anime and manga, noting that manga is seen as developing from American comics and traditional Japanese illustration traditions such as the e-maki (picture scrolls, Figure 4) and ukiyo-e (woodblock prints). "*Emakimono* emphasized formalistic expressions and shapes. It allowed the artist to focus on narrative continuity, spatial perspective, and other decorative demands" (G.Hu, 2010, p. 27). An important feature of the *emakimono* is its focus on mannerism and facial expression. Bridgette Koriyama Rickard states that illuminated scrolls or illusions of movement are 'not only the precursors of manga, but also of animated feature films' (Koyama-Rikard, 2008, p. 11) as she compares the use of 'real-life' facial expression, parallel movements, use of zooms and the connection between character and action as the antecedent to manga and the animated form. Imamura Taihei, one of Japan's pioneering animation theoreticians, argued a similar position when stating that Japanese animation has its roots in traditional Japanese arts, the earliest of which is the aforementioned e-maki or *Emakimono.* This sentiment is shared by famed

anime director Rintaro (Shigeyuki Hayashi) who, when asked what constitutes the originality of a Japanese film, stated that:

> Our graphics are also born of cultural tradition, albeit subconsciously. Illuminated scrolls, such as Choju jinbutsu giga [Scrolls of Frolicking Animals and Humans], are at the root of our animated pictures, and the master Japanese printmakers have influenced our graphics…All of the works by these artists are in our genes and are part of our DNA, even if we are unaware of it (Koyama-Rikard, 2008, p. 166).

Thus for Rintaro the unique qualities of Japanese animation are driven by a range of Japanese cultural traditions, from the graphic to the performative, that are engrained in Japanese culture and society.



Figure 3: Part of Choju jinbutsu giga



Figure 4: Genji Monogatari Emakimono published by the Tokugawa Museum in Nagoya, Japan, 1937

Anime also draws from its strong theatre tradition incorporating elements from Noh, Kabuki, Banraku and Takarazuka. Elements such as 'sound effects, stylized poses' and 'tableau effects' are drawn from these different forms of Japanese theatre (Levi, 2001, p. 24). Interestingly Levi makes the observation that Japan's "artistic and theatrical traditions have never aimed at realism. Instead, both in art and drama, the Japanese have emphasized techniques that capture the essence of the subject in a way that assumes some participation by the audience" (Levi, 1996, p. 21). This is in contrast to the developments in western theatre that actively pursued realism in their productions.

The core aesthetic world view of Japanese narrative drama lies in the performance of the mental state of the protagonist, specifically in theatre traditions such as Noh.

> The masked actor playing the sole shite role (the protagonist) first "identifies himself with the true essence of the whole role" (Ortolani 112 and 121) and in the process genuinely expresses the mind and body of the soul-role he plays. The imitative act becomes truthful, real-

life, and natural, which entices the audience to identify and experience with him the "inner essence" of the object-role.

In Noh the shite is tasked with portraying one all-encompassing emotion, through the use of stylized choreographed movement that is often symbolic. Nothing in Noh theatre is improvised. Masks are only worn by the main character or shite; once worn the individuality of the actor recedes and is nothing but the emotion. Most Noh masks are created to be emotionally neutral as it is the task of the actor to convey the emotion through their performance. Thus the entire performance is based on portraying emotion through movement and sound, the form of the performance takes precedence.

This observation is quite interesting as it creates a common thread or connection between elements found in Tezuka's manga (and anime) and Japanese theatrical traditions. Tezuka's manga as previously outlined focused on the presentation of the mental state of characters and played a large role in its popularization, and Tze identified this as an aesthetic of Japanese drama. How these mental states are represented in animation seems to be an amalgamation of various influences and traditions.

Noh elements are also present throughout Miyazaki and Takahata's films in the form of moments of non-action. These intervals between events or 'silent breaths' of the protagonists are a common Noh element and known as the 'art of ma'. In Noh "what [the actor] does not do is of interest" (Komparu, 1983, p. 73), and these silent ma moments are a device to move the audience into experiencing the contemplative world. These performances are described by Roger Ebert as "gratuitous motion" in his films. He states that rather than having "every movement being dictated by the story, sometimes people will just sit for a moment, or they will sigh, or look in a running stream, or do something extra, not to advance the story but only to give the sense of time and place and who they are" (Ebert, 2002). A sequence such as the mentioned above occurs in the film *Spirited Away* (2001) when protagonist Chihiro gazes over the ocean (Figure 5). This scene occurs after Chihiro helps clean the river spirit by removing a bicycle (among other human based trash) from his body.

As a reward, Chihiro is gifted an emetic dumpling medicine while her co-workers are tipped with a generous amount of gold by the river spirit filling the bathhouse with jubilation. Rhythmically the film goes from an energetic action orientated sequence to one that is contemplative in tone and allows the viewer to engage with the world along with the character. The use of iconic character design in juxtaposition with the realist painterly backgrounds allows for both the character and the viewer to engage with, and experience a vivid imaginary world. In the process, this sequence maintains Japanese drama and art traditions by capturing true essence of the character's emotional and mental state while fostering audience participation.



Figure 5: Noh device in which the audience experience the contemplative world in Spirited Away

Studio Ghibli

The 1970's saw the rise "of master animator Miyazaki Hayao and his colleague, animation director Takahata" (G.Hu, 2010, p. 105). Miyazaki, Takahata and mentor Otsuka started their careers at Toei animation and spent a significant number of years working on feature films and television

animation (Lamarre, 2009, p. 41). Studio Ghibli's animation and the work of Hayao Miyazaki have always been in dialogue with limited animation. This history and engagement with different forms of animation resulted in their unique approach.

Thomas Lamarre highlights two techniques crucial to Studio Ghibli's animations being viewed as full animations rather than limited; the first is the use of painterly backgrounds and the second is the dynamism of character movement (Lamarre, 2009, p. 189). The former is achieved through "real time location hunting, photo taking, and video filming and superior art directorship" (G.Hu, 2010, p. 119). These backgrounds have become more painterly in recent years and play a large role in Studio Ghibli's overall aesthetic presentation. Interestingly Studio Ghibli strongly defends its separation from other anime based on its use of full animation, yet this defence of full animation relies solely on the movement of characters rather than the realist backdrops. It is rather ironic then that Studio Ghibli's and Miyazaki's "characters do not move all that much; their motion is rarely that of classic full animation. His character animation shows the impact of limited animation" (Lamarre, 2009, p. 189). According to Lammare the real strength of Miyazaki's animation is in the sliding of planes and the dynamism of this form of animation rather than the classic understanding of full animation. A stellar example of where shifting and rotating planes are used, to produce movement unlike any other animation both Japanese and American, is the sequences in which *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004) moves (See Figure 6). Rather than animate the castle through traditional means, the castle is made up of various planes that constitute separate parts of the castle, which are then shifted and rotated to impart movement in the hulking structure.

Therefore Studio Ghibli's animation is arguably characterised by its hybridity of full animation and limited animation. Thomas Lamarre refers to this as full limited animation or Full Animation, Ltd. If one recalls the separation between Studio Ghibli and other anime has always been predicated on the former's use of full animation in the tradition of Toei (Disney) and the latter's

use of limited animation. However, it is clear that Studio Ghibli utilizes limited animation techniques but not to the same extent as other anime. It would seem that Studio Ghibli pursues full animated goals but achieves elements of these through the use of limited animation techniques.



Figure 6: Howl's Moving Castle animated by moving and rotating planes

This is where Otsuka Yasuo's techniques play a vital role "for producing a limited version of the dynamism of full animation come into play" (Lamarre, 2009, p. 190). Yasuo Otsuka's work is particularly clear in *The Great Adventure of Horus, Prince of the Sun* (1968), during a sequence that involves a battle between Horus and a giant fish. This sequence portrays all the hallmarks of Studio Ghibli's future work incorporating the dynamic movement of characters and its interests in 'realism'.

The Great Adventure of Horus, Prince of the Sun serves as a pivotal moment in the development of the animation medium in Japan and is often cited as the first modern anime film (Drazen, 2003). Stylistically the design of characters more closely resembles that of modern anime and arguably serves as a prototype for later Studio Ghibli character designs. The film is particularly

noteworthy for breaking away from the Disney styled features of Toei's previous output and defining contemporary Japanese animation, particularly the work of Studio Ghibli and Miyazaki. Thus, Otsuka's work is the key to understanding Studio Ghibli's approach to animation and performance (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Hayao Miyazaki (Left) and Yasou Otsuka (Right)

The film used less frames than the conventional productions that preceded it at Toei Animation but in the process ushered in a process referred to as 'frame modulation'. Frame modulation simply described is changes in the rate of animated frames per second, for example, an animation will switch from animating on ones to threes or vice versa or any other variation. The basic principle driving this is to give certain scenes greater emphasis. Thus important scenes receive smoother animation by utilizing more frames and therefore have greater emphasis while less important scenes receive less frames and therefore less emphasis. The animation would therefore oscillate between higher amounts of frames and lower or more stable amount of

frames. This creates a rhythmic flow to the animation, shifting from one sequence that may be more 'jerky' to the next, which appears smoother. Frame modulation is not a new concept however; it is inherently tied to the principle of timing and spacing and the scope of the action to be performed. Frame modulation is present in Disney animation but the results are far more subdued due to the higher consistency in the amount of frames used. In the case of Japanese animation and in particularly Studio Ghibli's animation the effect is used to heighten a particular performance, giving the animation a jazz like rhythmic sensibility. Yasou Otsuka popularized the technique; using this method in *Horus* to add a sense of weight and scale to the rock golem by increasing the amount of frames. The practice proved so popular it became a standard in the Japanese animation industry (Ettinger, n.d.). It is important to stress that while the number of frames increase it is not necessarily equivalent to quality, rather the goal is to emphasize a specific moment and differentiate it from other sequences for dramatic effect. This use of animation is reminiscent of other Japanese art forms including theatre and manga.

The use of iconic characters in manga is the result of Osamu Tezuka's work that was highly influenced by Disney. Disney used a similar method of foregrounding iconic character's against realist backdrops. Thomas Lamarre believes that when the animation of figures is limited the figures themselves need to be more iconic, that is to be drawn more simply, and that due to the iconic or simple nature of anime characters viewers tend to more easily accept limited animation and its reduction in the intermediate stages between key frames (Lamarre, 2002, p. 345). If the character were drawn in greater detail the exclusion of the intermediary movements become more visible resulting in 'jerky' movements. Thus to reduce the gaps in animated movement lines and designs will become simplified.

This approach of using simplified or iconic characters in juxtaposition with more realist backgrounds is not unique to manga as other comic traditions, such as the 'clear line' style Belgian comics like *Tintin*, used similar

approaches. Rather what is of interest is the use of realistic art or greater realism as a dramatic technique to emphasize an element. This approach often appears in both manga and Japanese animation (McCloud, 1993, p. 44)[i]. If realism or higher detailed illustrations are used within manga to emphasize an element the close equivalent in animation would be more detailed and therefore fluid animation or rather animation that shifts from figurative to more embodied performances. Therefore, one could argue that this dramatic convention and visual style of increasing the 'realism' of an artistic production is a common element in both mediums.

Another way in which Otsuka imparted the dynamism of full animation through limited animation was the use of the peg-hole technique[ii], which utilizes a slight tilt in each successive frame to impart a sense of energy and weight into the characters animation. Despite the limited amount of frames the angling of frames allows for fully animated dynamic characters. By directing a character's energy earthward, it places emphasis on moving the image rather than the image moving. This results in a different approach to weight and gravity. Meaning that mass and the gravitational elements that surround the character are portrayed and handled differently. This different portrayal is illustrated in Figure 8, from an episode of *Future Boy Conan* (1978) on which Hayao Miyazaki, Isao Takahata and Otsuko Yasou worked together. This animated sequence shares similarity to another a sequence from Princess Mononoke (Figure 9). Yasou Otsuka's experimented with techniques that have now become a staple in modern Japanese animation and anime.

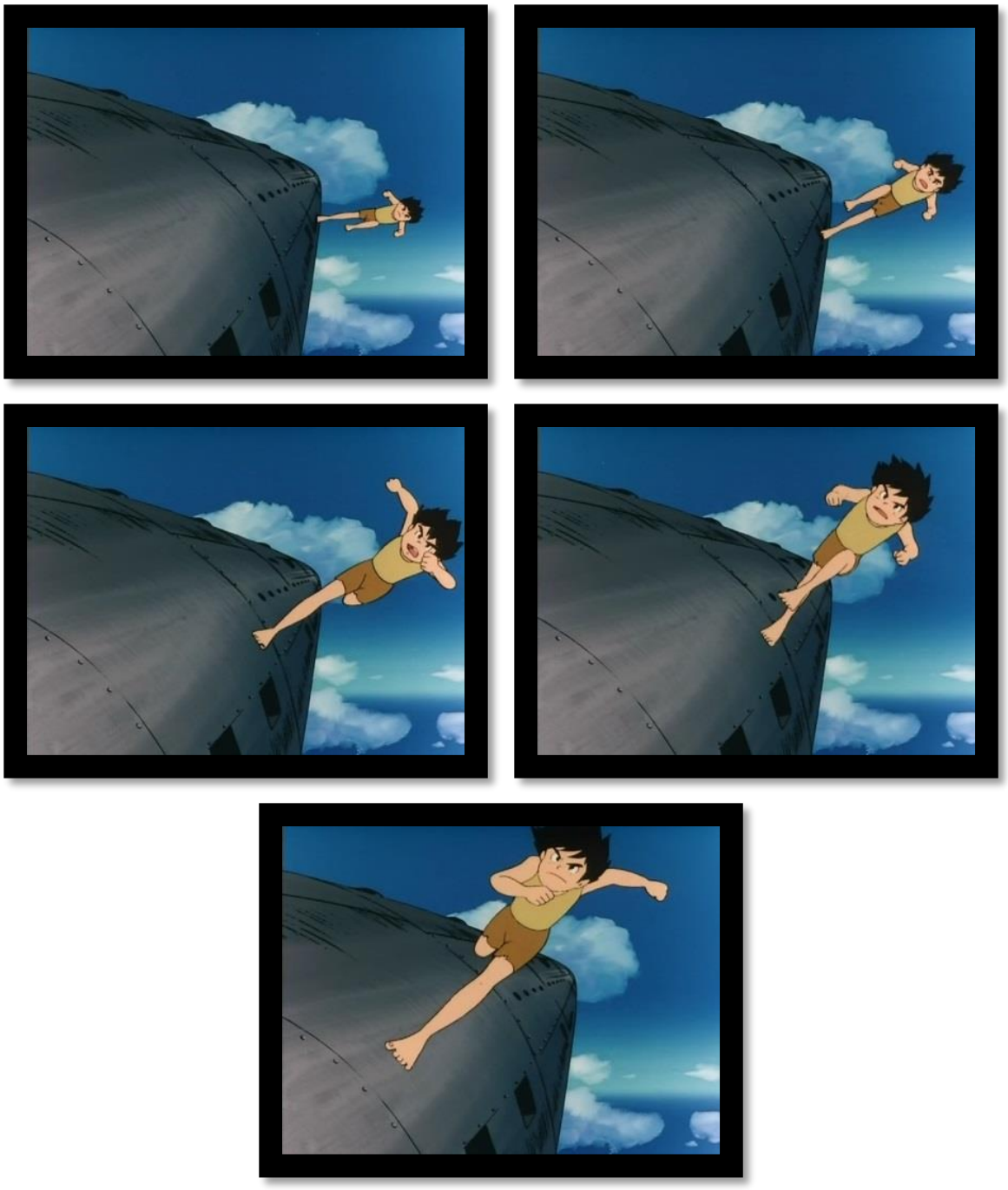


Figure 8: Illustrating Otsuko Yasou's 'peghole technique' angling characters to impart a sense of dynamism in more limited animation



Figure 9: A more recent example from Princess Mononoke in which the peghole is used to shift the weight rather than drawing it creating dynamic movement

Hu like Lammare identifies the use of photorealist backdrops and dynamic movement but identifies realism as what distinguishes Studio Ghibli and Miyazaki's work from other anime in Japan and Disney-like feature animation films. It is their approach and emphasis on realism that underpins their work stating that:

> It is realism that has become a major, if not primordial, ideological backbone of their animation aspirations. The constant desire and struggle to portray reality, often at all costs, are reflected in their storytelling process, especially in the thematic contents and technical expressions. The principle has motivated their careers and is both a common characteristic and a theme in their works (G.Hu, 2010, p. 119).

This certainly seems to correspond to what Hayao Miyazaki himself stated discussing his animation in regards to other anime:

> 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, 2009, p. 21).

This statement alone could place Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli on the same trajectory as Walt Disney and the radical shift his studio underwent in the 1930's by pursuing greater 'realism' through the pursuit of embodied performances to be discussed in the following section. If 'realism' or greater believability, verisimilitude as Disney pursued it, is the ultimate goal why are the results quite different and why would Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli pursue such an approach? It is more perplexing when one considers Miyazaki's position regarding Disney animation, as he often dismisses Disney's work in favour of their earlier Silly Symphonies or favours the work by other studios such as the Fleischer brothers which were arguably very figurative in their performances rather than embodied.

Before these questions can be addressed, a more in-depth discussion regarding what exactly figurative and embodied performances entail is required. Understanding the development of animation in Japan and the elements that define the two streams of animation is only one part of the puzzle. Thus the focus shall now shift to understanding the two performance modes in greater detail before applying the concepts to both Disney and Studio Ghibli animations and gaining greater insights to the unique qualities of each studios productions.

[i] Scott McCloud identifies Osamu Tezuka's seminal influence in the design of iconic characters in manga and its national style (McCloud, 1993, p. 44). Going beyond the juxtaposition of iconic characters and realist backgrounds McCloud identifies a separation between western and Japanese comics in the use of what he defines as the objectifying power of realistic art. Scott McCloud states that "while some characters were designed simply, to assist in reader identification other characters were drawn more realistically in order to objectify them, emphasizing their otherness from the reader" (McCloud, 1993, p. 44). This use of realism however extends beyond characters and applies to objects, seeking to imbue them with texture, weight and physical complexity often to heighten the dramatic impact of the scene.

[ii] Yasou Otsuka's peg-hole technique involves the rotating or angling of frames around the axis of the peg hole (near the top of sheet) to impart a sense of energy and roughness into the movements of characters. Instead of moving in straight lines, the characters would pivot. This would have two effects on the characters performance; the first would add a sense of weight and mass to the character, thus creating a relationship between the character and his/her environment while simultaneously creating the effect that the character is barely bound by gravity.

Performance in Animation

> For most of its history, animation has been obsessed with representing the human form in extremis…Whatever the origin of their work, filmmakers used animation as technique and as genre to make bodies dance, leap, float, and dive in a whimsical world with its own gravity (Crafton, 2013, p. 4).

To properly engage and analyse the performance of characters in Disney and Studio Ghibli feature animation, an understanding of what animation performance is and how it works is required. Crafton starts by delineating that narrative, space and music 'almost always' serve to back up body performance (2013, p. 5). Seeing as how animation is 'the illusion of life' this is a rather important distinction to make. Crafton applies his theory and analysis of performance to animated works from 1930's America, stating that he favours the period "because that was where and when the medium was acquiring its characteristic methods, forms, and content" (Crafton, 2013, p. 2). This makes sense as Chris Pallant refers to this as the Disney-Formalist period. Crafton shares this sentiment as the period was marked with the popularisation of the Hollywood cartoon. The Hollywood cartoon stood for "a mode of production and was shorthand for an attitude, a certain style, a suite of techniques, specific types of stories and reception expectations, and even a standard length" (Crafton, 2013, p. 1). The notion of the 'Hollywood cartoon' as Crafton defines it can be applied to both the works of Disney and Studio Ghibli, not in the sense that they both adhere to the same practices and styles of the Hollywood cartoon. Rather, just as the Hollywood cartoon stood for a particular style of film, Disney and Studio Ghibli each have their own unique attitude towards animation, mode of production, unique style, use of techniques, specific stories and audience reception expectations that define the form of character animation and performances. In other words, both studios produce work that conforms to a specific subset of tropes within the broader tropes of the animation medium.

Donald Crafton's engagement with performance theory and its application to animation allows for an analytical framework with which to engage and analyse the unique approach used to character performance by both Disney and Studio Ghibli while providing a more nuanced understanding of the development of character animation in American animation. There are two aspects of performance: performance *in* animation and performance *of* animation. Performance *in* animation constitutes the "behaviours, actions, and expressivity of the actors, as well as the dramatic situations, narrative flow, plots, and depictions…Thus this performance is primarily audio-visual. It is enacted event in a self –sufficient diegetic world" (Crafton, 2013, p. 17). Performance *of* animation however refers to the viewer's experience watching the animation and the process of animator creating the animation (conditional performances) (Crafton, 2013, p. 17). Thus the performance *in* animation is of particular importance and the focus of analysis between American and Japanese animation, although the performance *of* animation will be touched upon where necessary as it forms a component of both production and audience reception. Crafton's approach to performance in and of animation is instructive, providing two conceptualizations of animation performances.

> Performance in and of animation is not just doing animation, but how it is done, how it is judged, the dynamics of that execution as it produces movement in a body, and how that body acts in the resulting animation product. While there are a multitude of approaches to movement in animation, Crafton provides two such conceptualizations of animation performance forms: embodied performance and figurative performance (Suan, 2017, p. 2).

The core foundational concept behind animation performance is that it "bears the marks of allegory, metaphor, and irony" (Crafton, 2013, p. 20). There are two approaches to animation performance, embodied acting and figurative acting. The characteristics for each form will be addressed in further detail soon but for now, it is important to establish that embodied acting is held to

be Disney's brand of acting, influenced by Konstantin Stanislavsky's teachings. Embodied became the standard for animation acting replacing older styles such as the East Coast style (Crafton, 2013, p. 22). As outlined previously what Mark Langer referred to as the West Coast style is arguably Disney's approach to embodied acting now known as Disney's 'illusion of life' character animation or Disney Hyper-Realism.

Figurative acting according to Chuck Jones emphasized "movement that conveys signifying gestures and pantomime typical of broad humour and slapstick rather than emotive personality, character nuance, and emotional expression. The characters often derived from comic art graphic traditions and from popular theatre (vaudeville, burlesque, and music hall), accentuated dynamism and immediate legibility" (Crafton, 2013, p. 23). It is important to stress that "this does not mean that figurative acting is devoid of feeling, but rather, that it uses different "devices," specifically through "vocabularies" of various gestures and codified expressions" (Suan, 2017, p. 2) to achieve feeling and emotion. Figurative acting in contrast to embodied acting's prevalence in Western feature animation; thrives in Japanese television animation (Crafton, 2013, p. 22). "Figurative acting is not just found in animation, but in many traditional theatre forms, and though Crafton does not mention them, examples would include Noh, Topeng, and Kathakali" (Suan, 2017, p. 2).

Figurative and embodied performances are not in opposition or neither approach is superior to the other, rather it is the result of animators aiming for something different in their performances (Crafton, 2013, p. 40). That is to say that it is not a way to gauge quality but rather identify the types of performances, whether these performances are figurative or embodied depends on how the behaviours were intended by the animators and understood by the audience. For now, however it is clear that figurative and embodied acting are different approaches to character animation and therefore performance. They are not opposites; they are registers that may overlap. That said a production might favour a certain form of performance.

Figurative Performance

So one might ask what defines figurative acting and separates it from embodied acting. Figurative performances are extroverted according to Crafton (Crafton, 2013, p. 23). In this mode characters behave according to 'types' in the sense that they use a range of identifiable or formulaic facial and body expressions (Crafton, 2013, p. 23). This certainly does sound familiar when discussing cartoons and anime as both utilise a repertoire of both stylized facial and body expressions. Early American animation utilised figurative acting. Disney, prior to its pursuit of embodied acting, utilized this form of performance. Not all studios adopted the embodied approach and continued using the figurative acting in their productions (Crafton, 2013, p. 28). Figurative performances are thus delivered by cartoon characters often driven by their exaggerated physical forms and manifest in the ways they move (e.g. walk) and behave (e.g. talk). Early Mickey Mouse for instance represented the small-town boy type, his behaviour based on a collection of attributes, quirks and attitudes to resemble this 'type' borrowed from comedic greats such as Buster Keaton. The repetition of specific actions played a large role in the early cartoon's humour.

Figurative performance and its portrayal of 'types' would surely result in animators using standardized model sheets that provided formulaic poses and facial expressions to maintain consistency and increase legibility of action (Crafton, 2013, p. 29). "Without electric illumination of the stage or amplification of the voice, actors learned that they must communicate with their bodies. Furthermore, the range of these gestures had to be of a limited number and easily understood by audiences" (Crafton, 2013, p. 29) of these easily understood poses and expression none were more popular than the work of François Delsarte and his system of expression. His system of expression was readily available and a staple of theatre acting, available to singers, actors and by extension animators and allowed "audiences to grasp the message by training or intuition" (See Figure 10). (Crafton, 2013, p. 29).

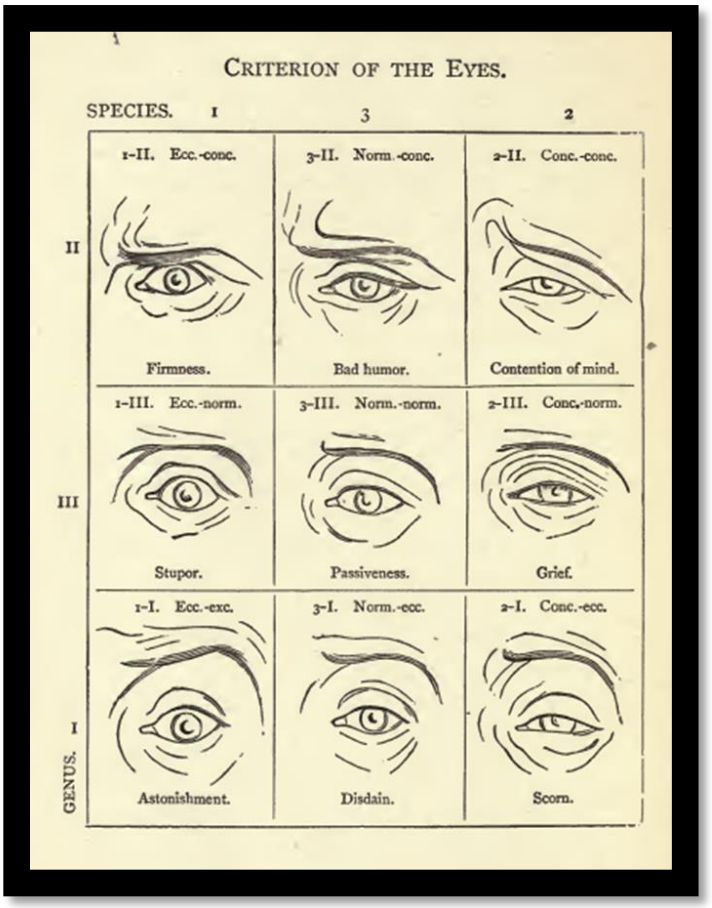


Figure 10: François Delsarte Eye Expression Chart

Another source that illustrates the use of established poses and gesture in the figurative mode can be seen in the works of Preston Blair's such as "*Cartoon Animation" (1994).* Yasou Otsuka also studied Preston Blair's work on the Disney technique much like contemporary animators study the work of Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnson. *C*haracter model sheets such as Figure 11 illustrate a series of established facial expression that would be easily recognizable to audiences. One could state that the concept of strong poses in animation practice itself is fundamentally linked to figurative performances, as figurative acting strives to remove the ambiguity in an action by relying on established actions, poses and gestures.

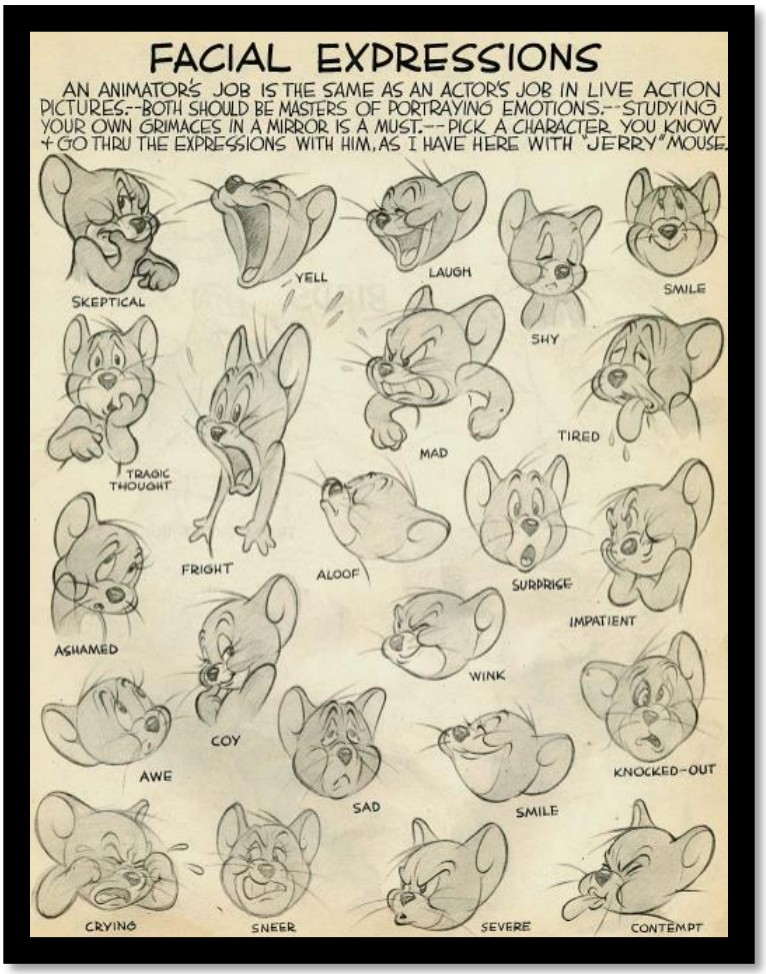


Figure 11: Preston Blair's Stylized Facial Expression

Based on this description one can see the similarity between classic toon animation and its use of stylized gestures and the figurative mode that thrives in Japan. The previous section defined how traditional Japanese arts used formulaic stylized expressions in the e-maki scrolls and how important the portrayal of the inner psyche of a character is to Japanese drama. The formulaic presentation of emotion in manga was adopted into television animation and forms what Neil Cohn refers to as JVL or Japanese Visual Language (See Figure 12) (Cohn, 2007). This visual iconography is stable enough that viewers are quickly able to identify the particular emotion of a character much in the same vein as Preston Blair's and François Delsarte. This iconography however isn't limited to just manga and anime in Japan and forms

part of a greater visual language as highlighted by their use as 'kaomoji' or emoticons in mobile and online texting (Katzuno & Yano, 2002). It is important to stress that the use of JVL is even more pronounced in Japanese animation and extends beyond describing states of emotion and incorporates semi indexical symbolic elements. An example of such and this would be the use of the 'cross' on the forehead to symbolize irritation. The language of anime is less iconic and naturalistic than that of Western animation requiring audience participation.

> Figurative performance involves participation, a manner of reading the codes actively. As if constituting their own "language," in order to be readable, each performance of a figurative expression must be connected to prior iterations, yet must still retain its particular relevance in the context of that specific performance (Suan, 2017, p. 5).

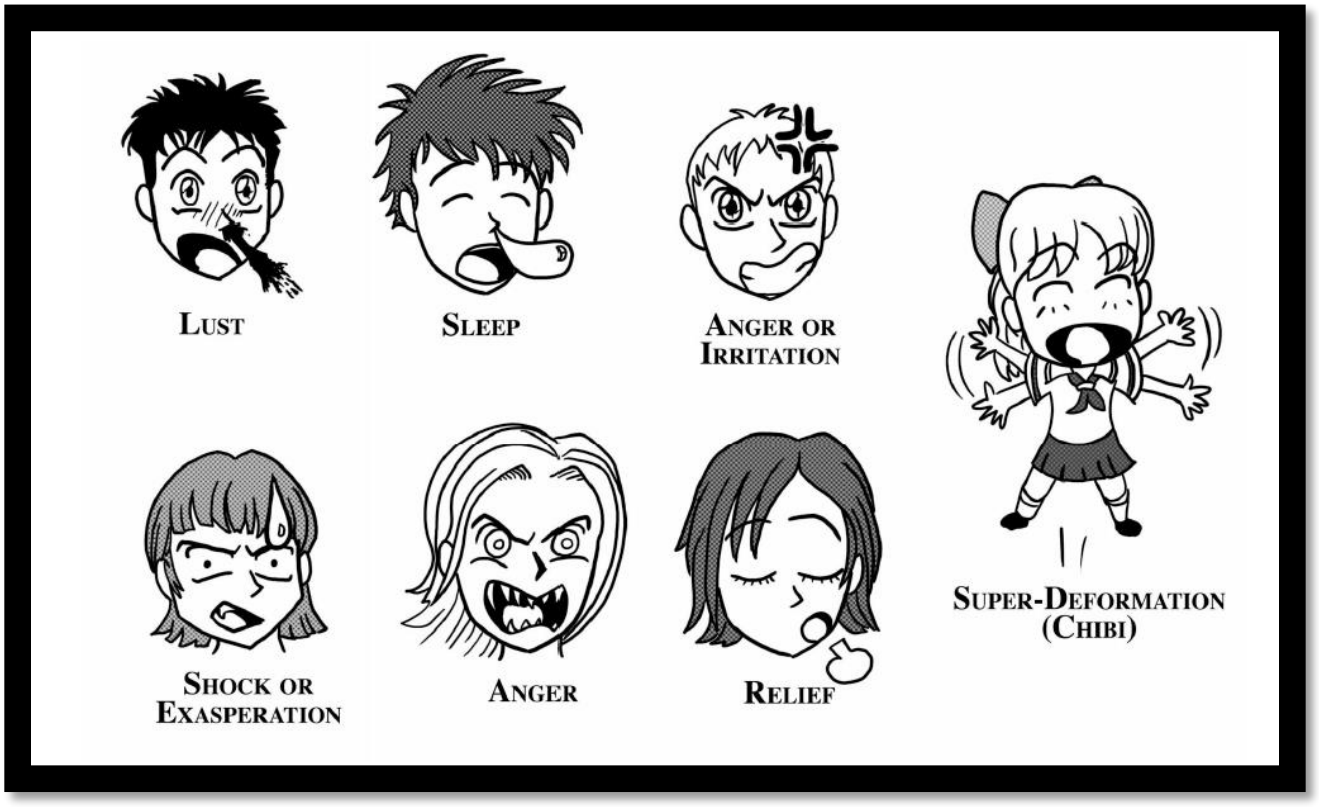


Figure 12: Sample of Graphic Emblems taken from Neil Cohn's Japanese Visual Language: The Structure of Manga

This is not only limited to facial expressions either and has extended to body gesture, such as the 'Gainax pose' which has become synonymous with mecha anime produced by Gainax studios. The pose, which is one of many iconic anime poses, is often used to illustrate the hero's determination and confidence, often prior to entering an epic battle. This is illustrated in Figure 13 and Figure 14.



Figure 13: 'Gainax pose' in *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann* (2007)



Figure 14: 'Gainax pose' in *Diebuster* (2004)

The Gainax pose which in itself pays homage to popular mecha manga *Getter Robo* (1974) utilizes popular manga iconography and visually depicts a clear connection between manga and anime. Most television anime is adapted from manga and incorporates manga iconography into its presentation just as most early American cartoons were based on comic strips. Much like anime the figurative mode thrives in American television animation where the use of types or conventional stock characters is particularly popular. One could state the majority of television animation is figurative. Due to the economic restraints placed on most television productions, there is an increased reliance on more indexical qualities due to the lower frame count. As stated previously this is done to maximise the legibility of actions within the scope of the animation. Additionally the Gainax pose is an example of not only the connection between manga and anime but of figurative performances in anime itself due to proliferation of the pose in other anime. This is due to the reliance of figurative performances on codified expression. "Due to this reliance on codified expressions, figurative performances build from previous ones (2013: 26), replaying and reiterating them in different contexts" (Suan, 2017, p. 2).

Paul Wells identifies the importance of comic strips and early animation when he identifies how *Soda Jerk*s (1920) and other early comic strip form created the "vocabulary for the animated short" (Wells, 1998, p. 17). He cites the example of the use of 'z's to indicate someone sleeping as an example. The link between the American comic strips and animated cartoon is particularly strong during its formation period as many animators were either creators of comics or had started their careers in the comic industry. Comic strips influence on the animated cartoon is particularly apparent and undeniable during the formative period as animated films not only inherited the form and behaviours of the characters but also what Giannalberto Bendazzi refers to as graphic and comedy 'gambits' (Bendazzi, 2016, p. 38). These graphic gambits

are what Paul Wells identifies as the vocabulary for the animated short. Bendazzi highlights a few more examples such as "a big exclamation mark for emphasis, a big question mark for doubt, flashing short lines around the face to represent surprise, movement lines around the body or the limbs to signify quick action, broken lines straight from the eyes to show the trajectory of a look etc" (Bendazzi, 2016, p. 38). The use of flashing short lines to represent surprise can be seen in various Mickey Mouse cartoons (see Figure 15). The comedic gambits are those that were inspired from vaudeville such as the utilisation of gags in the form of pratfalls, takes and double takes. It is interesting to note that while Japan embraced these visual tropes from its own comic tradition, American animation sought to distance itself from them in an attempt to engage a more mature audience and align its products closer to live action film. This highlights a difference in the cultural positioning of animation in Japan and America.

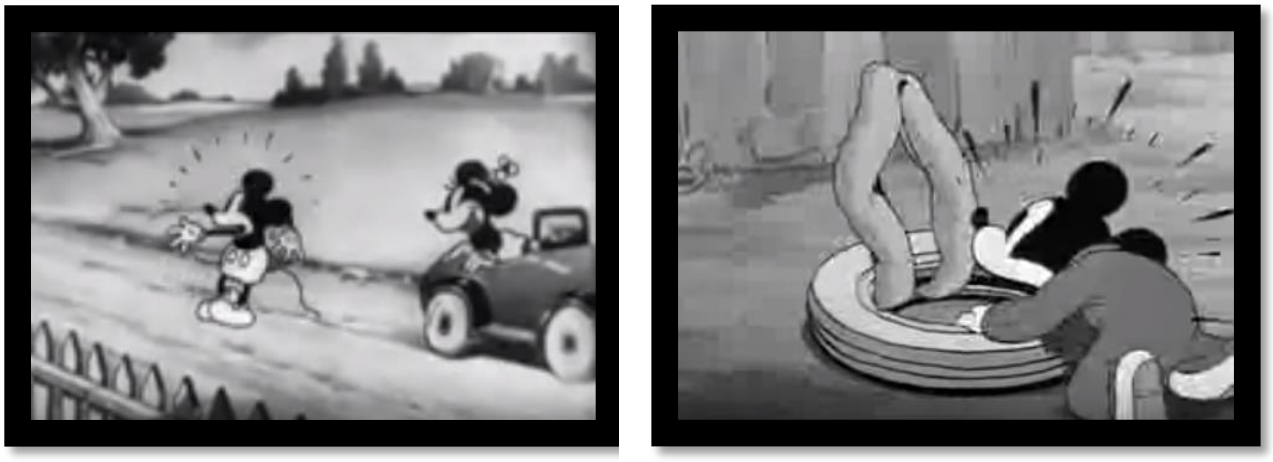


Figure 15: Comic strip language used as a performative element in early animation

Paul Wells also identifies that:

> Many figures throughout the cartoon remain static, revealing Barre's slash method of animation which only the aspects of each frame which moved were actually animated…This perpetuates the look and style of the comic strip, and the sense that linear progression in the narrative that comic strip readers were accustomed to, but it also privileges the

> narrative importance of certain movements, and the function of movements in the creation of physical comedy (Wells, 1998, p. 18).

It is particularly interesting to note the importance of the slash method and its similarity to sectioning used in anime, which serves to prioritize specific movement and its relation to perpetuating the look and style of manga. After all Tezuka stated that they were not pursuing animation but moving manga when adapting Astroboy.

Thus both anime and cartoons rely on figurative elements and share the use of stylized poses and expressions that were informed by a common medium ancestor comics and potentially theatre. This highlights a common historic element of most figurative performances. While there is undoubtedly, a strong connection between figurative acting and anime character performance there may be a potential pitfall. Donald Crafton states that "rather than providing insights into a character's psyche or suggesting a moral, the narratives of films adhering to the figurative approach make their points through repetition and symbolic visuals" (Crafton, 2013, p. 32). Chuck Jones also highlighted that figurative performances accentuated dynamism and immediate legibility rather emotive personality, character nuance, which seems rather strange considering that anime and Japanese drama's core focus is the representation of a character's psyche and emotional state often through the use of stylized gestures and poses or expressionist visual distortions. However, on closer inspection it is the very repetition of these narratives and symbolic visuals that accentuate character dynamism and immediate legibility that anime is identified by. So therefore, while anime may lack 'emotive personality' it meets all the other hallmarks of figurative performances, but before we can definitively answer this it may help to further explore embodied acting and animation.

Sergei Eisenstein was particularly enthralled by figurative acting, by its 'plasmatic' nature the 'figurative reflexivity and kinetic performance' of bodies in cartoons. Disney's pursuit to create cartoon characters with "personality, individuated character, and what the animators liked to call the

'illusion of life' may have been a critical success for the most part but not all studios followed suit (Crafton, 2013, p. 26). Eisenstein was one of the greatest detractors of Disney's new embodied acting, as his adoration for Disney dissipated due to the reduction in the plasmatic nature of figurative performance (Crafton, 2013, p. 26). "Eisenstein saw in such acting the potential for resisting Stanislavskian notions of embodiment, and for world domination by Hollywood's brand of performativity" (Crafton, 2013, p. 28). The plasmatic and plasticity that Eisenstein admired, the creation of expressive space through the body, is a key characteristic of figurative performance.

Embodied Performance

Embodied performance, contrary to figurative performance, is introverted. This form of animation performance was popularized by Disney in their pursuit of "imaginatively realized beings with individuality, depth, and internal complexity" (Crafton, 2013, p. 36) and in the process became synonymous with 'animation' (Wells, 1998, p. 24). Although Disney dealt with non-realist form he insisted on "verisimilitude in his characters, contexts and narrative", meaning he wanted his animated figures to be more believable by having them move like real figures and be "informed by a plausible motivation" (Wells, 1998, p. 23).

Early cartoons did not speak much, while there may have been sound and musical accompaniment, there was little in the way of dialogue. According to Crafton, Don Graham (the founder of Disney's in studio art school) stated that cartoon acting, or embodied acting, only started developing once sound technology was incorporated into the production and underscores the association between sound and personality (Crafton, 2013, p. 36). What is particularly surprising is the focus placed on body movement and gesture to express personality rather than the voice and dialogue which is arguably "the most obvious way to embody the character on screen" (Crafton, 2013, p. 37).

If one recalls that Michael Barrier (Barrier, 2006), when assessing Studio Ghibli's films, was rather dismissive of the character animation, as he

believed the characters performances could be swapped around with little effect on the overall presentation. What Michael Barrier really identified, if one were to apply the concept and approach used by Disney as outlined by Donald Crafton, is a lack of personality or rather a different approach to the representation of personality through movement. This potentially points to a difference in ideology, in how one approaches the representation of personality and the relationship between movement and sound in the presentation of personality.

When Disney was beginning the process of retraining his animators in what would become the embodied approach, he brought in Don Graham (Figure 16) and other instructors from Chouinard to set up art classes on the studio premises. Graham gave them the classical training that most had never had. There were lectures and classes on lighting, shadows, composing in space, perspective, and the relation of the character's psychology to its environment. Graham was also a big advocate of embodied personalities, telling the animators to think of the motives, story functions, and outcomes of an action before beginning to animate it (Crafton, 2013). He insisted that the characters must appear to be thinking. I agree with Crafton when he states that it was Graham who was primarily responsible for realizing Disney's West Coast style, and since that was so influential, Graham became a major contributor, though unsung.

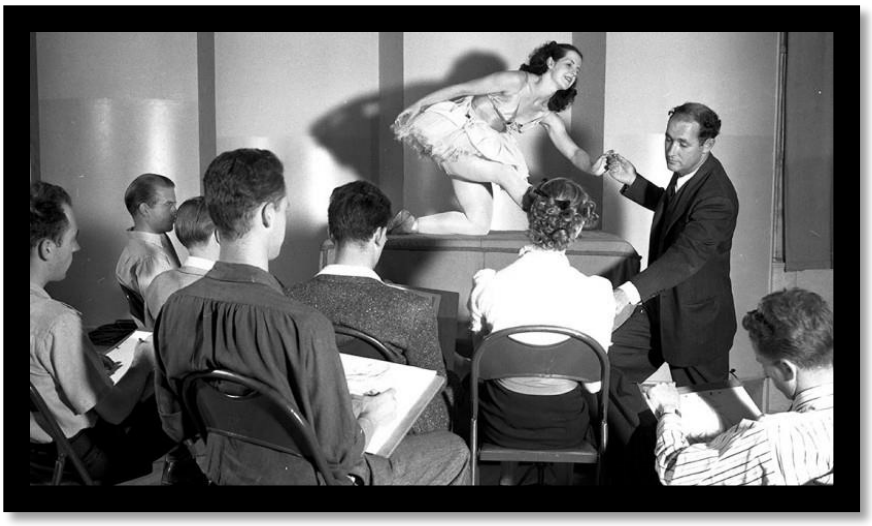


Figure 16: Don Graham instructing Disney Animators

Disney's pursuit into creating believable characters through character animation was first seen in *The Three Little Pigs* (1933). The short featured three characters that looked alike but behaved differently in the way they moved and sang. Essentially their acting was differentiated to showcase different attitudes and personality traits unique to each character. Upon viewing *The Three Little Pigs* (1933) (Figure 17) one can observe differences in performance and personality between the three little pigs in the way they move and gesture however, the degree to which this is done through movement alone is not as clear as one would believe. The use of sound and character design also plays a large role in delineating differences between the three characters. In the case of *The Three Little Pigs,* there are small differences in the performances of Practical Pig and his two brothers Fiddler and Piper Pig (who are almost indistinguishable from a performative aspect). Although the performative differences may be minor, they do display some difference in personality between the two and indicates the first step towards the development of Disney's use of embodied acting that would define Disney's hyperrealist illusion of life.

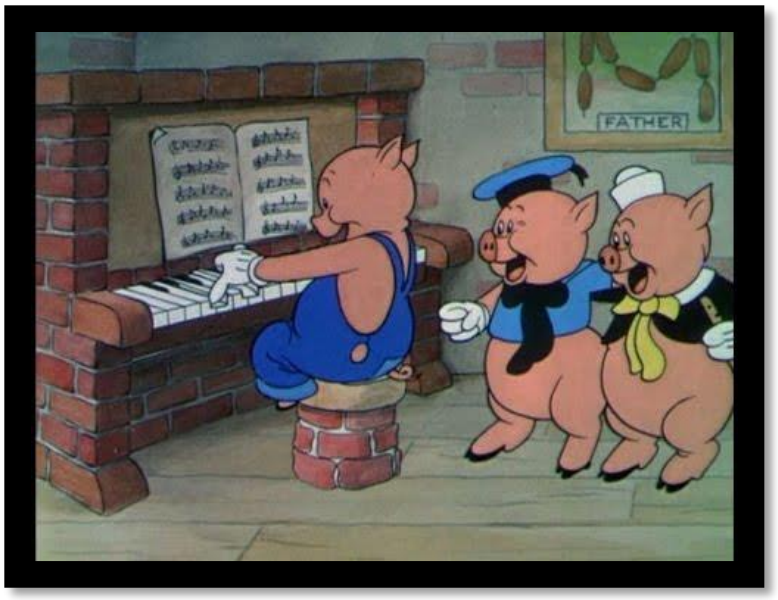


Figure 17: *The Three Little Pigs* by Disney. From left to right, Practical Pig, Fiddler Pig and Piper Pig

"Right from the start, he didn't want them to be just something moving around on the screen and doing funny things. He wanted the audience to care what happened to the characters and to believe them as real beings, not just a bunch of funny drawings" (Crafton, 2013, p. 37). This approach to acting is grounded in Konstantin Stanislavsky's work which caught on in Hollywood during the same period, a form of acting intended for stage actors. Through this process Disney standardised and perfected a specific brand and language for the feature length animation which adopted the model of live action film making (Wells, 1998, p. 26).

The Stanislavsky method, also known as 'the Method' or more commonly 'method acting', placed focus on

> studying and living the role, incarnating the character by living it oneself. An actor is under the obligation to live his part inwardly, and then to give to his experience an external embodiment…A method actor was supposed to make visible to his audience through his face and

> body; the actor could not reveal his character through dialogue alone (Crafton, 2013, p. 38).

A foundational concept underpinning all performances is irony, the Stanislavsky method sought to reduce this irony between stage actor and the embodied character, to create a shift in perspective and attention from actor to character. One can see the allure in such an approach as Disney sought to enhance believability of his characters, to create the illusion of life; thus animators directed their thoughts, feelings and emotion into their character's performance rather than applying standard recurring graphic templates as seen in the figurative approach. Character animation required the animators to understand the character before animating it. Don Graham insisted that "movement was not communicated not only in drawings and space but also through the artist's understanding of its feelings, motives, and emotions, which elicited empathy" (Crafton, 2013, p. 40).

The development of embodied acting led to a new class of animator, the character animator. While figurative and embodied performances are not in opposition to one another, Disney did try to distance themselves from the earlier figurative style of their own work and that of their competitors. Animator Dave Hand stated in regards to their old work, when addressing young animators, that they were set in their ways and had executed walks in the same fashion repeatedly. Only two walks existed, a regular walk and a Felix walk, but after Don Grahams action analysis classes they started to consider how to find a different walk for different kinds of characters.

Graham's belief echoed French sociologist Marcel Mauss. Marcel Mauss believed "bodies and their defining gestures are culturally constructed" and defined these characteristic ways of movement as "techniques of the body" (Crafton, 2013, p. 41). His belief was that while movement is a biomechanical process, it is also a learned behaviour. Like Mauss, Don Graham based his lessons on observations of movement that could be mimicked from one source to another and in the process redefine these observed bodies and produce

cultural meanings from them (Crafton, 2013, p. 41). According to Crafton, Don Graham:

> Asked his artists to create what Mauss called a "social idiosyncrasy," deep seated corporeal habits of movement, gesture, and behaviour that come to typify a whole society, or, in the case of cartoons, whole species (Crafton, 2013, p. 41).

For this to work, movement would need to be able to shift not only from one society to another but also from one "class of being (animal, human, imaginary)" into human motion (Crafton, 2013, p. 41). In essence animators were attempting to capture and re-perform recognized somatic body techniques. Thus embodied performers have "discernible interior as well as extrinsic-traits idiosyncrasies" (Crafton, 2013, p. 42). Graver described this as a completed character, a body "that Western audiences are trained to look for first and gaze at most intently. Its ready display of both inside and outside makes it a pleasing object of contemplation. This body can appear in paintings, novels, and film as readily as on stage" (Graver, 1997, p. 233). Graver stresses the importance of the relationship between the embodied character's interiority and their environment to theatre's world making, stating that:

> In looking for the worlds in which the actor establishes a corporeal existence we are looking for more than just worlds in which the actor has meaning. We are, rather, looking for worlds in which he or she has a body. More than just an object or image, a body has interiority, exteriority and autonomy. A body's interior hides its unseen, volitional mechanisms, the motivating forces that drive its observable behaviour (Graver, 1997, p. 222).

Before continuing the discussion of Graham's approach to animation, a momentary detour is required to discuss the implications of the biomechanical aspects underpinning embodied animation. In the pursuit of Disney's embodied performances characters developed a closer relationship with gravity and physical properties driven by the character's more 'real' or reality

based physiology. “Each character needed his own personality; a way of gesturing consistent with his appearance and psychology; and a body with properly located bones, muscles and joints” (Bendazzi, 2016, p. 100). In layman’s terms characters would perform in accordance to natural laws of motion and adhere to physical laws. The figurative performances of old played fast and loose with physical laws and biomechanics, that is to say they did not obey the natural laws of movement. Embodied performances doubled down on the skeletal structures or real anatomy and the effects of gravity and physical laws in an effort to reduce unreal and weightlessness of animation. This is visible in most of the twelve principles of animation that define Disney’s *Illusion of Life*. Lammare highlights this when discussing the representation of weight in Miyazaki’s films:

> It should be noted that the animation from Disney studios in recent years has gone to great length and expense to generate creatures with locomotion like that of real animals – for instance, the Beast in Beauty and the Beast – with scientific advisors to develop proper skeletons and plausible musculature and so forth. This emphasis on ‘real’ anatomy compensates for the ‘unreal’ weightlessness of animation’s simplified characters. It increases the reality effects of the fantasy world (Lamarre, 2002, p. 346).

In relation to anime however and the works of Studio Ghibli the weight or physical forces acting upon characters is represented differently. While Miyazaki’s characters are physiologically driven by the same natural laws and forces as Disney’s characters i.e. gravity and human anatomy/musculature, their relation to these forces and the depiction of weight is handled differently. One reason for this is how dynamism is imparted through animation; the other is believed to be a result of the visual presentation of characters. Lamarre believes that the iconic and simplified nature of the characters depicted allows for the potential to dramatically reduce the viewers’ perception of weight and mass of the characters, evoking only the barest element of implied mass. Animation as a whole is a lawless space and

various approaches exist for introducing laws and forces into this space; Lamarre highlights the approach used by anime. Anime favours approaches in which characters seem to "act from, and to generate, other 'non-natural' forces" (Lamarre, 2002, p. 346). The first approach, which is more pronounced in Disney animation, is to introduce a sense of reality through the emphasis of "implied masses, anatomical correctness, gravity and so forth". The second approach "more pronounced in anime, which is to play with non-natural forces and other sciences, to work them directly into characters and stories – and to follow the potential implied by different character designs" (Lamarre, 2002, p. 346). Thus the defining aspect of each approach can be delineated as follows: applying movement to a character or having movements implied by the character design. This separation can extend further to incorporate a difference in focus and emphasis, on physicality as the root for characterisation on the one hand, and psychology conveyed through the synthesis of movement and indexical signification on the other. As Stevie Suan states:

> In other words, a bordered body, with an internal and external is produced. In this sense, embodied performance, at its extreme, is locked to the body, localized and specific to the body, particular to that individual body. As such, the limit of embodied acting is the body itself. Embodied acting works producing a sense of emotion in movement, but limiting it to the body, making it appear personalized, individualized (Suan, 2017, p. 4).

Graham noted that gestures in animation do not occur spontaneously, they are drawn purposefully and that the immediate acceptance of a scene and gesture is vital for embodiment; to that extent three dimensionality and mise-en-scene is essential to embodiment. "First each gesture must be clearly staged or presented to the audience. If a gesture, no matter how subtle, is not grasped by the audience the whole scene and conceivably the whole picture may be lost" (Crafton, 2013, p. 43). This statement establishes two important notions, the first that there is a relationship between embodied acting and

the environment, as the environment defines the embodied characters by providing a setting for their performances. The second notion is that animators perform movement to depict emotion within these settings (Crafton, 2013, p. 44).

Part of Graham's approach to action was that natural action should be caricatured to be acting, action in itself would not be sufficient in sustaining the interest of the audience-that is to say that "when action, portrayed graphically, is ordered – caricatured- it becomes a new form of acting" (Graham, 1940, p. 12). Most if not all of Disney's animations are caricatured and in the event that they are not they appear weak as highlighted in the discussion of rotoscoping. Modern animators are taught this form of character animation and acting. Ed Hooks instructs students that:

> Humans empathize with emotion. The audience is why actors act and why you are animating in the first place. The goal of the animator is to expose emotion through the illusion of movement on screen. What the character is doing on a moment-to-moment basis is vitally important, the points of empathy with the audience involve emotion, how the character feels about what he is doing. Empathy is as essential to dynamic acting as oxygen is to water (Hooks, 2000, p. 16).

Character's actions must then be generated by primary thoughts and feelings, this approach or aim within Disney can be summarized or encapsulated under the general term of personality as in "a performance that combined emotion and intellect" (Crafton, 2013, p. 44).

> Emotionally – by arousing human appeal, sympathy or antagonism, by playing on spectator's feeling of justice or injustice, anxiety, satisfaction, etc. Intellectually – by bolstering the character, with idea-theme, revealed in the actions, feelings and attitudes of the character. Thus character acquires a deeper all human meaning for all nations and classes (Crafton, 2013, p. 44).

Embodiment is a crucial concept in Disneyesque animation, as action is not derived from movement alone or movement of a body in space, the main

concern of figurative acting, but from maintaining the integrity of its "somatic boundaries" (Crafton, 2013, p. 48). In regards to Disney's new embodied approach, not all characters may be presented as embodied and may utilise the figurative mode, this is clear in classic Disney films in the presentation of the Princes in 'classic' or formalist Disney films. They are often represented according to type and devoid of personality a hallmark of Disney animated films and their embodied mode.

Performance Space

> [In] the painting that came to us through the Italian Renaissance, we are much more preoccupied with volume and much less with space; and of course volume being more defined, having a true outline – which space has not – we are much more constructive. We deal with weights, with things that the Chinese or Japanese are not preoccupied with. – Jean Charlot, addressing Disney animators (1938).

Animated characters like any performer exist in a time and space, inhabiting an environment in which movement and action is either facilitated or restrained. Thus part of performance is the space within it occurs. This space allows for alternate worlds to be conjured that define the performance. In animation there are two levels of spatial construction, the figures and the scenery/environment in which they move. Unlike non-animated films the environment is completely constructed. Animation is not defined by the same laws as live action, if one can dream it, it can be animated.

> In live action cinema, what is difficult is teasing out the line of the composition from the real material. However we were only able by chance to film the right cloud we needed. We tried forty times before that but it was always wrong…But Disney is lucky. He can just draw the outline he wants (Eisenstein, 2010, p. 336).

The creation of space in animated films or cartoon space is not a purely mechanical process as audience expectations and narrative conventions are taken into account (Crafton, 2013, p. 146). If one looks at the development of

animation and performance space, a shift from graphic space (comic strip) to camera space occurs (film).

> Pictorial design in 1920's had achieved a happy medium because the dominant style of comic strip art, with its high contrast black and white palette, simplified forms, rounded characters, and inconspicuous backgrounds, contributed to an overall impression of flatness, the so called new York style (Crafton, 2013, p. 147).

In essence, it represented a certain attitude towards space and the screen evident in most early cartoons as character movement happened laterally across the screen, from right to left or vice versa, rather than into the depth of the environment. Character performances did not move into the depth, they were not three-dimensional so to speak, and therefore depth and perspective was not a necessary requirement. Additionally these animations relied on the comic strip spatial style that relied on lateral legibility which would have undoubtedly resulted in a familiar legible spatial system for viewers. *Plane Crazy* (1929), one of Disney's most spatially innovative cartoons, illustrates most of the "comic strip spatial composition typical of the New York style" (Crafton, 2013, p. 170). See Figure 18 and Figure 19 for an illustration of the comic strip spatial compositions in *Plane Crazy* and the comic strip adaption *Lost on a Desert Island* (1930).

According to Crafton the evolution of space was driven by the increased complexity of characterization or the shift from the figurative to the embodied mode (Crafton, 2013, p. 150). Thus for Disney pictorial space and personality were intrinsically linked to one another. It was during this same period (1930's) in which fundamental concepts such as pictorial space, colour pallet and performance philosophy changed into what Langer referred to as the West Coast style, marking the shift from the New York style (Crafton, 2013, p. 150).

> The markedly different visual representation style of the 1930's eventually replaced the comic strip style [New York style], which had often verged on modernism with its dynamic compositions. The new

style [West Coast style] emulated anachronistic illustration styles that were borrowed from popular bourgeois children's books and from literary classics of Victorian canon (Crafton, 2013, p. 150).

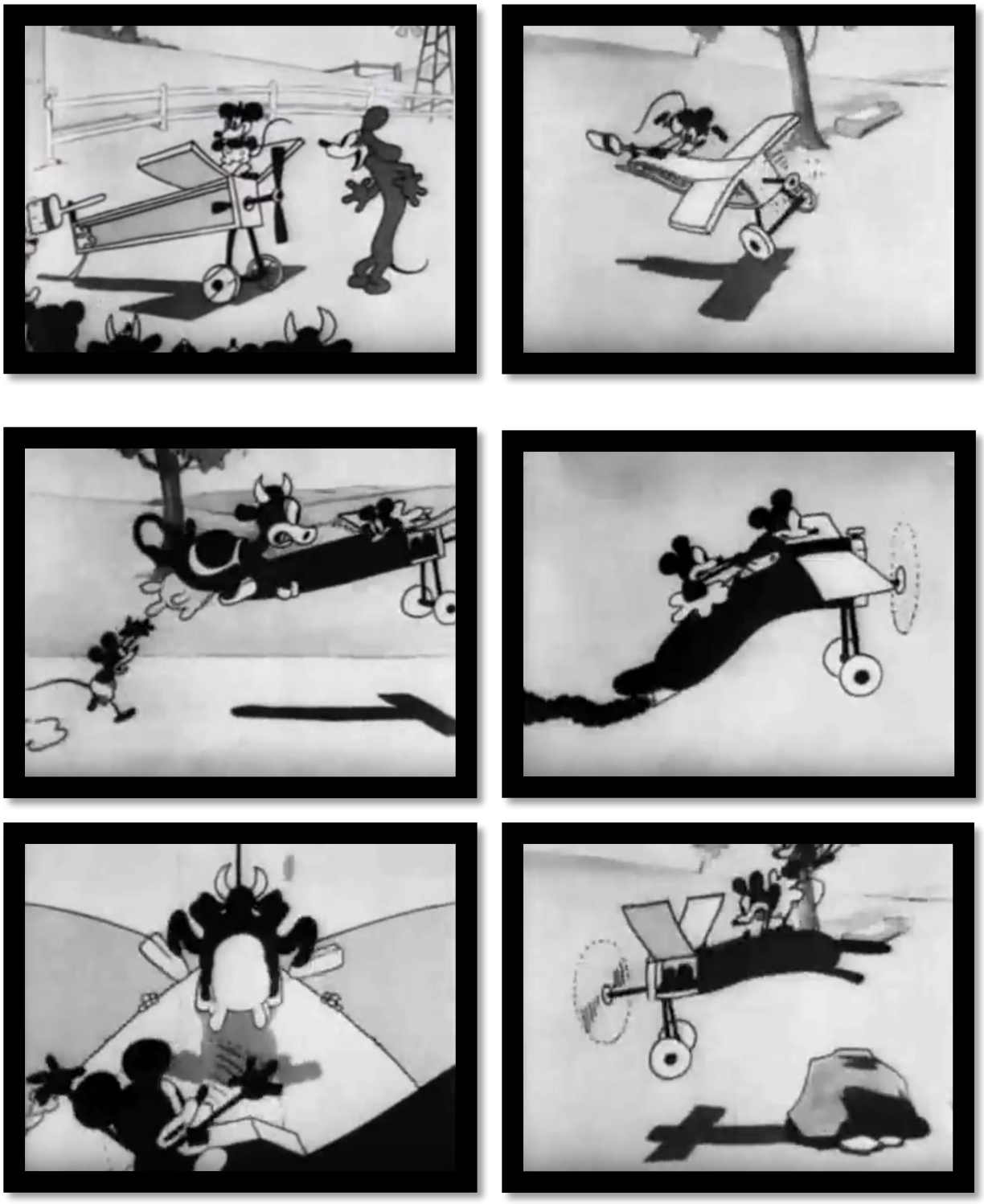


Figure 18: Scenes from Mickey Mouse *Plane Crazy* (1928) displaying lateral scene composition similar to comic strips.



Figure 19: Plane Crazy (1928) was the first animated Mickey Mouse cartoon adapted to a newspaper comic strip titled "Lost on a Desert Island (1930)". When comparing the two a clear connection between comic spatial composition and the early Disney animations is presented.

The interest in pictorial performance space developed concurrently with embodied performance at the time when Hollywood was considering embodied concepts of personality and character. In addition to his action analysis classes, Don Graham taught a class on perspective (Crafton, 2013, p. 155). Don Graham saw screen space as a 'prerequisite' for performance and that an animator is required to be proficient in pictorial space to render "believable fantasy worlds" (Crafton, 2013, p. 155).

Graham wrote that, "It seems reasonable to conclude that as long as action is possible a spacious condition exists. This space may or may not be visible" (Graham, 1970, p. 325). Graham thought of space as a medium for action and therefore space and action are in 'continuum' (Graham, 1970, p. 156). To Graham the impression of movement starts in the drawing themselves and the unbalance of space in the composition, suggests action and movement. All these developments aligned with the codes of classical Hollywood and became the dominant style utilizing the ideologies of Chouinard School of Arts, and the aesthetic and personal sensibilities of European artists such as Bill Tytla and Albert Hurter (Crafton, 2013, p. 159).

The cell process and its adoption according to Kristin Thompson affected the aesthetic of the animated image. “By decade’s end at the major studios there was a new kind of cartoon space that was more accommodating for the characters, more engaging for the viewers, and closer to live action mise-en-scene. The characters themselves were more fully rounded, graphically and psychologically, and needed spaces that…were less slight, flat, and chimerical” (Crafton, 2013, p. 160). The more defined characters needed spaces that could support their new performances. Maureen Furniss defines animated mise-en-scene as the “images, color and line, movement and kinetics” (Furniss, 2007, p. 62). Thus to understand the image a more nuanced understanding of the various spaces in animation is required. Cel animation separated the foreground from the background, essentially creating three spatial systems, “the biplanar systems of cel and background and a third, virtual one that was created at the time of projection” (Crafton, 2013, p. 160). Cinematic camera space is created when combing the spatial systems, namely the cel and background.

The cel is where the action occurs, where the figures come to life through movement and inhabit a proxy space. “To be fully illusionistic, though, these drawings had to be placed within an environment. This was the function of the background” (Crafton, 2013, p. 175). The background or layout (scenery, setting, environment or set), using vanishing points, creates its own space for the character or figure to inhabit, and their actions to occur and further solidify the illusion of movement into depth.

The relationship between cel and background plays a vital role in the dynamism of movement in animation mimicking the figure/ground relationship of depth and motion perception. This separation between layers and the ability to move them allows for the creation of a different kind of dynamic movement and forms a vital aspect of both anime and Studio Ghibli’s dynamism. Recall the movements illustrated in the discussion of Yasou Otsuka’s techniques in the previous section.

Animations in the 1920's adhered closely to the picture plane and were compositionally uniplanar due to animators focusing "only on the parts that moved, such as the feet. So the action tends to take the form of a frontal display, as though on a shallow theatre stage such as a vaudeville chorus line" (Crafton, 2013, p. 169). This form of performance is clearly visible in *The Skeleton Dance* (1929) and *Plane Crazy* (1929); see Figure 20, retaining the typical frontal display and presentation format of vaudeville theatre. "Characters perform for the "camera" that represents the point of view of idealized spectator in a theatre, and they often acknowledge the viewer's presence through a direct gaze, mimed gestures or speech" (Crafton, 2013, p. 169).



Figure 20: Skeleton in The Skeleton Dance in frontal display representative of vaudeville theatre.

As pictorial space developed to become more spatially complex, so too did the presentation of figures. Animators started showing more half figures and facial close-ups consistent with the drive for greater characterization in opposition to the typical full figure or from the knees up presentation of figures that had been the norm in the 1920's and early 1930's. Initially close ups were used as a shock device but over time the close up developed as a device to portray character intimacy and psychology, components essential to the embodied acting style. In contemporary films the close up is used to guide the viewers' attention to something or someone that is significant to the development of the plot. This helps to distinguish and highlight main characters from less important characters in productions (Nelmes, 2003, p. 98). Before the close up gained recognition as a device to enhance drama and the portrayal of a character's emotional state, it had the effect of encroaching on the viewer's personal proximity. Early film audiences did not respond well to the cinematic device for this reason especially when utilized in a context to instil fear. An animated example of this occurs in Satoshi Kon's *Paprika (2006) (See* Figure 21*),* in which the close up is used to instil fear or revulsion in viewers as they are forced into close proximity with a character that has been established as vile. Thus while it may allow the viewers to enter a character's intimate space revealing certain characteristics and emotions it could have the adverse effect as well.

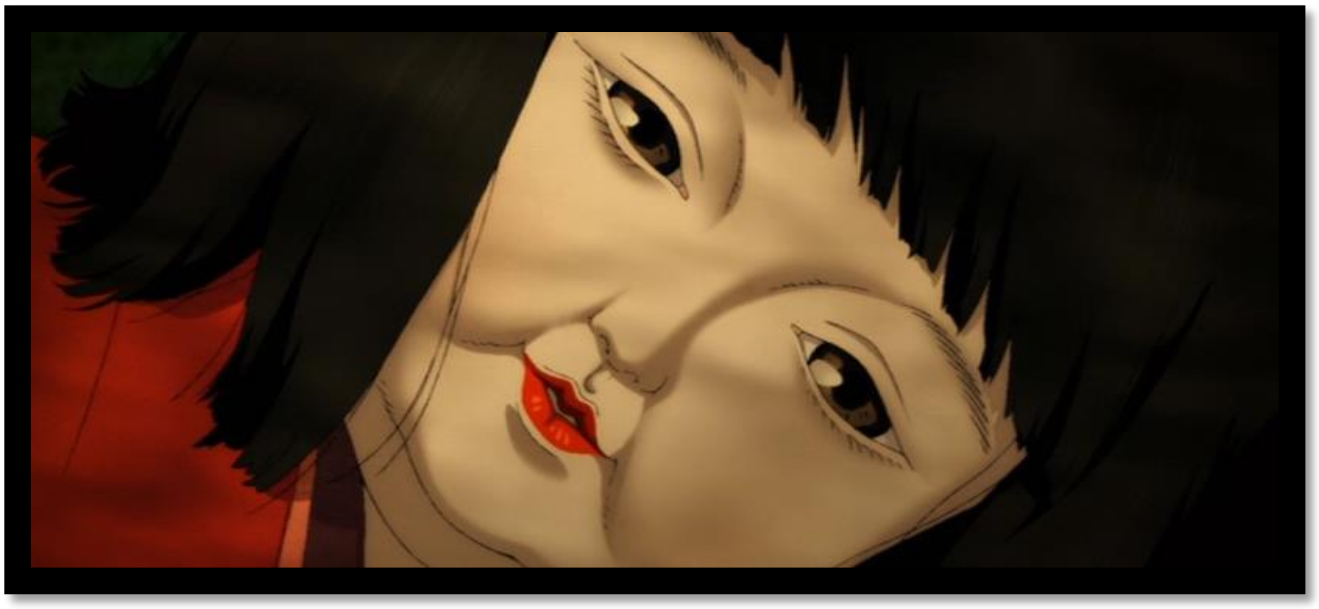


Figure 21: Extreme close up from Satashi Kon's Paprika (2006)

At this point, it would be beneficial to introduce anime and Studio Ghibli's approach to movement into depth and movement within their compositions. As established earlier, Miyazaki uses detailed backgrounds in conjunction with simplified iconic characters in the foreground. Seeing simplified characters against detailed backgrounds has two potential outcomes in regard to depth relations, on the one end of the spectrum it can suggest depth if the background colours are more subdued than those of the characters. On the other end of the spectrum however the characters may seem to float and appear disconnected or separated from the background/world. This is not to suggest that depth is not rendered and implied rather that it may appear to remain "incipient if the relation between foreground and background is not smoothed out, not well composited" (Lamarre, 2002, p. 359). Thus the viewer is made aware of the separation between background and foreground, rather than constituting a single three dimensional world they are presented as different dimensional layers.

This is to say that a while Cartesian single point perspective and therefore depth is present at the level of background illustration, it is not associated with movement into depth in films of Studio Ghibli. Meaning that backgrounds

are drawn with suggestions of depth but are not so pronounced as to completely alienate the characters and their subtle shading to impart depth (Lamarre, 2002, p. 362). Lamarre highlights a separation in compositing between traditional compositing and closed compositing. The former exemplified by Disney and the multiplane camera, which allowed movement into depth by mechanically moving layers in proportion to one another and the latter by Miyazaki and their animatic approach. Rather than focusing on the movement into depth, his films rely on movement between surfaces and emphasise lateral movements within the composition. This is not to say that there aren't movements into depth but rather that Miyazaki favours a specific form of movement, particularly lateral movements. Lammare states this is due to Miyazaki's adherence to the full-limited animation tradition, for embracing the dynamism imparted by limited animation and the moving of images.

Miyazaki is often defined as having a closer relationship to live action cinema, while animatic elements are present within his work he is by far the most 'cinematic' of anime directors. Lamarre suggests thinking of Miyazaki's anime as animation that seeks cinematic mobility through manga like drawings rather than animation that focuses on animating characters, hence stressing the word manga when defining Studio Ghibli and Miyazaki films as 'Manga Eiga'. After all Miyazaki distinguishes his works from anime and their 'otaku worlds', rejecting the art of limited animation. At its core, the separation lies in the use of either limited or full animation but beyond this separation both forms seek cinematic mobility through manga like drawings but its where they draw their expressiveness from that differs and converges. Television anime, the kind Miyazaki dislikes adheres closer to the cinematic expressiveness of manga; after all it was one of Tezuka's main contributions to make manga more cinematic. On the opposite end is Miyazaki's position, which embraces the cinematic expressiveness of animation, based on observation of the natural world rather than otaku worlds but utilises manga like images.

Miyazaki has stated that almost "all Japanese animation is produced with hardly any basis taken from observing real people, you know. It's produced by

humans who can't stand looking at other humans. And that's why the industry is full of otaku[7]!" (Baseel, 2014). His primary dissatisfaction lies with artists that rely on these conventions to convey action and meaning as he believes artists should rather develop these through observation and then expressed in animation, rather than relying on these visual shorthands (Miyazaki, p. 106). This is reminiscent of Don Graham's view that animated movement should be based on observation as the goal of animated acting is the caricature of real motion and not cartoon, which is based on comic movement and language.

The final element of performance space to cover is the use of shadows. "There is no better way to chart how mechanics, form, and content aligned to reconceptualise performance space in the 1930's than by observing the changing treatment of shadows" (Crafton, 2013, p. 183). Shadows help ground the performances of characters by connecting the cel and background space and are an essential element for creating the illusion of unified depth (Crafton, 2013, p. 183). They impart a greater sense of realism or verisimilitude through anchoring characters within their environment.

Early figurative performances in American cartoons used shadows as a stylistic device or as a special effect, which is if shadows were present in the animation at all. Animations in the 1920's treated shadows as an expressive element and not as a way to create space. It was another artistic legacy of the comic strip style as cartoonists were not trying to create space or enhance the depth and realism of their work. Hence, there was no need for shadows resulting in the inconsistent use and treatment of shadows. In the animations that shadows did occur, the noonday shadow was often utilized; a shadow that doesn't adhere to the form of the characters bodies and seems to cast un-realistic shadows. One can see the treatment of shadows within the same cartoon in Figure 22 and Figure 23. "The noonday shadow doesn't create much

[7] The word Otaku has shifted in register and meaning since its inception in the late1980's. The word contains both positive and negative connotation in Japan as well as abroad. At its core the term identifies an individual's fandom and enthusiasm towards a particular subject matter. The original definition is as follow: "[The word specifies] young, wildly enthusiastic fans of cartoons, comics, video games etc. who do not wish to communicate with others who don't share their interests" (Asahi Shimbun, 1990).

of an impression of depth, although it does imply that the vertical body has proxy space, density, and contact with the horizontal floor" (Crafton, 2013, p. 184).

When these shadows were rendered, they would often be opaque in the tradition of the comic strip. Shadows however would prove to be an important agent in Disney's shift from figurative to embodied performances and would therefore need to shift to something that resembled nature more, something more 'naturalistic'. This shift was achieved with the use of translucent shadows, which of course entered into the "studio's ongoing conversion to be a less cartoony performance program" (Crafton, 2013, p. 188). In addition to the use of translucent shadows, by use of double exposure, Disney shifted away from the formulaic light sources and noonday shadows that preceded their earlier work and that of other studios in favour of rendering convincing shadows that better defined a character's volume and their place in that environment.

The shift from graphic space to camera space led to the evolution of character design, space and shadows. Characters were now more complex not only in design but in their movement capabilities as well, accessing parts of their environment that were once the territory of live action (depth). As a result, their point of contact in these worlds had evolved along with them becoming more complex in the process and more closely resembled their real world counterparts. These elements are an integral component of Disney's embodied performance, seeking to reduce the division between the foreground and background. On the one hand is a representation system entrenched in the comic spatial system favouring lateral movements and on the other a fixation with film and camera space, and its movement into the depth. Disney and their embodied performances sought to reduce the division between foreground and background. Anime and Studio Ghibli are less concerned with these divisions, actively embracing the gap that exists between them. It must be noted that while the absence or presence of these elements alone may not be enough to identify whether a performance is figurative or embodied it does

allow for greater accuracy in identifying a performance's inclination. It provides more criteria with which to discern whether a performance is figurative or embodied in conjunction with other criteria corresponding with each performance mode. With a nuanced understanding of performance space and shadows and the ideologies underpinning their development we can now engage in an analysis of Disney and Studio Ghibli's character animation and performances.



Figure 22: Mickey's Steamroller (1934) but with shadows absent. This illustrates the inconsistency in the use of shadows as within the same scene Minnie sprouts a shadow within the same performance as seen in Figure 6.

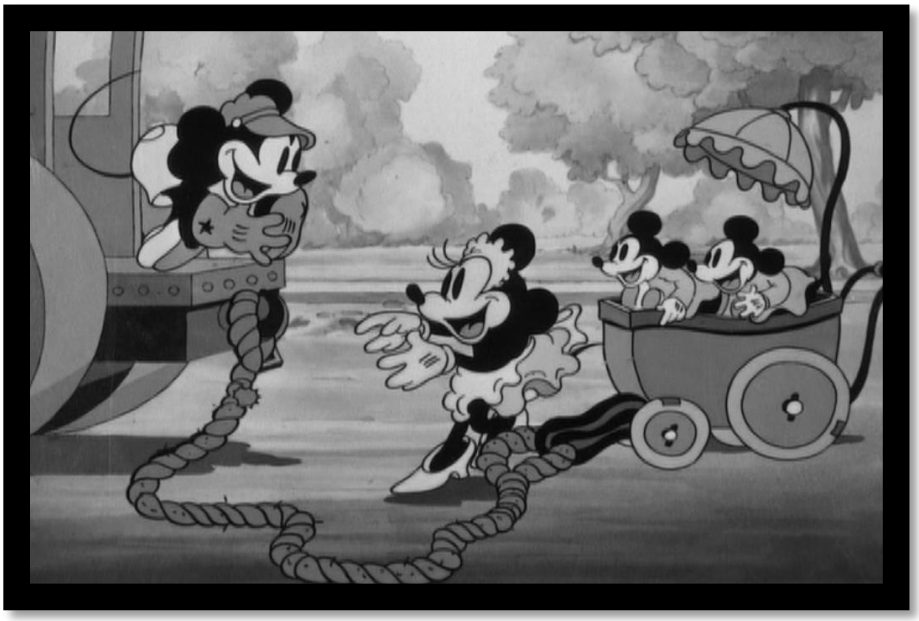


Figure 23: Mickey's Steamroller (1934) showcasing the use of the formulaic noonday shadow

Analysis

We established the importance of movement and the different modes of performance and how performance space developed. Animated performances are not binary, animated films tend to oscillate between these two modes. That said however, one could argue that studios tend to prioritise a specific performance mode in their productions. For Disney, embodied performances take precedence as the studio strove to perfect this method of performance. The question regarding which performance mode Studio Ghibli and the work of Miyazaki's leans toward still needs to be addressed. For this reason a sample of films from the 90's will be used to identify any trends common among the selected studio's oeuvre of work to the elements that define each performance approach. Films from the 90's are selected due to Studio Ghibli's ascendency during this period and Disney's return to form after a period of malaise in the 80's.

Disney and Ghibli Performance

If one were to over simplify and generalise the approach to animation used by Japan and America it would be that American animation and particularly the work of Disney wanted to show the truth of movement. Emotion is displayed through movement and must emerge through the frame, to render visible everything the character feels. An adherence to realism and Hollywood conventions places on emphasis on the subject and seeks to render the artist invisible, to create an illusion and reduce irony in the performances. Western theatrical performances strive towards realism defining characters by individuality and idiosyncrasies specific to a period and setting to enhance believability, which aligns with Stanislavski's method acting.

In Japanese animation the portrayal of psychological truth takes precedence, focusing on a single element and its portrayal, placing emphasis on form in expressing the psyche and emotion of the subject or character. Japanese theatre and art would fit a more modernist classification as the focus is placed less on realism and more on the impressionistic and expressionistic, or simply put the graphic nature of things. The focus is on capturing a

distillation of character rather than emotional verisimilitude. However as Hu noted in the works of Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli realism plays a large role, which is strange when compared to the classic theatrical traditions of Japan that don't seek or strive for realist depictions in performances. To simplify the discussion regarding figurative and embodied performances the identification of a core aspects separating the two is required. If one were to summarise the separation in simple terms it would be 'realism' or rather greater believability. Thus, the shift exists between works that are defined by more 'believable' performances versus performances that are less 'believable' in terms of visual realism. In most cases more 'believable' performances and greater verisimilitude is attached to greater physical and visual realism rather than psychological realism. Purely working on this rhetoric and Hu's account Miyazaki's work would fall in the realm of embodied performances and yet it seems that anime favours a more figurative approach.

Table 1: Basic Summation of Elements that Define Figurative and embodied Performances

Figurative	Embodied
• Characters less skeletally defined. • Loose approach to physical laws. • Often typified by weightlessness.	• Skeletal structure more defined in the way characters move with a more defined musculature. • Stronger emphasis on physical laws. • Reduction in weightlessness as characters are more 'grounded'.
• Focus on dynamism rather than emotive personality. • Characters display types using stylized gestures and poses. • Extroverted.	• Personality driven incorporating intellect and emotion in performances. • Greater emphasis on rendering the internal externally. • Introverted.
• Favours lateral movement. • Often typified as flat.	• Movement into depth.
• Shadows rendered unrealistically, a secondary focus. • Shadows appear in the form of noonday shadows. • A form of special effect or dramatic convention to emphasise a scene.	• Realistic rendering of shadows, integral part in displaying depth and heightening character performance. • Seeks to reduce to division between foreground and background
• Closer relation to comics.	• Closer relation to film.

Table 1 highlights components that help define whether a performance may or may not be more geared towards the figurative or embodied. In the case of Disney and Studio Ghibli films, both adhere to defining character movement according to the skeletal structure of the character, meaning that human characters move and behave like human characters and yet at the same time Ghibli refrains from these anatomical guidelines in instances such as facial expressions and the expression of weight on these anatomical bodies. “He seems content, however, with a certain degree of fluidity, grace and plausibility in movement. But he does not strive for the anatomical and facial precision of movement so important in other forms of animation” (Lamarre, 2002, p. 349). This often leads to the critique that their animation lacks personality. Personality was defined as a performance that combines emotion and intellect. Emotion referring to a character’s ability to rouse an emotion such as sympathy, anxiety etc. from viewers, and one cannot argue that characters in both Studio Ghibli and Disney animated films do not respond with the appropriate emotional response in a given situation as seen in Figure 24 and Figure 25.



Figure 24: Emoting Tarzan (1999)



Figure 25: Emoting Spirited Away (2001)

Intellect refers to imbuing character's performances with a theme, attitude, and feeling. In essence, these idiosyncrasies that define the character emerge through movement and are vital to creating embodied performances. Disney mobilized the concept in this way. Studio Ghibli's characters in this regard seem less 'energetic' and idiosyncratic in comparison with those of Disney. This is not say that Studio Ghibli character are without theme, attitude or feeling as they most definitely are with various characters having defined attitudes and feeling towards something or someone, but rather than present these through the performance itself these are registered through other means. These performances oscillate from the more subdued to the more overt with characters acting as ciphers. A potential answer may lie in the ideology informing performance that Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli share. In a discussion regarding the use of rotoscoping and live action in animation, Miyazaki highlighted an important approach governing his animation and that of Studio Ghibli:

> If animators are enslaved by live-action films, the excitement in the animator's work would lessen by half. Though we can also say that we didn't have an acting style after which we could model. *Bunraku*, *kabuki*, *noh*, or *kyogen* are too far apart from our works, and Japanese musicals or ballet which are just borrowed (from the West) didn't interest us. We have been animating with our passion, hunches, and feeling, based on various experiences of movies, manga, and others, as much as time and

> money allowed us. Gestures (of the characters) tend to be constructed by symbolizing and breaking characters' feelings down to facial parts (i.e., eyes, eyebrows, mouths, and noses) and reconstructing them. But we tried to overcome the decay of symbolization by animating through "identifying with the character" or "becoming the character (Miyazaki, 1988).

There are two interesting distinctions in this statement. The first is in regards to the performative model anime adopted or evolved from; it would seem that Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli rejected the performance models from Japan and the West. The second point of interest is the identification of elements that typify the embodied approach of performance. While it may be true that anime did not directly adopt or emulate the acting of Bunraku, Kabuki or Noh in terms of stylistic elements, they undoubtedly did continue the tradition of figurative performances in anime. Similar to anime the Japanese traditional arts are strongly grounded in the figurative mode never pursing realism; instead, their art seeks to emphasize “techniques that capture the essence of the subject in a way that assumes some participation by the audience” (Levi, 1996, p. 21).

In regards to the second point, it is not clear if Miyazaki is specifically speaking of Japanese animators or animators in general when discussing animators’ attempts to overcome the decay of symbolism by pursuing embodied performances. In either case, both statements would hold up historically as Disney pursued embodied performances through identification with the character and Toei’s early animation pursued Disney-like animation and therefore shared similar goals as Disney. Miyazaki had therefore, undoubtedly been exposed to Disney and their hyperrealist embodied animation. Disney and their caricature of life and movement do not seem to be the goal in Miyazaki’s animation. If one recalls Miyazaki favours the figurative works of Fleischer Studios and the early Silly Symphonies of Disney. It shouldn’t come as a surprise then that he believes that one should not look down on the use of symbolism, stating that “if you can capture the true

essence of what you should express, a picture with a true feeling has power" (Miyazaki, 1988). Thus in some sense this perpetuates the ideals of Japanese art and drama.

This seems to be at odds to some degree with Hu's assertion that realism is integral to Miyazaki's and Studio Ghibli's work. It is odd as figurative performances tend towards the symbolic and expressionistic rather than the more 'realist'. Hence, Miyazaki prefers symbolic performances to correspond with the symbolic elements of his narrative. Miyazaki believes an element of realism is required to create believable fantasy worlds much like Disney, hence the realist backgrounds and movement based on musculature. The separation then seems to occur 'higher up' in the performance, with one studio continuing the embodied approach in pursuit of greater believability and the other shifting more towards the expressionistic and symbolic. Acting is not just movement and consists of subtle changes in shadow, light and a succession of signs; Miyazaki and Disney were both aware of this. If one had to place Miyazaki's films in a spectrum, with each performance mode occupying the extreme of each polarity, it is interesting to note that the films become more embodied in regards to character performance with characters displaying more overt idiosyncrasies in the way they move and express themselves. The behaviour of Chihiro (from Spirited Away) in particular features a far greater range in facial expression and idiosyncratic movements that not only separates her from the rest of her cast but also from previous Ghibli protagonists. This may explain its greater critical and commercial success in the West as opposed to the other highly accomplished Studio Ghibli films as she can be referred to as a 'completed character' a character western audiences are trained to look for.

Other examples of more embodied performances exist in Studio Ghibli films, such as San's introduction sequence and her fight with Lady Eboshi in *Princess Mononoke*. Similar to how Chihiro's performance makes her identifiable in Spirited Away; San's performance separates her from the rest of the human characters as she is presented as more fierce and feral. The treatment of San

however is not consistent as her behaviour and movements do not reveal more of her emotional and psychological state, rather they fade away amongst other character movements. In comparison to Disney's *Tarzan* (1999) for instance, who is quite easily identifiable from a performance standpoint as a mixture of animal and human behaviour separates him from the rest of his human and animal cast. His emotion and psychological development is presented through his physical performance, from an 'ape man' walking on all fours to a human walking upright, yet his identity is in crisis and results in an oscillation between the two presentations. San in contrast is far more human in her performance and while she identifies more with her wolf family it isn't necessarily presented through her performance and rather through dialogue and emotional symbolism. In contrast however, characters like Chihiro presents her character growth through performance; she grows from an uncertain and afraid child to a confident adolescent.

It must be stressed however that even though Miyazaki may prefer symbolism in his performances it is not in the same vein as manga or anime, as his work does not feature or features very little of the hallmarks and iconography of manga and anime. Miyazaki refers to these elements as anime expressionism. These anime and manga elements seem to be reduced in his work in much the same way his performances defer from those of Disney. Thus, Studio Ghibli's work could be described as 'manga like' due to its utilization of the visual style in terms of character design but never embracing the more performative elements of the form. If one were to look at these aspects alone, the lack of overt anime expression or iconography could lead one to deduce that Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli's animation favours a more embodied approach to performances than most anime with the most embodied of performances found in Spirited Away, but is still more figurative than the work that Disney produces.

A particularly strong figurative performance occurs in *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989) in which Jiji (Kiki's pet cat) pretends to be a toy cat, so as not to rouse the suspicion of a dog. While the bulk of Jiji's performances are not overtly

figurative and adhere to the general depiction of a cat, this particular performance utilizes manga and comic strip language to depict Jiji's distress and anxiety in the form of sweat drops materializing all over his body (See Figure 26 and Figure 27). Similar figurative performances exist for human characters as well as seen in the sequence in which Chihiro first encounters the polluted river spirit and takes advantage of a highly stylistic pose to represent shock at the sight and stench of the spirit (Figure 28 and Figure 29).

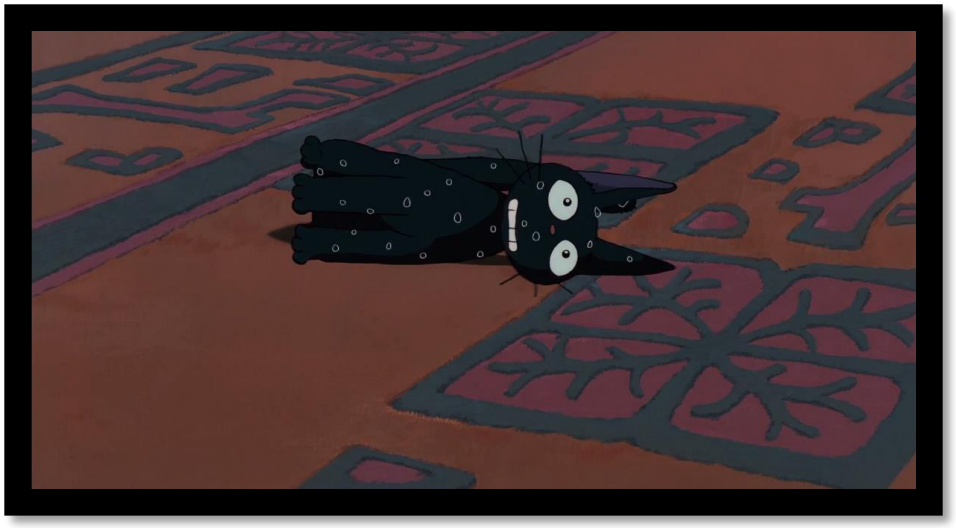


Figure 26: Jiji's figurative facial gesture. Kiki's Delivery Service

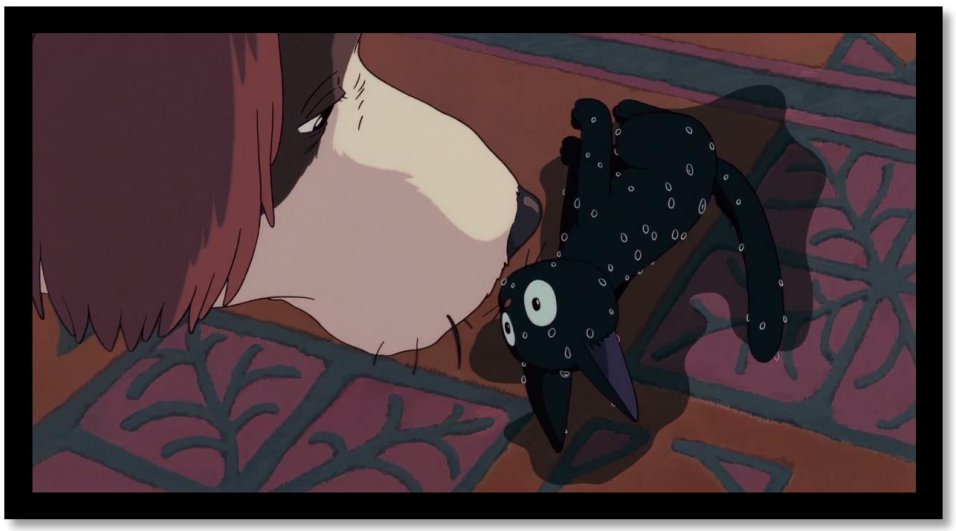


Figure 27: Jiji's figurative performance Kiki's Delivery Service

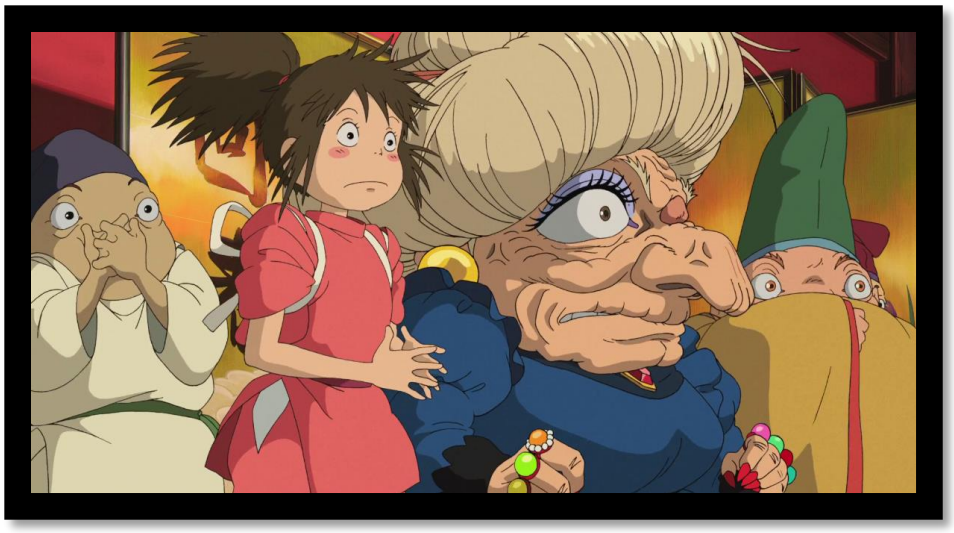


Figure 28: Chihiro Figurative Performance in Spirited Away



Figure 29: Chihiro's Figurative Performance Spirited Away

Weight and its representation has been discussed at great lengths already so without trying to re-tread the same ground it's important to highlight the representation of physical forces in both studios. The difference boils down to their approach to animation and which performance mode they subscribe to. In general, figurative performances are defined by a less strict approach or adherence to the representation of weight and physical forces. Embodied performances on the other hand are driven by a greater sense of believability through reality and therefore go to greater lengths to accurately portray

gravity and the physical forces acting upon figures. As discussed while Miyazaki holds the notion that some form reality is necessary to create believability (as seen in his backgrounds and biomechanical movements) he prefers a figurative approach when it comes to performances, which works well with their hybrid approach to animation which favours the use of moving and tilting cells to impart dynamism and weight. The use of the aforementioned techniques in conjunction with a higher number of frames (in comparison to other Japanese animation) results in their brand of full limited animation. As established, Disney's traditional full animation focuses on drawing the movement and animating weight (Figure 30). This is not to say Studio Ghibli does not animate weight shifts as seen in Figure 31, but rather that they oscillate between Yasou Otsuka's full limited animation techniques and traditional animation.

Therefore, weightlessness is a component of figurative performances. Disney tried to shift away from weightlessness in their earlier performances by pursuing their embodied approach defined by greater realism; Studio Ghibli on the other hand does not seem to be as pre-occupied with this notion as weightlessness integrates seamlessly into their narratives and figurative performances. These weightless movements aren't restricted to only flying sequences and form a core element of most of the character movements and heighten there expressionistic and symbolic elements. It is the control of anime techniques in Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli's work that impart a cinematic feel to his work and at its core these anime technique value figurative performances.



Figure 30: Weight shift and movement out of depth. Tarzan

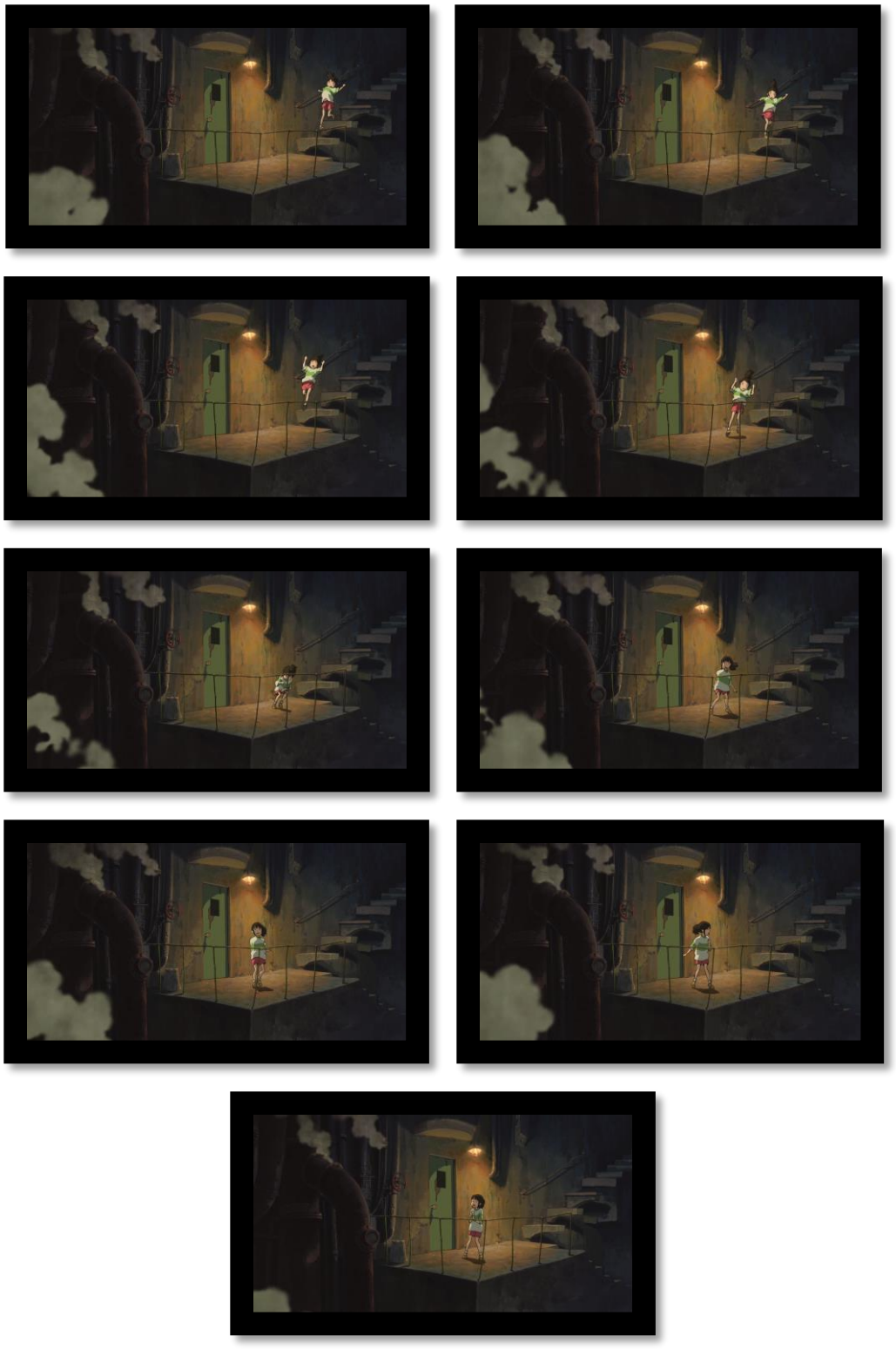


Figure 31: Weight shift in Spirited Away

Disney and Ghibli Performance Space

Performances are not based on movement alone however and rely on mise-en-scene to ground the performance in either the figurative or the embodied. Donald Crafton highlighted how important mise-en-scene and staging is to animated performances. The basic separation was that figurative performances tended to rely on lateral movements that utilized the comic strip spatial system and a particular treatment of shadows. Embodied performances featured greater movements into depth, shadows became more defined and backgrounds used greater perspective to define depth.

Rather than focus on the movement itself, whether lateral or into depth which has already been discussed in *Performance Space* section, a better use of time will be to engage with the treatment of shadows. Suffice to say the main take away was that Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli favour lateral movements and panoramic establishing shots rather than movements into depth; this is not to say that their backgrounds do not feature perspective depth and that their animation features no movements into depth but rather that lateral movements work in conjunction with the figurative approach.

Onto shadows then, Crafton highlighted shadows as the most obvious element in the development of embodied animation performance space for Disney. The basic notion is that developments in mechanics, depth and colour can be traced to the treatment of shadows. The use of depth would impart the impression and potential for motion and showcase greater character depth as characters became three dimensional opposed to their two dimensional counter parts. The treatment of shadows in the figurative mode in a sense reduces the importance of shadows often utilizing them in various formats that appear inconsistent. When present they would take the form of noonday shadows and would be opaque as opposed to translucent. Upon inspection, this would seem to be the case in Studio Ghibli's treatment of shadows as illustrated in the comparison of shadows between Disney films and Studio Ghibli (Figure 32). It is clear that Studio Ghibli utilizes shadows that align more with the classical figurative mode than that of the embodied. The

shadows are opaque and often appear in the noonday format, and often do not appear all that defined and only serve to indicate that the character is anchored to the environment to some degree but not explicitly.

In many ways, the use of shadows in Studio Ghibli's films is reminiscent of older animated cartoons from the East coast figurative style. If one were to compare the treatment of shadows between the Popeye short *Vim, Vigor and Vitalky* (1936) from Fleischer Studios and that of Studio Ghibli's films the similarities are quite striking (Figure 33). Both studios treat shadows as neutral opaque noonday shadows, with little indication of a prominent light source and are less restricted in their approach to the shape and volume that the shadows cast. The treatment of shadows is near identical in this regard, what is of greater interest however is the treatment of shadows when they are given greater importance for dramatic effect and utilized to create more depth and space. Crafton highlights this as a special effect and it seems to be present during moments of contemplation in Studio Ghibli's and Miyazaki's oeuvre. The astute reader would remember the discussion regarding the tradition in manga and anime to improve the illustration and animation of a sequence or image for dramatic effect. The same approach or concept is utilized with the treatment of shadows. As illustrated in Figure 34, the use of shadows is used to heighten the mood of the scene. Prior to this scene most shadows were presented in the common format as illustrated in Figure 32. The treatment of shadows changes however as this scene in particular utilizes shadows as a special effect to heighten the contemplative mood. There is no doubt that this is done to enhance the contemplative elements of the protagonist, to render their emotional and psychological state, and for the viewer to engage with the fictional world. This is Ma moment, common in Noh. The shadows are not the only element to receive additional detail however; the performances themselves seem to shift towards the embodied as if to create a stronger relation between the character and their world only to dissipate in the next sequence.

Shadows in *Spirited Away* have a higher level of sophistication than prior Studio Ghibli films as they appear translucent opposed to the opaque rendering in prior films. The rendering in terms of form remain sporadic with various noonday shadows appearing throughout the film however there are instances where these are swapped out in favour of more defined shadows, such as the aforementioned sequence. In these instances in which the more defined and natural shadows occur they appear to be quite reminiscent of Disney's approach, meaning the shadows are translucent and dictated by light sources rather than opaque and neutral (noonday shadows). Disney sought to subtly articulate a believable performance space by "better defining characters volumes and their place in the environment" (Crafton, 2013, p. 190). It should be no surprise then that Studio Ghibli would prefer a looser more figurative approach to the use of shadows and depth when his animations often utilize the figurative mode and its looser approach to physical forces.

In sum, this section sought to situate Studio Ghibli's approach to performance space and shadows in regard to whether it is figurative or embodied. It is clear that Disney adheres and exemplifies the embodied performance; Studio Ghibli however seems less constricted in that regard. Shadows and performance space seem to shift back and forth between highly figurative to more embodied presentations much like the character performances themselves. Thus performance space and depth is rendered in the realist mode aligning with embodied performance goals but shadows and the utilisation of performance space seem to favour figurative performances. This distinction adds further proof to Studio Ghibli's hybridity.

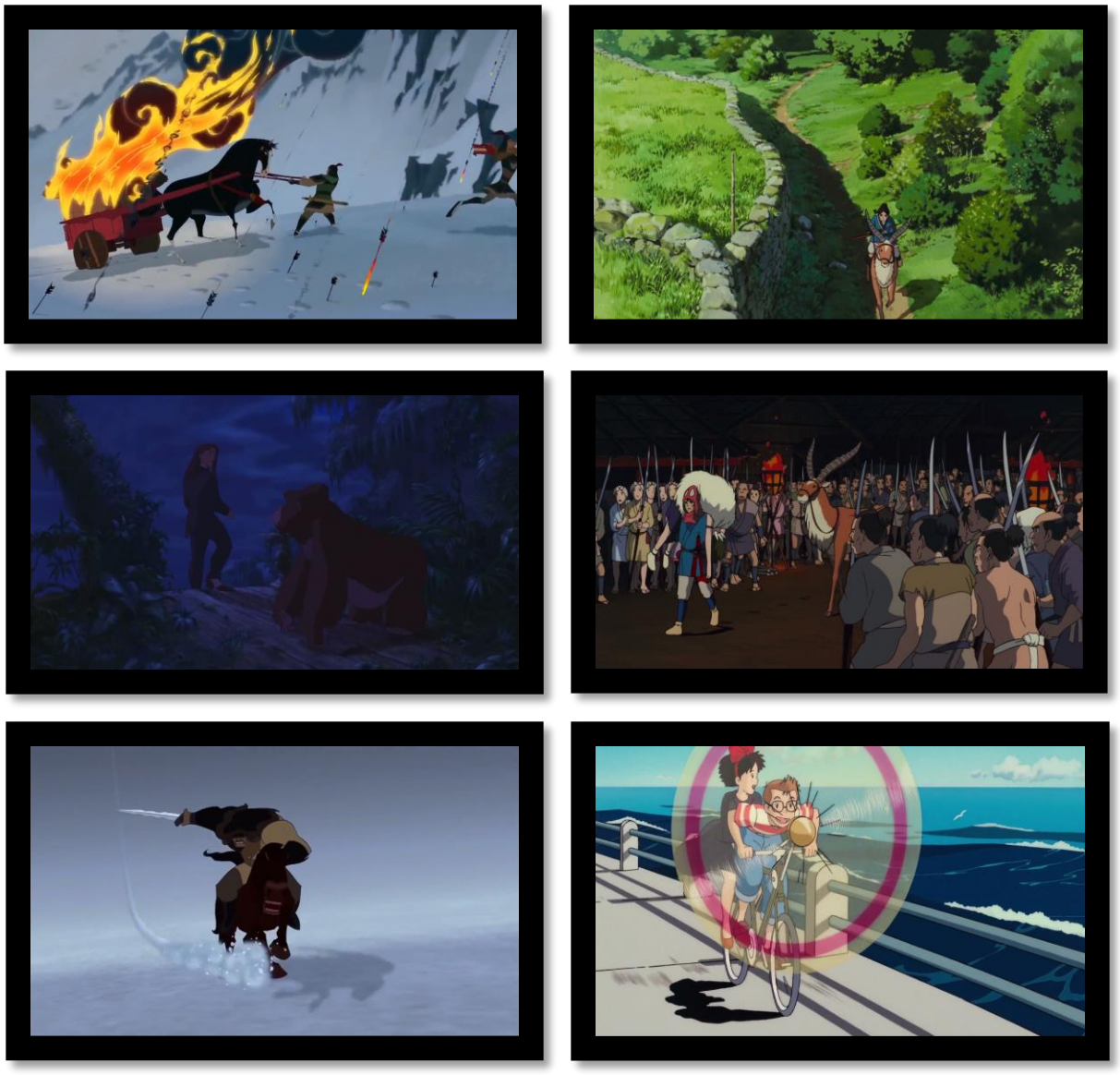


Figure 32: Shadow comparison between Disney and Studio Ghibli. Indicating the use of more defined translucent shadows in Disney's work and the more opaque and less defined shadows of Studio Ghibli.



Figure 33: Comparison of figurative shadows in *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Popeye Vim, Vigor and Vitaliky* (1936). Opaque and loosely defined shadows in both productions seem to serve the same function of anchoring the characters but only enough to facilitate that they are influenced by physical forces.



Figure 34: Defined translucent shadows for dramatic effect in *Tarzan* and *Spirited Away*

Conclusion

This research paper sought to investigate the differences and similarities in character animation and performance in Disney and Studio Ghibli animations. It was established that Disney and their hyperrealist school of embodied acting and animation is the defacto dominant performance standard. In that regard Disney is the quintessential example of embodied acting and animation, it is their hallmark and their contribution to the world of animation. It is the culmination of decades of work, pursuing the goal of greater 'believability' through the pursuit of visual and physical realism. Reality would become the template for its aspirations, not a true reflection of reality, but rather the caricature of it. These elements would prove vital as the imaginary worlds and the characters inhabiting these worlds needed to be real enough to be believable. They needed to be idiosyncratic not only in theme and in attitude but in the way these elements were presented through movement. In short, they needed personality, they needed to be alive. This does not mean that the works by Disney are devoid of figurative performances however, as it is unlikely any production would subscribe to a singular performance mode as they do not exist in opposition of one another, but rather that the fundamental performances are embodied and are driven by hyperrealist goals. This would thus position anime and their strongly figurative animations as an alternative to embodied animation. This extends beyond a difference in animation techniques used i.e. full animation versus limited animation. The differentiation thus does not only lay in the techniques used to render the performances but in the performances themselves. Japan's introduction to animation and early pursuits may have been in the school of embodied acting and Disney hyperrealism but the medium's eventual development turned towards the figurative. This shift was driven by a multitude of factors including the economic and cultural. In many ways, this shift occurred due to the rise and popularisation of a new graphic medium in Japan and its own traditional approach to art and drama that favoured the figurative rather than the embodied. An approach to performance that embraces its constructed nature rather than attempt to conceal it as

embodied animation does. This is fitting as most anime gains much of its dynamism from limited animation's ability to expose its constructed nature and embrace those aspects.

Studio Ghibli however exists between these two performance modes and somewhere between the two animation forms (full animation and limited animation). Essentially placing them at an intersection between Disney's embodied hyperrealism and anime's figurative dynamism. In the process, Studio Ghibli seems to have developed a unique approach to figurative performances. These performances synthesize traditional full animation ambitions with limited animation ingenuity resulting in a hybrid style. If one were to make a rough summation of Studio Ghibli's approach it would be the utilization of figurative facial expressions from a well-established Japanese graphic medium and the embodied physical performances based on human observation rendered through a combination of full and limited animation techniques. Beyond this, one could also state that Studio Ghibli actively embraces the graphic medium of manga, through the use of manga like images, and the animation/film medium effectively combining elements from each. Steinberg noted the separation between the two streams of anime predicated on a relation between animation and film and animation and manga. It would seem however, that Studio Ghibli is a combination of the two as it embraces the relationship between animation and film, making his work more cinematic than most anime, but also embraces the graphic elements of manga and animation. This hybridity extends to their approach in performance.

Embodied performances function as individual external expressions of internal emotions, figurative performances however are not the representation of an inner feeling but the expression itself is the feeling. When Studio Ghibli's performances do extend into the embodied, they maintain a connection to the figurative, as they exist in continuity. Hence, their characters display personality through codified actions in the form of figurative, facial and bodily movements, but never to the same extreme as the majority of anime.

Therefore Studio Ghibli's productions are more embodied than most anime but more figurative than most Disney animations. Thus, one could conclude that Studio Ghibli's identity and point of differentiation from other anime and Disney is in the balance of how figurative and embodied the performances are in its animation. In essence, Studio Ghibli supersedes the categories of embodied and figurative performances by embracing aspects of each polarity and blending them together. Their performative watermark is driven by one of balance; balance not only between the two performative modes but also of its relation to film and manga.

Thus in summation one studio is defined by its approach to embodied animation and the other by its hybridity of the two performance modes that are reinforced by its hybrid approach to animation.

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