OFUJI, Noburo (June 1, 1900-July 28, 1961)

Noburo Ofuji was a Japanese animator and animation director. He is most well-known for animated work that uses traditional *chiyogami* – brightly coloured paper printed with woodblock patterns – and their innovative incorporation of colour, movement, and sound. Inspired by Lotte Reiniger’s similar work with paper cut-outs, he began to make his own films in the early 1920s and soon established his own studio. While cut-outs were a common animation technique due to their cost-effectiveness, Ofuji stood out by tinting the celluloid of his films in order to convey the the bright textures and patterns of *chiyogami*. His *Song of Spring* (1931) is an example of this, as the film uses vibrant pink *chiyogami* to create evocative kaleidoscopic patterns of swirling cherry blossoms. Ofuji’s experimentation with layers of animated images is also noteworthy. Thomas Lamarre notes that Ofuji’s animation stand, which used multiple glass planes separated by a few inches, in many ways prefigured the invention of the multiplane camera. While most of Ofuji’s films do not utilize this technology, his *Chinkoroheibei Tamatebako* (1936, Chinkoro Heibei and the Treasure Box) incorporated filmmaking techniques from the cinema, such as irises and mattes, in order to focus audience attention on particular areas of the screen. Ofuji was also one of the first animators to embrace the use of cinematic sound in his short films. His *Kuro Nyago* (1928, Black Cat) featured music synchronized to a pre-recorded jazz record, predating the first “official” talkie of Japan’s cinema by three years.

List of Works:

*Animation no senkakusha: Ofuji Noburo kokou no tensai* *[Animation Pioneer: Ofuji Noburo, Solitary Genius]*, (Kinokuniya Shoten, 2010: 180 min).

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

Lamarre, T. (2009) *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

*The Roots of Japanese Anime: Until the End of WWII*. Zakka Films, 2009: 92 min.

Yamaguchi Y. (ed.) (2004) *Nippon no Anime Zenshi [Complete History of Japanese Animation]*, Tokyo: Ten Books.

Paratextual Materials:

Song of Spring

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkV-5pmSHag>

Black Cat

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFQO774RsLU>

Flower and Bee (later Ofuji-directed cel animation in color)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ik-lS4xWIu4>

Bryan Hikari Hartzheim

University of California, Los Angeles