

THE GHIBLI ISSUE

CAL ANIMAGE ALPHA presents

# konshuu

Volume XLVII, Issue VII



SAN  
Princess Mononoke

Art by Deborah Lim

# THIS WEEK'S FEATURED SERIES

ANIMERECOMMENDATION

## MAJO NO TAKKYUUBIN (KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE)

A classic coming-of-age story about a witch-in-training named Kiki. In order to become a witch, she must spend a year living on her own in an unfamiliar town. After settling in at a bakery in a coastal city, Kiki starts her own delivery service, transporting products by broomstick. Along the way, she encounters new experiences and learns what it truly means to be a witch.



Summer 1989, Studio Ghibli  
Directed by Hayao Miyazaki

ANIMERECOMMENDATION

## KAZE TACHINU (THE WIND RISES)



Summer 2013, Studio Ghibli  
Directed by Hayao Miyazaki

Though Jiro Horikoshi's eyesight is too poor to fly planes, the young boy yearns to design them one day. And so begins his story. Told in vignettes, the film's surreal quality is accentuated by its vivid dream sequences, as the movie floats between Jiro's lofty ideals and the weight of the war in which he must realize them. Achingly beautiful landscapes set the tone of this classic biopic.



# THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON CLEANING

STAFF WRITER

**ZIANA DEEN**  
2ND YEAR, ARCHITECTURE

We're watching *Howl's Moving Castle* for the twentieth time. My sister is on her phone because she's just gotten a text. But then Sophie grabs a bucket and a mop so I hit my sister's knee. "It's cleaning time." Phone cast away, my sister sits up and for the next five minutes, we're captivated by the cleaning scene that makes every Ghibli film amazing.

You may think I am joking, but I am not. I truly believe the cleaning scene present in every Ghibli movie is part of the reason why these films are so popular. There is just something about taking a duster to a cobwebbed corner that makes the viewer so relaxed and satisfied.

Every time Sophie cleans up, I'm filled with satisfaction as Howl's castle goes from being a dump to a respectable home. In *Spirited Away*, one of the most rewarding scenes is when Chihiro cleanses a polluted river spirit. While the characters are amazing, the music is out of the world, and the plots are engaging, I believe

it is these positive reactions we feel during scenes such as cleaning that makes Studio Ghibli so enchanting. And all because of something called ASMR.

**ASMR**, that is, **Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response**, is a low-grade euphoria experienced on a calm and relaxed level. It's the feeling we get everytime we watch a Bob Ross video, or see cakes being frosted just right. It's also the feeling we get when we see chaos being sorted out, just like in Ghibli films: a house made anew or toxic sludge becoming a clean, pure river spirit. The mere act of watching a dirty element become clean actually places our mind in a state of euphoria. Clinical trials have proven that watching ASMR-inducing videos or actions are effective in treating insomnia, anxiety, depression, and panic attacks.

I'm not sure if Ghibli puts their cleaning scenes because they want to induce relaxation in the midst of their films or because they just like cleaning stuff. But whatever the reason, it certainly doesn't hurt the popularity of their films. All I know is that no matter how many films they make, as long as there is a cleaning scene, I'm watching it.





# SELF-DISCOVERY



**ANDREW OEUNG**

3RD YEAR, EECS

Secretly wishes for ice powers.

STAFF WRITER

*Spirited Away* is one of a kind. The public sees it as the most successful animated film of all time. BBC sees it as the fourth best film of the 21st century. *Spirited Away* is special to me because it was the first animated film I ever watched. I remember the days when Cartoon Network aired Miyazaki's movies. I watched *Spirited Away*, then *Princess Mononoke*, then *Castle in the Sky*. *Princess Mononoke* and *Castle in the Sky* were both good, but *Spirited Away* was not good...it was amazing! Since then, I have watched *Spirited Away* over a dozen times. This film is undoubtedly my favorite film of all time, and no other film has usurped its position from the throne in the past ten years. What does *Spirited Away* do differently?

The setting. *Spirited Away* takes place in Yubaba's bathhouse, a large and mysterious commercial property housed with magical spirits. The origin of these spirits is never explained, but does fantasy really require explanation? The bathhouse evokes a sense of wonder and awe from children, but adults can see the implications behind the spirits and their potential symbolism.



The storytelling. Most movies heavily focus on dialogue, but *Spirited Away* has several segments without dialogue for scenes at a time. Can you remember when Chihiro runs down the stairs to meet Kamaji, the bathhouse's boiler-man? The staircase is steep and precarious, with Chihiro nervously clutching the wall for dear life. This is her first real step into the world. Haku and her parents are no longer there to guide her, and even though this scene is funny in hindsight, it's obvious that Chihiro is scared and fearful of this foreign setting.



Can you remember when Chihiro and No-Face board the train to meet Zeniba? We see the sun set as the train crosses a vast ocean, coupled with emotional piano music. Faceless strangers disembark the train and return to their daily lives, while Chihiro looks onward with a confident gaze. She has grown into a capable and responsible individual after the trials and tribulations of working in the bathhouse. For both scenes, no words are spoken. But the absence of dialogue only makes the scenes more memorable and relatable.

We all experience moments in which we step into a brand new setting or undertake a new journey. This portrayal of a character's growth from childhood to adulthood is certainly not novel, but *Spirited Away's* execution marks it as a masterpiece.

# HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE: AND THE VANITY OF ANIME



KATRINA LUQUE

4TH YEAR, ENGLISH

Self care is watching *Madoka* for the 5,000th time.

STAFF WRITER

The titular character of *Howl's Moving Castle*, Howl, is preoccupied with his appearance. In fact, his vanity appears to be his defining character trait at the beginning of the film. While Howl's obsession with appearance may seem to be a trend that is isolated to this particular movie, anime as a medium is similarly enthralled by aesthetics.



It is common sense that anime characters are attractive. Nobody would want to spend countless hours staring at a screen full of unattractive character designs. This explains why even characters that are supposedly plain, such as *Attack on Titan*'s Eren Yeager, are appealing to look at. Throughout *Howl's Moving Castle*, the "aesthetic character rule" is referenced, especially when Howl breaks down when his hair is dyed the wrong color. Howl's hair color switch leads him into a spiral of despair, where he confesses to Sophie that he believes he has no value if he is not beautiful.

In some respects Howl is correct: anime would have little value to the audience if the art and character designs were repulsive to viewers. *Howl's Moving Castle* reminds viewers that anime relies heavily on the beauty of the visuals on screen. However, despite often reinforcing the beauty equals goodness mantra that exists in the anime industry, both the movie Howl and several stand-out anime work to subvert the tyranny of aesthetics.

Two methods of undermining the aesthetic obsession in the industry are style and unattractive, yet relatable, characters. Tomoko Kuroki from *Watamote* is one such character. Ironically it is her unremitting anxiety over appearance and popularity that makes this character sympathetic. Viewers are guaranteed to connect with her woes concerning whether or not people are willing to disregard her appearance in order to connect on a personal level. *Watamote* succeeds at transcending the aesthetic paradigm by creating a main character who is relatable due to her struggles with appearance.



The second method relies upon stylistic innovation. The style of *Devilman Crybaby* is not for everyone: some people may find the design to be distorted and unsymmetric (symmetry is a standard measure of beauty). While the stylistic deviation of *Devilman Crybaby* may be unappealing to certain people, the design does wonders for the contemporary (read: modern) atmosphere of the anime. In this case, an unorthodox animation style leads to a phenomenal anime that discounts classical standards of beauty in anime such as symmetry and soft, doe eyed female protagonist.

Tying aesthetics in anime back to *Howl's*, the movie attempts to undermine the hegemony of beauty by introducing Sophie, the protagonist and female love interest who does not conform to classic beauty standards. Although Howl does confess to Sophie despite looks, immediately after this confession Sophie undergoes a transformation sequence which causes her hair to turn a luminous silver. At the end of the film, Sophie embodies the ideal of female beauty championed in the anime industry, rendering the films' attempt to discount aesthetic appearances ineffectual at best and hypocritical at worst.

# AN EYE IN THE SKY

## ~ON GHIBLI'S VISUAL TECHNIQUES~



**JOSH ROQUE**

4TH YEAR, ENGLISH

EDITOR-IN CHIEF

Everyone thinks I'm a Film major but really I'm just a Roger Ebert fanboy.

Konshuu articles tend to focus on storytelling and affect, as that is always the general focus of the anime fan. However, I like to throw in a teensy bit of technique here and there. Most of what I learned can be read in Thomas Lamarre's article, "The Multiplanar Image."

I will tell you nothing about *Castle in the Sky*'s plot other than this fact: two small children are attempting to reach a mythical castle while facing down pirates, armies, and the occasional maniacal government worker. Children crawling into an adult world, a la Ghibli.

*Castle in the Sky* (1986) works in a paradigm known as **animetism**. Modern technology makes it easy to emulate real world effects in animation: *Violet Evergarden* (2018) jumps right at the camera with a whoosh, and that effect is not cheap. As usual, Ghibli is the grumpy old geezer who likes to keep everything old school. Animetism makes the artificial part of animating more noticeable, rather than trying to hide it behind realistic effects. It is a financial workaround that instead becomes a way of thinking about animation as a whole.

Animetism in *Castle in the Sky* can be observed when the film animates movement of moving objects. A more sophisticated technique of animating movement would be to have an object coming at the camera, or away from the camera, like a speeding train or a car. You would be able to feel the woosh as the object moves. However, almost all of the movement in *Castle in the Sky* is lateral and flat, moving only in two dimensions; and it is a conscious decision.

Think about it like this: how does a child draw a moving car versus a professional artist? Of course, the child will draw it

flat and moving left to right on paper. An artist with time and resource will likely add some dimension to the image, because it is better at conveying movement.

Throughout *Castle in the Sky*, the viewer is meant to experience the world as a child views it. Ballistic movement will not work for that. Children don't imagine movement realistically. Their imagination tends to be two-dimensional, like watching a hand puppet play with cardboard cutouts.

It makes speed feel different. Because the camera is still, it makes the viewer feel as if they are the center of the world and action. Ballistic movement like a car zooming forward depicts speed in relation, which requires understanding and comprehension of the speed of relative objects. How much easier is it for kids to play *Super Mario Brothers* than *Mario Kart*? A lateral view makes movement easier to comprehend at a basic level, but less comprehensive overall.

It is not a coincidence that *Castle in the Sky* is about children trying to perceive a hidden, grown-up world and fumbling around when they falsely perceive danger. Neither is it a coincidence that the effect of rising technology over nature has obvious discourse on how the movie thematizes perception.

*Castle in the Sky*'s animation shows the viewer how to see like a child. As we see more simplistically, we think more simplistically, and this ends up having large repercussions on our sense of identity throughout the film, and the larger experience of "crawling" into an adult world once again. We enter the children's viewpoint through the camera before we are even told to by dialogue or action.

The beauty of technique is this: take this animetism concept and apply it to a Ghibli film (there are many to choose from in this issue). I can guarantee that the wonder and glow of a beautiful Ghibli movement is seeded as such: simpler animation reaches the most basic instincts of perception, reaches into our hearts, and puts a tint to our eye when wrapped with a ribbon of story.

# Dear Konshuu-sensei

Got a question about school? Need some advice? Don't worry, Konshuu-sensei is here for you! This advice column features answers to questions that our readers posed last week.

Ask a question at [tinyurl.com/konshuusensei](http://tinyurl.com/konshuusensei) and you could be featured by Konshuu-sensei in the next issue!

## Protag-kun

 Every time I say hi to Tsundere-chan, she always calls me a baka for some reason. Did I do something wrong?

I don't think you did anything wrong, Protag-kun. Girls like her usually have something they're not saying. If you're patient with her, I'm sure she'll eventually say it.

## Protag-kun

 Our school festival is coming up, and linchou-chan wants us to do a play. How do I get out of it?

Be honest. They'll be hurt, but if they care about you and respect you, they'll understand.

## linchou-chan

 All the people in this class are lazy, especially Protag-kun! Why can't they just do the play like I ask?

Perhaps you have unrealistically high expectations of your classmates and Protag-kun. You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink. Your classmates have to want to do it on their own.

## Tsundere-chan

 It's not like I like that baka or anything, but how do I talk to Protag-kun? All I know how to do is call him a baka.

Maybe don't call him a baka. It's just going to confuse him.

See you next week! :)



# VOLUME XLVII, ISSUE VII — MARCH 15, 2018



**WHITE-HAIRED BOY**  
Original  
Art by Helen Wang

Konshuu accepts  
guest submissions from club  
members! If you'd like to have  
content featured, please visit:  
**J.MP/KONSUB**

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**Weekly Showings:** Weds, 8pm - 9pm, Barrows 166  
**Game Nights:** Thurs, 8pm - 10pm, Wheeler 222

**AMIYA**  
Arknights

Art by David Chang