Foreword by John Lasseter, director of *Toy Story*

STARTING POINT

1979~1996

Translated by Beth Cary and Frederik L. Schodt

HAYAO MIYAZAKI

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By Hayao Miyazaki
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The Cat Bus and Pure Cinematic Magic

John Lasseter talks about Hayao Miyazaki

I first met Hayao Miyazaki-san about twenty years ago in Los Angeles. He had just completed *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro.* I didn't have the opportunity to see the whole movie; I just saw a small reel of clips. But from the little I did see, I was taken with the characters. I was also impressed with the energy and cleverness of the animation. I still think it contains one of the best car chases ever seen on film. The imagination invested in the movie really inspired me. I could tell someone who knew and loved animation had made it. *The Castle of Cagliostro* is so much more than taking a live-action film and making it animation. It took the medium and really used it to its fullest potential. That's what always inspired me about every Miyazaki-san film I've seen. It's like, "Wow! This is someone who really loves animation as much as I do." That totally excites me.

I remember taking the clips to Walt Disney Studios and showing them to various people. This was probably back in the early 1980s. I had some friends on the organizing committee of the Los Angeles International Film Exposition and we worked together to get *Castle of Cagliostro* shown at Filmex [a predecessor of the American Film Institute's International Film Festival in L.A.—Ed.]. I was thrilled to finally see it on the big screen, with a live audience. People just loved it.

I next met Miyazaki-san during my first trip to Tokyo in 1987, and I will never forget that experience. I was there to give a lecture at NICOGRAPH International, a Japanese computer animation and computer graphics conference. One of the people I met at the conference used to work with Miyazaki-san and he arranged a visit for me. After a long train ride, we finally arrived at Miyazaki-san's work studio. I was struck by all the beautiful background paintings hanging on the walls and had to ask him what movie he was currently working on. There was an enigmatic smile on his face as he showed me an animation cel of a cat bus. Of course it was from *My Neighbor Totoro.* I was so amazed just by that one single drawing of the cat bus. It was thrilling to see the imagination at work.

A year later, we finally got a chance to see the finished product. It was so incredible. How fortunate for us to have visited Miyazaki-san's studio while he was making such a wonderful film. Now *Totoro* is an important part of my life. I brought home a Japanese Laserdisc version of the movie that my five sons grew up watching. Later it was released in an English version for the U.S., and of course we watched that too. My sons actually prefer the Japanese version. The characters are so alive! The character of Mei, for example, is just one of our favorites.

I have used scenes from *Totoro* as teaching tools while giving lectures to Pixar animators. To me, one of the basic elements in defining the personality of an animated character is to show the same action performed by two separate characters. No one does the same thing in the same way—no one. By using this technique, the characters really take on a personality of their own. There's one scene in *Totoro* when Mei and her older sister Satsuki are exploring their new house. Satsuki is running around and opening random doors. Then Mei comes in and does the same thing, but she does it like a young child. This scene tells the audience that Mei is the younger of the two girls. Nothing else needs to be said. It's so

clear. These are two different characters, two different ages, doing the same thing, but in completely different ways. I've always admired that particular scene, both for its simplicity and for the believability of the characters it portrays.

I could go on and on. I continually find inspiration in Miyazaki-san's work. In *Laputa* [released in the U.S. as *Castle in the Sky*—Ed.] there is a scene that gives me chills every time I watch it. It's the rescue sequence. Sheeta is saved from the robot and you see the fort exploding. When Sheeta jumps and is ultimately rescued, it is amazing. It's one of the greatest rescue scenes ever put on film and I love it. I've studied that scene frame by frame.

In *A Bug's Life*, the character Flick assembles all the bugs together in an attempt to save a little ant named Dot. For reference, we sat down and studied the rescue scene in *Castle in the Sky* very carefully. We didn't copy it, but we tried to pick the scene apart to identify why it worked so well. I know what's going to happen. Of course, she gets rescued. I know that. But every time I see it, I get the chills. It inspired us. People tell us how much they enjoyed that particular scene in *A Bug's Life* and it holds a great debt of gratitude toward *Castle in the Sky.*

There's something that Miyazaki-san does better than anybody else in the animation industry. He's great at giving things a sense of scale. It's a hard thing to do, especially in animation. With animation, you achieve scale—weight and size—purely through movement. You get that by seeing how things move and how things relate to each other. In all of his films he gives us an incredible sense of scale. *Castle in the Sky*, especially, is a masterpiece in this way. Take another look at those flying ships. There is no question they're huge. And you can just tell that they weigh an enormous amount too. I mean, look at them, you can feel their weight. It's not just perspective. It's movement, it's size, it's weight. It really is amazing.

Another thing that's very important in filmmaking, something we pay strict attention to at Pixar, is pacing. Pacing is the timing of shot after shot after shot after shot. I'm always thinking about the movies being made in Hollywood. They all have a tendency to make things extremely fast-paced. I don't know why this is. Maybe it's the influence of video games, or music videos, or the result of our fast-moving society in general. Whatever it is, I think directors, editors, and studios feel compelled to hurry the action along at a breakneck speed.

There's a term that a certain studio executive used when he sensed a movie was starting to slow down. He'd say, "I'm going for popcorn." He felt that unless a movie raced nonstop to its conclusion, an audience would inevitably lose interest. I totally disagree with him. Things don't need to be faster all the time. That's one of the ways Miyazaki-san's films, especially *My Neighbor Totoro*, have inspired me. His movies have balance—both fast and slow moments. You can even go back to *Castle of Cagliostro* and see it. That car chase up the hill is still one of my favorite scenes. Just before the chase, Lupin's car gets a flat tire and swerves to the side of the road. He climbs up on the roof and just sits there looking up at the sky. The clouds are going by, the wind is blowing, we're shown a field of grass ... and then you hear this *GHEEEEE* sound. Miyazaki-san allows Lupin to react with a "What was that?" look before a car roars past him. It sets up the chase so beautifully because of the quiet moment right before. *That's* pacing.

One of the greatest scenes in all of Miyazaki-san's films is the one when the cat bus first appears in *Totoro.* It's just pure cinematic magic. To me, what makes it so special is the pacing of it. It's something you don't normally see in a film. The bus arrives at the bus stop, but the father is not on it. The kids then have to wait in the rain. You feel the waiting and it's not tedious. It's beautiful. Mei is getting sleepy, and believe me, being a father, I know how kids get bored and sleepy. So Satsuki puts her on her back under the umbrella and the

waiting continues. And then Totoro arrives and it's just so special. By the time the cat bus arrives it's like ... well, I couldn't believe what I was looking at. I remember the first time I saw it—I had the same expression on my face as Mei and her sister. It really is a great scene.

I confess that sometimes I look at my own films and I think that we may have rushed certain moments. Making these movies takes years and years and you get used to what you see. There's a tendency to accept the familiar, and therefore things appear to be going slower than they actually are. What I've learned from watching Miyazaki-san's films, and I think *Toy Story 2* is a good example of this, is that now I have the confidence to slow down the action a little bit. There's a scene in *Toy Story 2* where Woody has just heard Jessie's backstory. He finds out that she was loved by a child and then discarded when that child grew up. I am very proud of the way we scripted Woody's reaction to this sad story. We deliberately took our time with it. Jessie tells Woody to go, and Woody silently climbs down from the window ledge. There's not much going on. He slowly walks over to the air vent in the wall, unscrews it, and opens it up. There's no music, no dialogue, just the sound of his footsteps. I believe there are certain emotions that need time to sink in with the audience. This was one of them. I learned this trick from watching all of Hayao Miyazaki's films. That scene is very much inspired by the pacing I learned from him.

In the first *Toy Story* movie we made some edits that I now regret. We were getting input from the studio and they said we needed to increase the tempo in certain areas. Since it was our first movie, we figured the studio guys knew what they were talking about. So we made some cuts per their recommendations. I look back at that movie and I wish I had some of the original pacing back.

But we live and learn. With *A Bug's Life*, and especially in *Toy Story 2*, we became much more confident in what we wanted to do. We knew exactly what sort of pacing worked

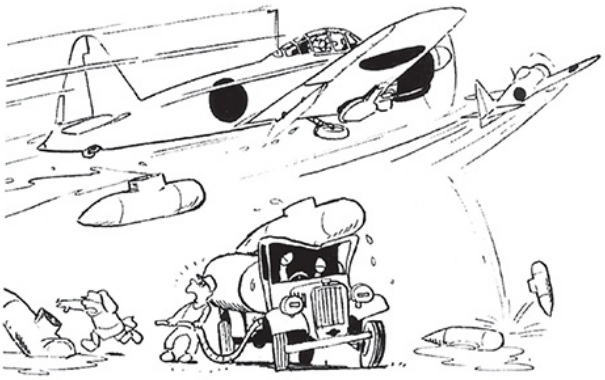
best for us. The co-director on the *Toy Story 2* movie was Lee Unkrich—he was also the editor for all of our films. I turned Lee on to Miyazaki-san's films, and we've had many discussions about how Miyazaki-san is a master of pacing. There are certain moments in a film you cannot rush through. It's important to allow the audience to reflect on what's happening on the screen.

I remember reading reviews of *Toy Story 2* when it was first released. Many critics mentioned that it had an emotional depth lacking in most animated films. In fact, they were surprised to discover that a cartoon could deliver such depth. I am very proud of that. Most of the critics didn't specifically mention the movie's pacing, but to me that was the key to *Toy Story*'s success. You need that component to reflect pathos, sadness—all those heartfelt emotions. Like I've said before, you just can't rush those things.

—From the interview in *Ghibli*,
Studio Ghibli, May 2005.

John Lasseter is an Academy Award–winning animator and director and is currently the CCO of Walt Disney and Pixar Animation Studios. As a director, his films include *Toy Story*, *A Bug's Life*, *Toy Story 2*, and *Cars*. With Pixar, he was the executive producer for *Monsters, Inc.*, *Finding Nemo*, and *The Incredibles*.

ON CREATING ANIMATION



▶ ON CREATING ANIMATION

Nostalgia for a Lost World

Gekkan ehon bessatsu: Animēshon (Animation: Monthly Picture Book Special), Subaru Shobō, March 1979

What animation is to me

If I were asked to give my view, in a nutshell, of what animation is, I would say it is "whatever I want to create." The world of animation is wide, and it includes not only animated series for television, but also commercials, experimental films, and theatrical features. But no matter what others may say, if it isn't something I really want to work on, it isn't animation to me.

I'm talking about a very personal view of animation here, of course, and when it comes to my work there are also obviously times when I have to compromise. In fact, there are times when I really have to struggle, and I suffer quite a bit in the process. In that regard, I feel particularly lucky that *Future Boy Conan*—a series I first worked on years ago—was not only something I wanted to create, but also work that I greatly enjoyed.

In other words, I am talking about doing something with animation that can't be done with manga magazines, children's literature, or even live-action films. I'm talking about building a truly unique imaginary world, tossing in characters I like,

and then creating a complete drama using them. Simply put, this is what animation is to me.

Wanting one's own world …

Animation, or anime, has become extremely popular among those we call "mid-teens," and especially among middle school students. And why is this? I think I have a pretty good idea or at least understand the background behind the phenomenon.

Personally, I was never more passionate about manga than when preparing for my college entrance exams. It's a period of life when young people appear to have a great deal of freedom, but are in many ways actually very oppressed. Just when they find themselves powerfully attracted to members of the opposite sex, they have to really crack the books. To escape from this depressing situation, they often find themselves wishing they could live in a world of their own—a world they can say is truly theirs, a world unknown even to their parents. To young people, anime is something they can incorporate into this private world.

I often refer to this feeling as one of yearning for a lost world. It's a sense that although you may currently be living in a world of constraints, if you were free from those constraints, you would be able to do all sorts of things. And it's this feeling, I believe, that makes mid-teens so passionate about anime.

The word nostalgia comes to mind. Adults, fondly recalling something from their childhood, often speak of nostalgia. But even three-, four-, and five-year-olds feel a similar sentiment. It's something that all of us, regardless of age, actually experience. And as we get older, the breadth—or depth—of our nostalgia definitely increases. I believe, in fact, that nostalgia is one of the fundamental starting points for most people involved in creating animation.

Human history exists in a continuum encompassing both the past and the future, but the moment someone is born into this present instant, into 1978, he or she has already lost certain opportunities or possibilities, including the chance to be born in other ages. Yet we can still enjoy ourselves in different fantasy worlds. And this yearning for other, lost possibilities may also be a major motivator for those of us in the industry.

Most people feel unfulfilled by something in their lives, even if they don't consider themselves to be living in a particularly unhappy environment. It may even be one reason so many Japanese in their mid-teens love to read *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl.* In a sense, they may actually envy the situation described in the book. They may wish that they, too, could experience a life like that of Anne Frank, to live life to the fullest amidst such tension, in such an extreme environment. Of course, they would feel revulsion if there were any real chance of them actually being placed in such a horrific situation. What I'm saying here is that when young people feel attracted to the heroes of a tragedy, whether in animation or other media, a type of narcissism is really involved; this attraction they feel is a surrogate emotion for something they have lost.

From personal experience, I can say that I first fell in love with animation when I saw *Hakujaden* (*The Tale of the White Serpent*), the animated feature produced by Toei Animation in 1958. I can still remember the pangs of emotion I felt at the sight of the incredibly beautiful, young female character, Bai-Niang, and how I went to see the film over and over as a result. It was like being in love, and Bai-Niang became a surrogate girlfriend for me at a time when I had none.

It is in this sense that I think we can achieve a type of satisfaction, by substituting something for the unfulfilled portion of our lives. The something can be a movie, music, or a novel, and it can include animation. Those in their mid-teens, who are so passionate about anime today, will probably go on to graduate from it. They will likely seek another surrogate

something in their lives. Even if they continue to seek it in anime, as they age, the ways in which they seek it will probably change. It is, I suspect, the normal pattern of things.

If I were to create it …

I was hooked when I first saw *Hakujaden*, and I wound up choosing to become an animator because of it. In the more than fifteen years since then, I have had one constant theme in my work: "To watch good animation, and then to make something that surpasses it."

I saw *Hakujaden* over and over again. But eventually I came to believe that the film was a sham. There is too great a focus on the tragic connection between the young male protagonist, Shūsen, and the beautiful white girl, Bai-Niang. As a result the other characters aren't depicted in a very attractive light at all. Because of this, while I dearly loved *Hakujaden*, I was increasingly plagued by doubts about it, and I began instead to excitedly imagine how, if I were to have created it, I would have done this or that differently.

Today, I rarely watch any animation that amazes me or makes my heart pound with excitement. I'd of course love to see works that do, even if only once a year; for most people—and not just professionals like myself—it's probably the way real animation is supposed to be, after all. But creating animation of that caliber requires a huge amount of concentration, even when drawing the individual illustrations, and the animated film won't come to life unless the animators themselves pour their hearts and souls into their work. In reality, we rarely have the luxury of doing that. And even if we do throw ourselves into our work, in this industry we can never expect commensurate rewards or treatment.

As a result, the sort of work I am describing cannot be created without the help of people who are truly willing to go hungry. I'm not talking about people who make experimental animation, but something completely different. I'm talking about those who create animation designed for a wide

audience that includes children—the type of animation that cannot be made by a single individual. Commercial animation almost by definition requires group effort. Even if the animated images ultimately move as a result of the efforts of each individual member of the group, the final product can never be from one person alone. It must belong to everyone, as well as to each individual. For us, the ultimate dream is to create works this way and have as many people as possible view them.

At the core, there must be a sense of realism …

In Japan today, animated TV shows filled with all kinds of fancy robotlike, mechanical creations are all the rage. I have certainly drawn lots of *mecha*, or mechanical things, myself. But the general theme of currently popular shows seems to be that the protagonist jumps in a giant machine he couldn't possibly have created on his own, battles the enemy in it, and then boasts about winning. I frankly hate these kinds of shows. I don't care what types of robots are featured. For me, in a truly successful *mecha* show the protagonist should struggle to build his own machine, he should fix it when it breaks down, and he should have to operate it himself.

In modern society, humans have become slaves to machines—so much so that machines currently hold the keys to our collective fate. But that is the real world; in the world of anime, by contrast, humans control and operate the machines. Yet, despite the fact that anime has been granted the special freedom to show things this way, most works don't really take advantage of this.

Everyone is attracted to power and strength. This was true even in ancient Japanese tales in which superheroes—such as Kurama Tengu—appeared. People were able to identify with these heroes and to enjoy imagining themselves as superheroes. But today's supermen also have machines and technology at their disposal. And even if only one person operates a specific machine, that machine presumably required

multiple designers and mechanics to reach the point of being operational. In the world of fiction, I believe that we have to depict this background to give the machines an air of reality. I despise shows that fail to do so.

As a result, I don't watch your typical action anime films. And it's also the reason why, when I worked on *Future Boy Conan*, I did not try to make "animation" as we usually think of it, but a manga, or a cartoon film. 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.

For example, say one makes an animated film depicting the world of a bug from the viewpoint of the bug. Such a film shouldn't show the world from the perspective of a human using a magnifying glass, but a world where each blade of grass becomes a giant tree, where the ground is not flat, but bumpy and rough, and where water—whether in the form of rain or droplets—has a completely different character than we humans normally think of it as having. It's in depicting the world this way that the story becomes interesting and starts to seem real.

In my view, this is one of the hallmarks of animation in general, and one of its most wonderful qualities.

Gags and laughter

Let me next comment on gags. Most gags make fun of human stupidity. But I think laughing at other people's foibles actually represents something far more base and vicious than a "gag." So what do I consider a real gag? Well, it's when someone tries his or her absolute best to do something, and for some unexpected reason loses focus and does something totally out of character or outside the normal routine. It might be, for example, when a beautiful, gentle, proper princess attempts to save her lover from falling into the hands of

bandits by kicking them. This doesn't ruin our impression of the princess, but it makes her suddenly come alive, makes her seem truly human.

"Gag characters" are often used in animation. These are the fall guys—the characters that always screw up, slip up, or fall down. I really dislike them. The way I see it, there are many different types of humor in the world, and some humor can't easily be defined. Characters like Matthew in *Anne of Green Gables*, for example, are very taciturn, but truly fascinating. It is when we sense the humanity of such characters that we begin to laugh.

Before speaking about the techniques of animation …

Having said all this, if someone were to ask me what the most important thing is when creating a new animated work, my answer would be that you first have to know what you want to say with it. In other words, you have to have a theme. Surprisingly, perhaps, people sometimes overlook this basic fact of filmmaking and overemphasize technique instead. There are innumerable examples of people making films with a very high level of technique, but only a very fuzzy idea of what they really want to say. And after watching their films, viewers are usually completely befuddled. Yet when people who know what they want to say make films with a low level of technique, we still greatly appreciate the films because there is really something to them.

So with that, for young people who are now dreaming of someday becoming animators, let me wrap up my thoughts:

When young, nearly all of us want to be taken seriously, as soon as possible. Perhaps because of this we tend to overemphasize technique. In fact, many of those who have not yet taken the plunge into the professional world of animation tend to speak endlessly about animation techniques, or concentrate on gaining as much knowledge as possible about the technical aspects of certain scenes. In reality, however,

once you enter this industry, the techniques required to make animation can be mastered very quickly.

Sometimes high school students and others ask me whether they should first go to college, or start working as animators right away. When asked, I respond as follows: It doesn't matter, so just go to college. Go to college and, while enjoying four years of student life, study art if you really want to.

I give young people this advice because jumping into the industry four years early isn't going to help them become full animators any faster. Once you're in the industry, you will be overwhelmed with work and you won't have any time to study or learn for yourself.

One of the things about drawing is that, if you put in serious effort, you will become good at it, at least to a certain extent. But that's all the more reason to study a variety of things that interest you while you have time, before you enter the professional world in order to develop and solidify such fundamentals as your own viewpoint and way of thinking.

If you don't do this, your life will be treated as just another disposable product. In the animation business, most people spend a long time working at the bottom of the organizational ladder. You usually have to endure a lengthy apprenticeship period, waiting patiently for the chance to someday demonstrate what you can do. But the opportunity to demonstrate what you can do only comes along once in a while, so unless you are extraordinarily lucky, you'll probably never make it.

To endure something is obviously exhausting and agonizing. But at the same time, you must also continue to hold what you regard as important close to your heart and to nurture it. Should you ever relinquish what you truly hold dear, the only path left to you will be that of a pencil-pusher—the type of animator whose sense of self-worth is determined by the numerical amount of his earnings, or who cycles

between joy and despair over the high or low ratings his work receives.

It is all well and good to love animation but, as I always counsel people, it is best not to think of entering this business lightly. Animation is still a very new field, and there are only a few works in existence that we can really call classics. But it is essential to watch as many of these classics as possible. And it is also essential to be interested in subjects that have traditions going back hundreds of years, and to broaden your own knowledge. In exerting yourself toward this end, you will find that you develop something truly all your own.

Now is the time to really study!

From the outside, creating animation probably seems very glamorous and rewarding. And it is true that there are some glamorous aspects to this work, and also that I find it rewarding. But the glamorous parts represent only a tiny fraction of the whole; most of the work we do—what people don't see—is actually very down-to-earth.

Quite a few of today's younger animators plunged directly into this line of work because they were fans. But if I were to ask them to draw a picture of what they think a *chaika* (a flying boat in *Future Boy Conan*) would look like in flight, they would only be able to imagine what they had previously seen on past TV anime shows. And I wouldn't be able to use their work as a result.

To draw a *chaika* flying in a truly original fashion, you would need to have read at least one book on the history of flying, and then be able to use your imagination to augment what you have read.

In delving into books on the history of airplanes, you would encounter the name of Igor Sikorsky. He is the man who in 1913 built the world's first four-engine biplane and flew it in the skies over Russia (later on he immigrated to the United States and in 1941 he invented the first single main-rotor

helicopter). When Sikorsky flew his four-engine plane over Russia, he is known for having dined on board, and then, when an engine failed, for grabbing on to one of the struts supporting the wings and standing up, out of the cockpit. With the full blast of the wind in his face, he personally and anxiously checked the condition of his engines. I personally think Sikorsky symbolizes the way men really fly. And it is from this image—of someone simply yearning to fly—that a good illustration emerges. It does not come from imitating something seen long ago on an animated TV series, from a plastic model kit, or even from the experience of having flown in one of today's hermetically sealed passenger planes.

Once involved in the business of creating animation, the truth of the matter is that you wind up working on project after project and rarely have time to read, study, or to come up with great ideas. And then the question invariably arises: "Why am I creating animation? What am I doing this for? Is it just to make a living?" I know I'm repeating myself here, but to avoid this trap, my advice to you all is to study.

From Idea to Film: 1

Gekkan ehon bessatsu: Animēshon, May 1979

> "What's important? The Theatricus? No. It's the folk who came to watch us. They see themselves brave, strong, beautiful! And why? Because somewhere in their hearts that's what they are! Make-believe and moonshine? No! We show them only the truth—as it might be."
>
> —Lloyd Alexander, *The Marvelous Misadventures of Sebastian*

To my way of thinking, creating animation means creating a fictional world. That world soothes the spirit of those who are disheartened and exhausted from dealing with the sharp edges of reality, or suffering from a nearsighted distortion of their emotions. When the audience is watching animation, they are apt to feel either light and cheerful or purified and refreshed.

Those who join in the work of animation are people who dream more than others and who wish to convey these dreams to others. After a while they realize how incredibly difficult it is to entertain others. Anyone who has tried to describe the wonderful or bittersweet qualities of his dreams should be able to understand how hard this is. And, because it requires group effort to create a film, animation is further complicated.

When I saw the Soviet film *Snedronningen* (*The Snow Queen*), I felt really happy that I had become an animator. I thought that there could be no more wonderful occupation than creating such a marvelous world—no, of having the possibility of perhaps creating an even more marvelous world.

Animators are the people who create animation on film, or more accurately, they used to be these people. There was a time when the animator did everything. He drew the pictures, created the story, moved the models, colored in the frames, manipulated the camera, and even recorded the voices and sounds to create a world. Now we are in an era where quantity and specialization dominate the making of animated films. The animator has become merely a cog in the wheel of the

unprecedented mass production of anime and the flood of animated television programs.

Animation has become simply an occupation, and the job of animator has the same importance as almost any other work station in the assembly-line process. The general image of an animator has unfortunately become one of a worker who is presented with a lousy storyboard—made who knows where—who must quickly draw figures that will move as little as possible, and who must promptly send his work on to the next stage in the production process.

Ironically, this flood is touted as a boom, as there is a fan base even for the most slapdash animated program. This in turn allows for the sale of character-based products and, above all, ensures that someone somewhere earns a profit. Meanwhile, the animator himself feels a certain level of self-satisfaction, and in accepting this situation, has submitted to the trivialization of his creative spirit.

You may have become an animator because you wanted to build your own fictional world. But such romantic dreams are quickly destroyed. Who could reproach you for mechanically running your pencil across the paper as you sit at the conveyor belt, confronting the incredibly large pile of work to be done, the totally inadequate production budget and time schedule, the stupidity of the broadcaster or sponsor or promoter, and the formidable barrier of the preexisting specialization system? There is no shortage of rationalizations. It is easy to be a cog once you get used to it.

Isn't it possible for an animator to be engaged in the entire process of a work?

Isn't it possible to get a bit closer to the original essence of the animator?

It's not as if all paths toward creative animation are closed off. The work, at its core, is forged by a group—a group that is not usually dominated by a single strong personality. Should

you possess a vision of a world you want to share with the public, a will to go to any length, and the skill to back it up, you can move bit by bit away from being a cog and closer toward being an animator in the original spirit of the word.

Even in your daily work you can add a spark of authenticity to an unoriginal story, or breathe a bit of expression into the blank face of a character. You can also improve an ugly drawing, making it slightly better. All the while, you continue to watch for an opening when your opponent—the system itself—lets down his guard. You can only find this opening when you stop making excuses and work hard every day. When you see your chance, take it and create the world you always wanted to create.

If you offer, free of charge, something that no one is expecting, and if your suggestion is compelling—and as long as the project chief is not a rigid believer in supporting vested interests—your world can be accepted. After all, it doesn't cost them anything, and they don't need to put your name in the credits. So if your creation is accepted, it is a clear advantage for the main staff. At that point, you will feel for the first time the thrill of creating animation. Always watch for that opening and be prepared to run with your idea whenever you can—that attitude gives animation its hope.

My experiential theory of animation

In this essay, I candidly write about my personal experiences and thoughts—highly arbitrary and biased as they are.

Within the various genres of animation, what I am qualified to write about is limited to animation films for release in theaters and on television. And I am certainly not one who has won fame thanks to my achievements. Regardless, I have done my work in my own way in the past, and plan to continue in the same way in the future. In writing "From Idea to Film" I do not intend to explain the various steps in the process of making an animated film (plenty of manuals explaining the

process already exist). What I intend to write about is my own experience, how the animator can be completely involved in the process of the work: from idea to image board, to storyboard, to scene composition, to inventing each character, to selecting jokes to include, to what will be on the storyboard, to structuring scenes, to designing the art, to animating it, and finally to producing the completed film.

The idea—the origin of everything

Is the starting point of an animated film the time when the project is given the go-ahead and production begins? Is it at that point that you, as the animator, first go over your ideas for that story? No, that isn't the starting point. Everything begins much earlier, perhaps before you even think of becoming an animator. The stories and original works (excluding manga originals)—even initial project planning—are only triggers.

Inspired by that trigger, what rushes forth from inside you is the world you have already drawn inside yourself, the many landscapes you have stored up, the thoughts and feelings that seek expression.

When people speak of a beautiful sunset, do they hurriedly riffle through a book of photographs of sunsets or go in search of a sunset? No, you speak about the sunset by drawing on the many sunsets stored inside you—feelings deeply etched in the folds of your consciousness of the sunset you saw while carried on your mother's back so long ago that the memory is nearly a dream; or the sunset-washed landscape you saw when, for the first time in your life, you were enchanted by the scene around you; or the sunsets you witnessed that were wrapped in loneliness, anguish, or warmth.

You who want to become animators already have a lot of material for the stories you want to tell, the feelings you want to express, and the imaginary worlds you want to bring alive. At times these may be borrowed from a dream someone related, a fantasy, or an embarrassingly self-involved interior life. But everyone moves forward from this stage. In order for

it not to remain merely egotistical, when you tell others about your dream you must turn it into a world unto itself. As you go through the process of sharpening your powers of imagination and technique, the material takes shape. If that shape is amorphous, you can start with a vague yearning. It all begins with having something that you want to express.

Say a project has been decided on and you have been inspired by something. A certain sentiment, a slight sliver of emotion—whatever it is, it must be something that you feel drawn to and that you want to depict. It cannot solely be something that others might find amusing, it must be something that you yourself would like to see. It is fine if, at times, the original starting point of a full-length feature film is the image of a girl tilting her head to the side.

From within the confusion of your mind, you start to capture the hazy figure of what you want to express. And then you start to draw. It doesn't matter if the story isn't yet complete. The story will follow. Later still the characters take shape. You draw a picture that establishes the underlying tone for a specific world. Of course, what you have drawn will not be your final product. At times, your work may be rejected entirely. When I mentioned earlier that you must have the will to go to any length, this is what I meant. When you draw that first picture, it is only the beginning of an immense journey. This is the start of the preparation stage of the film.

What kind of world, serious or comedic; what degree of distortion; what setting; what climate; what content; what period; whether there is one sun or three; what kinds of characters will appear; what is the main theme ... ? The answers to all of these questions gradually become clearer as you continue to draw. Don't just follow a ready-made story. Rather, consider a possible development in the story, or whether a particular kind of character can be added. Make the tree trunk thicker, spread its branches further—or go to the tips of the small branches (this could be the starting point of the

idea), and on to the leaves beyond as the branches grow and grow.

Draw many pictures, as many as you can. Eventually a world is created. To create one world means to discard other inconsistent or clashing worlds. If something is very important to you, you can keep it carefully stored in your heart for use at another time. Those who have experienced an outpouring of an amazing number of pictures from inside themselves can feel it. They feel that the fragment of a picture they envisioned, the other trunk of a story that was thrown out while piecing together a narrative, the memory of pining for a girl, the knowledge about a subject gained as they delved deeply into a hobby—all of these play a role and become entwined into one thick strand. The scattered material within you has found its direction and started to flow.

Eventually, the basic form of your fictional world takes shape. It becomes a shared world for the entire project staff. It becomes a world that actually exists! This is the "image board" stage of the animation production process, the period when people become most excited in anticipation.

If you are part of the main staff and can devote yourself to this work it would be fine, but if you are a staffer who is also busy on another film (and there is usually some other work in process), can you take the time to turn an idea into a whole new world? It holds no guarantees in terms of pay or time. Even so, unless you do this, you will not find that opening!

When the original story is from a manga, the work of creating a world has already been done by the author. No matter how faithfully you turn it into animation, how much you expand on it, the essential basics of creating a world have already been done, and you cannot avoid being secondary to it. Although it may be good training, I think it is worth bearing in mind that animating an original manga is unrewarding even if the result is popular with the general public.

From Idea to Film: 2

Gekkan ehon bessatsu: Animēshon, July 1979

A fortress of broken animators

An animator's work primarily consists of drawing storyboards and creating a detailed plan for the overall film. All the available ideas are sifted through to create a story, which in turn is concentrated into storyboards and given shape. Then the work is divided into a series of tasks, and therein really begins the huge effort that eventually results in a finished film.

Specifically, what we do is to split the story into a series of scenes, and then—while visualizing the settings, structure, movement, and speech of the various characters as drawings—we try to construct scenes so vivid and emotional that they will make viewers' palms sweat from the drama, or their sides split with laughter from the gags.

But in reality, animators rarely work on storyboards today. Or, to be more precise, I should say we create almost no storyboards. Instead, we create *ekonte*, or continuity sketches, and it is from this point on that the animator's work really begins.

There are a couple of reasons I can think of for this change.

First, unlike the days when animators mainly made shorts to be screened before live-action features in the theaters, the stories in animated films today are increasingly complicated, requiring a much greater degree of compositional skill.

Let me give an example. For an older work like *Popeye*, you didn't need a scenario. Say you started with the idea, "Popeye and Bluto vie to become patients of Olive Oyl, a nurse. They intentionally try to injure themselves in order to be admitted to the hospital, but instead they wind up getting in each other's way." Then all you need is for someone to draw some storyboards. Start with a hilarious gag of Popeye lying down

on the railway tracks, hoping to be run over by a train, with Bluto then derailing the oncoming train and saving (?!) Popeye in order to stop him from winning Olive Oyl's affections. Put as many clever and crazy ideas as possible into the storyboards, add a little dialogue, and then put the boards up on the wall in some sort of order. The person who drew the storyboards then explains them, laughing, to the other staff members. Then everyone carefully analyzes the storyboards, makes changes where needed, finalizes them, and then starts drawing.

This is all well and good with animated shorts, but for longer works audiences demand much more complexity in the characters of the story's heroes. For example, no matter how delightful a scene is, if it only plays a tiny role in the overall story, you might find that you have to invest your energy in another, more important area. And the overall balance of the film is usually something determined not by a group of animators, but by someone who is in a position to see the work as a whole—the director. This need to see the big picture may explain the emergence of a division of labor between director and animator. The more sophisticated the subject you are trying to depict, the more important the scenario becomes (for an example of this, take a look at *La Bergère et le Ramoneur*, or *Adventures of Mr. Wonderful*). It is this fact that has made animators yield half of the stage to directors and scenario writers.

The other reason that comes up again and again has to do with shrinking production schedules and budgets. For a one-hour work of animation, if you have, say, eight hundred scenes, you can't have only one storyboard for each scene. You need at least two to three times that number. And drawing all those storyboards requires a huge amount of labor and skill. If it were just a matter of divvying up the drawings according to the scenario, there would be no need to draw storyboards at all. Storyboards augment the scenario, expand on its intent, and exist to be analyzed and eventually revised. In the old

days at Toei Animation, feature-length animated works often used storyboards like this. But when it's just a matter of assigning composition and dialogue, it's faster and cheaper to have the directors create continuity sketches using rough drawings.

Then television came along. Animators, who had already had their hands more than full with the work of making drawings move, finally had to relinquish the last half of their work. The bulk of the work involved in creating cartoon films shifted to scenarios and continuity sketches for direction (in the world of TV animation today, there's even a division of labor in effect for continuity sketches), reducing the role of the animator increasingly to that of an occupation, of someone who merely draws as ordered and makes those drawings move.

Thus the animators—who used to sit at their desks and moan and groan while drawing storyboards, but who'd also laugh at their own ideas, get excited, and sometimes become so involved in the story that they would weep—gradually took a backseat in the production process. The word "cartoons" fell out of vogue, and was replaced first by "animation," and then "anime."

The scenario is a process of elimination

The above was a long preface to what I'm about to say. Despite what I've told you, we still need to draw storyboards. We've really got something we want to express, and we've been busy drawing pictures at the conceptualization stage, so how can we possibly relinquish the most enjoyable part of making a cartoon movie?

Those of you about to try creating animation for the first time must start by changing your idea of what the scenario is all about. You may read a script and find it interesting, but it's quite another thing to animate it; in fact, it doesn't really make sense to expect a scenario writer to be a choreographer for a cartoon movie.

Cartoons are like Christmas trees. People put a lot of energy into decorating their trees because everyone enjoys the fancy part of the decoration—the baubles and sparkles. But to decorate a tree requires that it have branches and needles, and both of these require the tree to have a trunk and, ultimately, roots, even if we never see them. There are lots of examples in the world of animation where the finished product is a scrawny, impoverished creation because it never had a trunk or roots. And some works—with trunks supported by bamboo, or bits of iron and plastic soldered together—that may have been intended to be new and novel, end up being just weird, jerry-built exhibitions that are hardly enjoyable to behold.

Hidden among the many illustrations drawn at the conceptual stage, among all the materials originally used in discussing the chaotic and disparate ideas, lies the real story we want to create. What's important with scenarios is to steadily whittle away at them, to reveal a story with a solid trunk or core.

The animator applies the decoration

It's important to have a clear theme. When I say "theme," some people may imagine a big billboard sort of theme, something involving a critique of civilization or advocating world peace, but I am talking about something far more basic and simple—the theme is the very foundation of a work. Now, there are films that are like war comics, with the stench of death floating over them, and everything justified by an abstract pursuit of world peace. There are also works that try to glorify their heroes, that are lined with scorn for average people living ordinary lives—living good lives. The bigger the billboard, the more likely it is to be acting as a cloak for what is really a silly and shallow work.

What's really important, I think, is to have fully fleshed out characters, characters who are life-affirming and have clear hopes and goals, and then to make sure that the story develops as efficiently and simply as possible. If a scenario fulfills these

requirements, then the animator's job just consists of applying the decoration. He or she must accurately grasp the meaning or intent of particular scenes, and conceive of some drama and action that makes sense based on the way the characters in the story would think.

To give an extreme example, there's nothing wrong with having a scenario that presupposes that characters A (the protagonist) and B (the bad guy) will fight it out, with A ultimately winning. The important thing is to make sure that viewers know what sort of people A and B are, and why they have to struggle against each other so desperately. As long as this is done, the only other important thing is to be creative in developing the story up to the showdown, and resolve things in as fulfilling and entertaining a way as possible. And usually this is accomplished with movement, often with movement that actually has to be drawn to be sure if it works. Drawing this movement is the animator's job.

Drawing storyboards and creating the setting

At this point you will have to return to the realm of ideas. You will have to reconfigure the world you want in your head, comparing it with the core story (the scenario), eliminating unnecessary elements, and adding whatever is lacking. You will sometimes wind up with a world quite different from the one originally envisioned.

You will need to build this world inside your head. You will even need to build such things as the scenery, and determine the structure of the houses in the scenes. Up until this point, you may have been able to draw whatever you pleased, but from now on you will be limited by the very world you have created. If there is a road over there in one place, you can't put it in another; if there is a window over there in a room, you cannot put it over here. The image of the world you have created, the world in your mind, will gradually solidify, until you can sketch it as if drawing from life. If there is a hill over there, you will wonder what you would be able to see if you

climbed it. You may even try to climb it and, lo and behold, discover a lake! This sort of work is the foundation required to establish the setting.

Let's assume that characters A and B are about to square off in the world you have created. What you next face is like a jigsaw puzzle, because you have to consider every possible situation. If you were A, for example, what would you do? Or, conversely, what would you do if you were B?

It's important here not to insist on making things develop according to your own logic. You can come up with an infinite number of logical explanations for something. No, what is important is to think of the most interesting method to express yourself, just as animators did in the old days when they used to draw lots of storyboards, while laughing, yelling in anger, or even weeping at their own ideas. And as you draw your storyboards, everything should become much clearer to you. You will find yourself identifying with the various characters' emotions: with their anger, joy, and gentleness. Their emotions will become yours. And, as is often said, you will become both an animator and an actor.

Of course, you can't draw everything in this world you have created. You just need to draw a few key illustrations. For every scene in a film, there are always a few shots that are the most important. If they are clearly identified and appealing, you should be able to get the whole production staff (the director, the art department, and even the chief animators) to work on them.

In TV animation, there's never enough time to draw storyboards. But you can do something similar. You can refuse to accept continuity sketches as is. You can instead carefully consider whether the sketches are good enough or interesting enough. Anyone can act as a critic. But you can't just criticize for the sake of criticizing; anyone can do that. As a professional, you have to be able to propose alternate ideas right away or you will have no right to criticize. And you have

to be able to justify the extra labor (which you will wind up doing) that goes into all of this. When you can do all of these things, you will begin to transform from a person who merely executes what others tell him into a true creator.

From Idea to Film, Part II: 1

Gekkan Animēshon (Animation Monthly), June 1980

To run … running

When I was starting out, several senior animators told me how difficult it was to animate people running and walking. As I was learning my craft, I was full of energy and strength, and, putting myself in the place of the characters, I made them run for all they were worth—here, draw! here, run!—whatever they were doing—and I felt satisfied that their movements were good. But recently, I've come to think that depicting movement really is difficult.

We use the phrase, "moves well." If you draw the picture by shifting the subject and then shoot it frame by frame, anything will look like it is moving. It is time-consuming and may take a lot of effort, but that is all it takes.

We have drawn countless movements that are labeled "come," "go," or "run." But when it comes to running and walking in a way that has an impact on the viewer—an exhilarating way of running that communicates joy; a character, full of life, walking with his feet on solid ground; his emotional state conveyed through the way he walks and with his walk communicating the feel of the ground as he climbs up a slope—that is the ultimate.

A long time ago I was dumbstruck by a fragment of the film *Chikemuri Takadanobaba* (*Duel at Takadanobaba*) starring Tsumasaburō Bandō. Bantsuma (as he was called) was playing Yasubei Horibe, who learns that his uncle was in a duel. He runs to Takadanobaba—and his run is terrific. He pulls back the left side of his body, where he holds his sword, and he sticks out his right arm as far as he can as he runs and runs along the embankment. He pushes people aside as he runs past them. I am sure that the scene was helped by the way the film was edited, but he also just ran magnificently. It was definitely not the way someone runs a track race. His running style was

close to that of *kabuki*, yet it wasn't stylized or rigid. It was much more vigorous than mere running. In this long shot, Yasubei's run conveys all the anxious desperation he feels. I was amazed at the power of Bantsuma's acting.

If we made an animated film of *Duel at Takadanobaba*, what kind of movement could we put into this scene? Most likely, Yasubei's facial expression would be the only place where we could show his desperation. I can see how this would turn out. His running would have to be a repeating series, a set pattern of motion. Unless we were careful, we might let the hand holding his sword move back and forth as well.

In the film *My Darling Clementine*, Henry Fonda takes Clementine's hand as they walk to the outdoor dance. Even if that way of walking is wholly impossible to do in animation, I wonder if we can't at least provide better running and walking movements in our work.

Running's basic form

Our depiction of running has to rely on a basic form, a repetition of a set pattern. A sequence of four running steps over twenty-four frames per second—that is, six frames per step—is the most established way to convey a running rhythm. Though we define "running" as requiring a moment when both feet are simultaneously off the ground, when we use this basic form, we don't use drawings of steps in the air.

We use just three poses to depict one step in double-frame drawings for the six frames allotted to each step. Any mid-air frames would have to be inserted by cutting out the minimum necessities of the sequence—gathering up power, stretching, and kicking up. When we do that, the power of the sequence diminishes and the running doesn't appear very dynamic. Of course we could use this to show a child running in everyday life, but unfortunately there are hardly any specific examples of this for our purposes.

If the picture of airborne feet is added to show one running step in eight frames, the sense of gravity is lost, the power weakens, and the rhythm disappears, making the run unwatchable. This type of running should work for scenes of light running in the daily life of adults or long-duration running by a trained group carrying heavy equipment.

So, the basic running form that relies on six frames per step does not include an airborne picture unless one frame is added in. Even though this basic form yields a heavy, plodding type of running, it is better than a running form that lacks power, and that is why we use it.

When I want to show people running faster or a toddler's quicker steps, I use a running form of four frames per step instead of six. This format includes a mid-air picture, so the runner's steps seem lighter. But in order to be economical, the single frame drawing is inserted only for movement—we call this "follow": the character runs in place and the background moves—and any vertical motion is shown by having one running frame out of every two. Even this looks a lot like running, so I have used it in some films.

I hope you can understand that this basic form for running is actually different from how real people run. The running we create is actually an optical illusion that makes it look like the character is running. I think that animation itself is an optical illusion, so I am not ashamed of using this method.

If we deconstruct a real person's way of running and animate it, it wouldn't look as though the character were running. Actual running cannot be expressed simply by drawing lines and coloring in spaces. This is, I think, because in reality it also includes subtle movements of quivering muscles, the flapping of hair and clothing, the speed of leg movements that cannot be tracked by the naked eye. Walking is even more difficult to show than running for me because we are able to follow the movement with our naked eye, so the viewer brings with him a wealth of information about walking.

Generally speaking, viewers are apt to be more forgiving of the animated movements of animals than they are of human movement.

We use these basic patterns as a foundation from which to create variations. We create the kind of running that is demanded by the scene or that we want to express: whether it is serious or slapstick, normal or unusual; whether the character's posture is heavy or light, fun or desperate, pursuing or being pursued; how old he is; how coordinated he is; and so on. If this is done well, the basic form ties it all together and gives the images cohesion.

Yet the reality is that in many cases the depiction of running is formulaic. It is a pity that so many animators assume that there is one set pattern for running. A pattern is just a pattern. The process of creating the pattern in the first place entailed careful observation and repeated trial and error until a standardized form of optical illusion was derived. But the "running" drawn by incorporating the pattern as is, without realizing that it is an optical illusion, results in dull, dry movement.

Anything looks like it is moving if the drawings are slightly staggered in different frames. But I don't think that someone who merely depends on these techniques can be called an animator.

Doubts about the basic form

On television I once saw a hunter running, pursuing an antelope across a steppe that bordered on a desert. He hid his canteen, made of an ostrich eggshell, in the underbrush and carried only a bow and several arrows. This hunter ran in pursuit of the wounded animal with effortless grace. It was very similar to the way the barefoot Olympic marathon hero Abebe Bikila ran, or rather, I should say that Abebe's way of running was like the hunter's.

Originally people could not have run purely for the sake of running. They must have run to reach their goal quicker or to escape from harm. I'm sure humans only started running for the sake of running—or for sport—after they had detached it from running for necessity. Each style of running should be different according to the meaning it conveys. We sometimes describe someone running as "staggering," because at times people do run that way.

The act of running in an animated film, though based necessarily on the basic form, must have innumerable variations if it is to be used to show not only what the character is doing but also what he is feeling and thinking.

It may be possible to run on a flat racetrack with unchanging rhythm, steps, and posture. But it would be difficult to do so in the hills. There are also different ways of running depending on whether you run in short spurts or for long distances. In order to draw these numerous ways of running, you have to rely on close observation. When one basic form is achieved, it becomes a format and loses its vitality. I think we must make the effort to compare the pattern against reality over and over again through incessant observation.

Drawing a single-frame sequence is a lot of work, but it should be possible to have a five frame-per-step or a seven-frame-per-step style of running. Running using an odd number of frames causes difficulties when drawing double-frame pictures, but shouldn't it be feasible to use them for repeated motions?

If this can be done merely by adding a bit to one's own work time, we should be aware that by changing from the usual pattern of six double frames per step to two patterns can add a slightly complex irregularity that will energize the character's running. Something like this can be easily done in television even now.

Above all what is most important is what one wants to express through the act of running. It is not enough merely to copy how an actual person runs. It is rare to see good running and good walking even in live-action films, and this demonstrates that running and walking are among the most difficult movements for actors to convey.

For this very reason I would hope that in animated films we can use observation and the technique of optical illusion to realize many wonderful ways of running that even live actors cannot project.

Men of strong resolve, who are wearing heavy armor and carrying swords, should run in a way that weak extras cannot. The running of surging masses on fire with anger, the running of a child doing his best to hold back tears until he reaches his house, the running of a heroine who has forsaken everything but the desire to flee—being able to show wonderful ways of running, running that expresses the very act of living, the pulse of life, across the screen would give me enormous delight. I dream of someday coming across a work that requires that kind of running.

From Idea to Film, Part II: 2

Gekkan Animēshon (Animation Monthly), July 1980

Thoughts on vehicles / A moving perspective

Trying to identify the land on which he had lived all his life, the peasant pressed his nose against the window so hard it looked like it might break ... But he still couldn't see the village he had lived in for twenty-eight years, or the streets he had traveled down countless times ... The earth seemed to shake violently, and the roofs of the buildings below flashed by like a herd of livestock trying to flee, while flocks of panicked birds lifted off and scattered in all directions.

Only thirty meters above the earth, the pilot took his plane as low as possible, in an attempt to give the peasant a more familiar perspective on the land he knew so well. As they nearly creased the tops of the trees in the forest, the view was almost like that from an automobile.

And then, the farmer finally spotted the clumps of trees he had been looking for ...

* * * *

The above anecdote is paraphrased from Andre Malraux's novel *Hope*, in which he writes about the Spanish Civil War. In the episode, a peasant approaches the Republican forces to tell them that the Fascists have built a secret airfield hidden in the woods. But the peasant is illiterate and unable read a map. He volunteers to be a guide, however, and a Republican bomber takes off with him on board in search of the secret airfield.

The peasant normally knows his village inside out, everything about the poor condition of the soil and whether the crops are growing or not, but as the plane flies over the land the different perspective renders him blind. Malraux writes that if people ever died from trying to look for something, then this farmer would surely have been dead. Malraux was himself

a pilot, and during the Spanish Civil War he personally took part in bombing raids, so I have always felt that this particular passage has a wonderful quality to it that only he could have written.

Before airplanes were invented, there were many attempts to depict what the ground might look like from the air, as well as attempts to depict imaginary flying machines. It's something that people had probably done for a long time, and I'm not referring here to using the vantage point of a tower or a hot air balloon, but to imagining what the view from above might be of the actual ground on which we live, as we do when creating a map or a miniature model of a landscape.

With airplanes, for the first time people could experience the view of the earth when flying through the air at high speed and soaring up or down. It's a vista most people discover for the first time on take-off. It's just like children exclaiming, "Wow! Look at all the telephone poles flying by!" when they ride in a train for the first time ... Today we can also sort of imagine what the view might be like from a spaceship leaving Earth, but that's only because we've been so well prepared, because we've already seen so many actual films and photographs of it.

A moving perspective—I believe that the development of vehicles may in fact be the process that provides us with new views of and new perspectives on the unknown. As animators we think nothing today of drawing two or three layers of background images, which we manipulate to create a scene that looks as though roads or fields are going by. Modern viewers accept this technique without questioning it, because we all share the experience of seeing vistas open up or stream by as we ride in automobiles or trains. Another way of thinking about all this is that to us, vehicles are not just things with a specific form or shape, but also things we ride in to gain a moving perspective.

A plastic model perspective

I have drawn many vehicles in my career, ranging from bicycles to spaceships, military tanks, even giant robots, but I have often found myself stuck just depicting them from a plastic model perspective.

In other words, I find myself (or the camera, if you will) simply seated in some fixed location in a room. I take the plastic model in hand and hold it closer to me. I add sound effects such as *roar* or *screech.* I make it zoom by my face. I imagine a pilot in the cockpit. And then I pretend to fly the plane to its destination, all the while mouthing sounds like *ratatatat* or *whoosh.*

In animation, we create almost all the vehicles depicted—or at least the mechanical vehicles called *mecha*—in this fashion. And almost all the machines therefore suffer from the fact that they are bound by a plastic model perspective; they lack a true sense of presence.

I'm not trying to say that a strong sense of presence or place is always required in animation, for there are, in fact, works that deliberately try to eliminate this effect for vehicles. However, if instead of limiting this sense of presence to spectacular combat scenes or breakneck speed scenes, we consider it essential to creating a sense of reality in a fantastic or imaginary world, then we have to admit that a plastic model perspective looks rather cheap. In fact, precisely because animation *is* a depiction of the fantastic, those creating animation should do their utmost to devise new ways of faking things, or lying, for the sake of viewers.

Let's take the case of two animated films, and compare the flying scenes in Walt Disney's *Peter Pan* with those in Toei Animation's *Wanpaku ōji no orochi taichi* (*Little Prince and the Eight-Headed Dragon*). In the former, Peter Pan and Wendy fly over moonlit London, whereas in the latter Susanoo and Princess Kushinada fly through the air on a Pegasus-like white horse called an *amenohayakoma.*

There is a huge difference in these films that cannot be explained simply by the different sense of space that they employ. *Peter Pan*'s flying scenes are predicated on the experience of flying in an airplane with a moving perspective. As a result viewers soar through the air with the story's characters and feel liberated by the exhilarating vista unfolding below them, with moonlight casting shadows on the city streets. With the characters we share in the freedom of flying.

Unfortunately, Susanoo's flying in *Wanpaku ōji* is more like looking at something from the perspective of being on a tatami mat on the ground looking up. And in this case, despite having a flying horse, the long-held human desire to fly through the sky is frustrated by having only a simple symbolic representation of flying. Whether the horse is running on the ground or flying through the air, the only difference is in the backgrounds used. There is no sensation of wind or height, and thus nothing for us to thrill to.

Whether we're depicting a Pegasus or a flying carpet or anything magical flying, it seems to me that we should think of it as a type of vehicle, and that our perspective—or the camera angle—should be liberated from earth.

The problems with works that limit themselves to a plastic model perspective should be plainly obvious.

Mecha—a power-oriented fantasy

In animation these days, vehicles are often referred to as *mecha*, and it has become increasingly common for *mecha* designers to focus obsessively on their external appearance and functionality. I believe this fascination with *mecha* is often stimulated by an unconscious orientation toward all things powerful and strong. Not only that, I think those who create these images of vehicles are consciously trying to stimulate the same fascination among those who consume them.

If you are just trying to express a sense of “awesomeness” or “coolness” in a vehicle’s exterior design, or trying to show that it is replete with advanced attack capabilities, then a moving perspective can actually get in the way. And this is precisely the reason people in the industry so often use a plastic model perspective. As the head of a certain plastic-model-kit manufacturer often laments, “If a model of a military tank doesn’t have a big turret gun on it, it won’t sell ...”

Now, I have to admit that ever since I was a child, I, too, have been a fan of military planes, warships, and tanks. In fact, I grew up being very excited about war films and drawing military things all over the place. I was an overly self-conscious boy and I had a hard time holding my own in fights with others, but my classmates eventually accepted me because I was good at drawing. I expressed my own desire for power by drawing airplanes with sleek and pointed noses and battleships with huge guns. And I found myself thrilled by the bravery of sailors who—even as their burning ships sank—continued to fire their guns until the bitter end, by the men who plunged into the hail of fire and flak spewed forth by an enemy formation’s guns. It was only much later that I realized that in reality these men had desperately wanted to live and had been forced to die in vain.

If a tank’s form and function is drawn with a plastic model perspective, no matter how much detail is used, it’s simply not possible to imagine the lives of the actual humans inside. They are real men in a hot steel box filled with the stench of burning oil and explosive gases, surrounded by roaring sounds and vibrations—men who peer out from the limited perspective of their filthy periscopes at the enemy in kill-or-be-killed situations. And it’s even harder to imagine the lives of the humans outside, crushed by tank treads as they advance.

I like vehicles and want to continue drawing them, but I have resolved not to draw them in a fashion that further feeds an infatuation with power. In the same way, I think that being

infatuated with the world's biggest battleship guns merely reveals an infantile mentality, and such an infatuation is truly useless in conflicts with more sophisticated nations, who think of war as merely a means to victory, cannons merely as tools to destroy targets.

I thus have absolutely no desire to follow the course many others take of continuing their infantile infatuation with power, becoming *mecha* fanatics, and finally becoming knee-jerk advocates of increasing Japan's actual military strength. The way I see things, in the world of cartoon films, vehicles should run over the ground, dive into the water, and fly through the air in order to liberate humanity from the things that hold us back.

It's just like the infatuation with "supercars," ultra-powerful race cars that can reach speeds of three hundred kilometers per hour. Even after running three hundred miles, the rich are still better off than the poor. The really fascinating thing about cartoons, it seems to me, is that when a bicycle is depicted in a race with a supercar, it's actually possible for the bicycle to win, fair and square. I'm not talking about some silly parody here; what I'm trying to suggest is that the real fun in animation often comes from using a series of clever lies or fabrications to create a convincing victory.

A moving perspective that incorporates a sense of space in the picture, that creates a sense of liberation, and that makes our souls want to greet the wind, the clouds, and the beautiful earth we see unfolding far below—these are the wonderful scenes and machines I dream of someday depicting.

My Point of Origin

Lecture, Joint Animation Studies Groups
at Waseda University, Tokyo, June 5, 1982

As I work in animation, I vacillate between two ways of thinking.

One is that currently forty animation programs are broadcast on television every week. Do children really need so many animated programs in their lives?

The other is almost instinctive for a creative person—I want to create something captivating.

I fluctuate between these two positions. When I don't have much work to do, I wonder whether we need so many animation programs, but when I have work facing me I'm happy and I think, "Let's make something interesting."

Let me explain about the world of animation these days. Television stations, advertising agencies, publishers, toy manufacturers, animators, manga artists, and those working in film—all of them are fully incorporated into a single entertainment industry. In effect, we are all in the same boat.

This means that when a new manga series starts in a magazine, the editor calls people in production companies and television stations to ask, "We're starting a series of such-and-such type, would you want to buy it?"

One toy manufacturer pays 60 percent of its advertising fees to a single animation company. This is the same thing as turning the product into animation in order to make children buy it. The reality is that adults are brazenly productizing animation. And the world of anime makes its business out of themes like departing for new horizons or love, while pretending not to be conscious of this commercial reality.

Unless our work fits in well with the scheme of this commercialized reality, we cannot do anything, no matter how driven we are or how lofty our desire to create quality

animation. These are the constraints under which we live every day.

Nevertheless, I cannot help but think about the cultural role animation plays. This, I think, is deeply rooted in my relationship to the cartoon films I watched in my childhood. In those days, I was very happy when watching cartoons. I may have felt so because I had few chances to watch them. Nowadays we can watch more than enough animation anytime we want. But no matter how good the animation is, when we have too much, it is no longer of good quality. When you listen to music on a Walkman from early in the morning to late at night, your ears start to hurt. It's exactly the same with an overdose of animation.

It's an oft-repeated aphorism: "Those who want to go to Hōryūji temple[1] should get off the train far away and walk on the country road toward the temple." When one takes the time to walk, one first glimpses the uppermost roof of Hōryūji's five-storied pagoda, and then gradually the entire temple grounds come into view. Because one has approached the temple on one's own two feet, one can savor the experience. The more difficult one's way to Hōryūji, the greater one's excitement at finally seeing the temple.

What is missing in Japan's current cultural condition, I think, is this action-oriented way of "visiting Hōryūji on one's own."

Here is another story from history. They say that as the Roman Empire was declining, the citizens demanded bread and circus entertainment. In today's Japan, we have plenty of bread, but we have too few circuses—genuine circuses.

Certainly, it takes a great effort to create significant work given the current flood of animation. It is like pouring clear water drop by drop into the muddy flood waters. I can't help but feel lonely that, just because it is such an effort, some decide to settle for sending out mediocre work to be pushed along with the rest of the deluge. Having chosen animation as

my occupation, I think it would be better if I risked my life for it—though that is an exaggeration—and I continue to search for that solution.

My hope of making films that give children encouragement

I don't think it is at all bad that the entertainment industry exists. In our formal lives we often become exhausted and stressed, so I think we need something to give us a boost and help us forget what is unpleasant. If entertainment didn't exist, almost everyone would have to be sent to a mental hospital or have to go see a psychiatrist.

It's fine for animation to be one type of entertainment, just as long as we don't forget that, from its starting point, it has always been created for children. At least that is what I think.

In my case, the reason I think this way goes back to the *gekiga*,[2] or story-oriented manga magazines that gained popularity during my dark days of studying for university entrance exams.

These *gekiga* presented the message that things don't go well in this world. Drawn by manga artists who had suffered through misfortune—in particular those who hung out around Osaka (though I must apologize to people in Osaka for saying this)—*gekiga* were filled with their grudges and feelings of spite, so there were no happy endings. The artists made every effort to provide cynical endings. For a student in examination hell, this disillusioned perspective seemed totally refreshing.

I had already decided to spend my future drawing pictures, so I was trying to draw ones filled with grudges and spite. Yet, as I didn't have a concrete blueprint for my future I was full of anxiety.

As we grow from childhood into youth, this anxiety grows exponentially, and we worry about how on earth we should live our lives. Our anxiety forces us to look for an antidote that will rid us of this feeling as quickly as possible. We want to

find that something that will help us grab our own chair in this world and sit in it.

I chose manga as a weapon to fight against anxiety, and, as I mentioned, at first I drew *gekiga*, story-oriented manga. Just about that time I saw *Hakujaden* (*The Tale of the White Serpent*). For me, it was a kind of culture shock. I began to have doubts about *gekiga.*

I thought, Do I really want to draw *gekiga*? Don't I want to do something else? To be more specific, I thought it might be better to express in an honest way that what is good is good, what is pretty is pretty, and what is beautiful is beautiful.

I don't mean to be heaping praise onto *Hakujaden*, but watching this cartoon film made me think along those lines. And I stopped drawing *gekiga.*

A while later, I realized why I had tried to draw those *gekiga* filled with grudges and spite. I had been drawing them because they were interesting and easily accessible to me as a reader. This became clear to me as I started drawing regular manga, and also because I had grown up somewhat. I realized that what I started drawing had to do with the way I had lived as a child, a youth, and a young adult.

As a child, I was what everyone calls a good kid. I wasn't living according to my own will, because I was trying to follow my parents' will without any self-reflection. I wasn't conscious of this, which is scary in itself.

As I developed into a youth and young adult, I came to realize that I shouldn't be just a good kid, that I should look at things with my own eyes and have independent ideas. This led me to attempt to turn my back on even my fundamental purity as a child and, combined with the dark time of studying for entrance exams, I came to draw nihilistic *gekiga.*

When I saw *Hakujaden*, it was as if the scales fell from my eyes; I realized that I should depict the honesty and goodness of children in my work. But parents are apt to stamp out their

children's purity and goodness. I had another idea, and that was to create manga for the children of the world that said, "Kids, don't be stifled by your parents," and, "Become independent from your parents."

With that as my starting point, I have spent the last twenty years trying to do this. The key to my work is to create what I wanted to see when I was in the third grade, when I was waiting eagerly for the next Disney or Soviet animated movie.

Then when I got married and had children of my own, I came to think about what kind of cartoon films my children might want to see. When my children were three years old, I thought of making movies for three-year-olds, and when they became grade-schoolers, I wanted to make movies for them at that age. Now that they are in high school, they seem to have lost interest in watching animation, so it's hard to find a purpose for my creations. [*laughs*] I'm thinking of shifting my target for inspiration to the younger children in my neighborhood.

It may sound trite when I say that I make animation to entertain children, but it is not trite at all. I certainly do not make animated films just so they will be popular with children. I try to create what I wanted to see when I was a child, or what I believe my own children want to see. We have all heard folktales. You can tell when you read them that they are a kind of encouragement; they assure us that somehow things all turn out all right. Even if something terrible happens, someone will come and save us—*Cinderella* and *Snow White* are good examples. Encouragement changes with the times. In our era, since the start of video, we are continually compelled to retell stories. These stories originate as popular literature but change with the times. Looking back on them later—for example watching a film that gave us encouragement two years before—we often wonder how they could have seemed so good when we first saw them.

How to reflect what we want to do in our work

We are now living in a society that is wealthy yet poverty-stricken. We are able to listen to large amounts of music and watch large numbers of videos. But only a small fraction of these move us. If you think about it a bit, I suspect you will agree with me.

I hear that manga magazines are read most often in places such as ramen noodle shops, while a customer eats noodles alone. And the people who draw these manga know this, so they create stories and pictures that are easy to absorb even while the reader is slurping noodles. Editors of manga magazines, especially those who edit manga for girls, frankly admit that manga is a disposable medium. Rather than nurturing manga artists, they dig up new ones one after another.

The same can be said for the world of animation. If you plan to reflect what you really want to do in your own work, you must have a firm foundation. My foundation is this: I want to send a message of cheer to all those wandering aimlessly through life.

But reality doesn't allow me to do that easily. Most of the time I strive haphazardly amidst the rushing flood waters of animation work. The other day our studio staff went to the island of Yakushima, in Kagoshima Prefecture, Kyūshū, for a week, and we all came back in a daze. We were all amazed that a place with such a relaxing and generous spirit existed. For a while after we returned, we kept asking ourselves if there weren't some way we could manage to move there to live. "Maybe being a mail carrier would make it possible to make a living there," we'd say. [*laughs*]

Excuse me for jumping here and there in this talk. Before I close I do want to touch on one more point.

One day I went fishing with my children. I realized I needed a rubber band, so we searched for one in the woods. I looked but couldn't find any. As a child, when I heard a cicada's cry I had always been able to find the cicada on the tree trunk, but

once I became an adult, my old skill was of no use. In the same way, my children were able to find a rubber band right away. Children seem to look for different things than adults do. Children can find a rubber band fallen by the roadside and pick it up, but they aren't aware of an approaching car. Conversely, adults are aware of the car but can't find the rubber band. Why is this?

As people learn about things and construct their own worlds, their eyes gradually look at wider areas. Take a baby, for example. A baby will spend an hour or even two hours picking at the tuft of a tatami mat right in front of it. Children are concerned only with what appears right in front of their eyes.

I bring this up because I wanted to tell you that if we give children a torrent of overly stimulating things like animation, they cannot view it selectively but rather take it in just as it is. We don't know what the ultimate result of this will be, but it makes me very apprehensive. Though I feel uneasy about it, I nonetheless want to keep creating manga and animation that will provide encouragement for people. That is my day-to-day quest.

With this I will close my remarks for today. Thank you for paying attention for so long.

Using a Bucket to Pour Water on a Flood

Cine Front, Cine Front sha, January 1985

Perhaps one of the biggest problems in our culture today is that we are inundated with images. Movies and television do not exist today in opposition; they probably only appear to do so in the same sense that in the old days, when villages temporarily staged plays during the agricultural off-season, a permanent theater in a neighboring village would attract a larger audience. In other words, compared to the old days when villagers could only see plays if they staged them themselves, they could now enjoy them in town anytime, as long as they were willing to pay. In the same way, the mass medium we call "movies" emerged, and as technology advanced, black-and-white silent movies turned into talkies, color films, widescreen films, television, and eventually videos. It simply became easier to obtain images at an increasingly lower cost.

And in today's context, for lovers of film—the sort of people who love to sit in a darkened room surrounded by others watching images projected on a large screen—the main reason they don't like television may be the same reason many farmers resented the appearance of professionally produced plays. For the farmers, plays were something to be performed by the villagers themselves in the off-season, and because these plays were home brewed, they had a quality that couldn't be easily reproduced, a quality completely different from that offered by professionals, even if the professional productions were technically far superior.

There was a period when the film industry gave birth to some truly wonderful movies. In the early 1950s in particular, they were enjoyed as one of the least expensive forms of entertainment around. Along with others, I used to love to watch samurai action flicks and Westerns, but at the beginning I would watch anything in the theater, so at one point I even wound up seeing *Sciuscià* (*Shoe Shine*). I came home amazed

after seeing *The Bicycle Thief*, and I trudged home heavy-hearted after watching films starring Isao Kimura—who always played overly earnest and sincere and never-very-good-at-life young characters—for they taught me how hard life is. So I know that the films of that era had a different meaning for us than the mass media of today. I know some people want to learn about how films and TV are incorporated into our current culture, or what approach we should take to life, but to me, before even attempting to discuss such issues, I find myself first of all wondering whether we even need so many films.

I don't watch much TV myself, but when I do, I have to say that I'm impressed by the progress NHK,[3] for example, has made, with its documentaries. I'm not just talking here about their famous *Silk Road* series—even some of their more casually produced programs are really very well done. They're certainly better made than the educational and cultural documentaries that we had to watch in the school auditorium as kids. They utilize NHK's great technical strengths, show mastery of the advanced capabilities of video, and take advantage of large budgets. The result is that the crews are able to shoot with cameras moving freely and in a three-dimensional fashion, even underwater or in the air. Even in a show titled *Itto rokken* (One Capital and Six Surrounding Prefectures), which was really made quite casually, I can sense far more depth and richness than in the films we used to enjoy in movie theaters in the old days. Of course, this doesn't mean much if everyone's only watching cheap TV shows dedicated to gossip about Kazuyoshi Miura,[4] but when we look at the better programming it's obvious that movies and TV shows, and commercial productions and noncommercial productions, are not always in opposition.

When people of my generation look back on our childhood, it's clear that we were raised amidst a lowbrow popular culture. There was a lot of children's reading material created during the post–World War II democratization movement, but

by the time of the Korean War most of it had already disappeared, so we never really saw it. Instead, we mainly consumed the really cheap and vulgar magazines that had appeared in reaction to the first postwar wave of publications. We were raised in this environment and motivated to enter the business because of it, so it makes sense that I have no interest whatsoever today in creating animation as part of an "art" movement, in trying to bring attention to social issues, or in sending out messages with self-financed and self-produced works. What sort of works do I want to create, then? Well, I want to create works that children can enjoy, or that they can spend some quality time with, and it doesn't matter to me whether the shows are for the TV set or for the movie theater. The only reason theatrical features are still usually better than TV shows is because they have bigger budgets and more time can be spent on them—it's possible to do good work on TV shows, and when the conditions are right, then I'm ready.

What does seem to be a big problem to me, however, is that both the film and TV worlds are always desperately running after whatever carrots are dangled in front of them. The carrots for the TV world are particularly small, truly piddling overall, and for both TV and film, projects that pass muster tend to be low risk and highly disposable. For TV today, the biggest problem is the huge increase in the number of shows being made. Everyone's confused about what is being done. No one knows who is making what, or where. And no one is watching what others are making. If you watch something for three minutes, you feel like you know everything about it, even what went on backstage, and then you don't feel like watching the rest.

As far as viewers are concerned, well, they are being bombarded with images around the clock, and they have become accustomed to an infinite supply of them; it's gotten to the point where they have no qualms about demanding even more. Viewers will forever demand that we give them their shows every week, that when a season's up we follow with

another season of shows—without any idea how much time and energy we creators have to invest, to give of ourselves, to create a single episode. Sometimes they even have the nerve to tell us that last year there was such and such, but this year there hasn't been anything good on at all.

In reality, it's impossible for creators to keep working at the same pace year in and year out. The harder you try to make one good program, the more difficult it is to achieve that same level of quality over and over again. If you really want to create good shows year in and year out, you have to create an organization or system that makes this possible. But in the world of TV animation, it's physically impossible to create a series where each episode is like a theatrical feature. Since we have to cram shows into a system of mass production and mass marketing—and keep pumping episodes out in such a tight cycle—it's only natural that the works eventually become anemic. I think that's the point where the industry is now.

The decline of the film industry was inevitable—viewers simply switched to watching television when they found they could enjoy more visuals for less money. Television is a cheaper, easier-to-enjoy type of entertainment than film, and the move to television just mirrored what happened in the old days, when movie theaters drove out the local plays that villagers had performed in makeshift playhouses on their own. In that sense, there's really no point in discussing current problems in the film industry, at least in the context of some expected revival of the industry. The issue is always whether there will be good works created or not, and how to create them. It's true that in the "good old days" of movies, there were some real classics. But they weren't all great, and there were a lot of truly inane works created, too. In fact, many were so-called samurai or modern films, and if you saw them today you would think they had been made as a joke. But as time has gone by, most of these films have simply faded from memory, so we don't even take them into account.

So, given the overall condition of our culture, what do I think should be done about this overproduction problem and other issues? Frankly, I find it a true dilemma. Part of me thinks that the best thing would be to simply not make any more shows. I question, for example, whether it's necessary for someone to add a bucket of water to a flood, just because it's particularly good water. However, I can justify doing so by saying that even in the midst of a flood we still need to drink good water once in a while. So, in a similar fashion, when a good job comes my way I tend to throw myself into my work, adding to the flood, and thus I always find myself on the horns of a dilemma.

I personally intend to continue my work, but at the minimum to always be aware of the dangers of being too wishy-washy, to be aware of the relationships between media creators and the consumers, capital and labor—even of the problems of distribution. If I'm lucky, I'll be able to continue working; if not, I'll just have to wait until the opportunity to work comes along, all the while trying to protect myself and not lose my sense of self.

What the Scenario Means to Me

Kōza Animation 3 'Image Design': Bijutsu Shuppansha: January 15, 1989

Introduction

My experience with animation is limited to the genres in which I have worked: several television series and theatrical release films. I have never studied scriptwriting, nor have I made any effort to read the scenarios of projects other than my own. In the worst cases, I have been known to just skim through the scenarios of projects that I am involved with and leave the rest to intuition and feelings.

For me to theorize about scenarios, I can only rely on my biased viewpoint and use my experience to show the hole I have dug to fit my own case. Rather belatedly, I should point out that I am probably not the best person to discuss this subject. For the scenario writer, it may be that he must perfect a scenario in order to present it as his own work. However, the real work is the film, and the tasks that go into finishing the completed film are all parts of the process. To put it bluntly, as long as the film is made, it doesn't matter what method was used to create the scenario.

I think there is no set method or procedure for making a film. Those involved in the making of a film make a concerted effort, step by step, to create the film they want to make; the entire process is the creation of the film.

The current division of labor among the staff's job categories—animators who direct the drawings and artists who create the key animation drawings, the director or creative director or overall director, and the supervisor—is no more than what is specific to a certain time and a certain place. Production procedures such as planning, scenario writing, storyboarding, and setting the characters and stage are categories born merely of the need for production efficiency. If the situation changes, a different procedure will emerge. All tasks can be done at the same time if that would be better.

There are countless cases in which the scenario is enriched because the writer is inspired by the drawings, or the artists' imaginations are enriched by the scenario. There are examples of scenarios being written just to make the story coherent after a storyboard was created, and I'm sure I can't be the only one who has finished a film without a scenario.

It is the height of folly to think that one's work is more than just one part of the complicated process of making a film. If a change suggested by another person improves the work, it is a mistake to refuse to incorporate it under the misconception that one's purview has been violated. Animation is a collaborative process. Writers who believe that refusing to make scenario changes protects their work and directors who use their artistic rights as a shield to prevent changes in the storyboard simply prove that they are not talented at what they do. What is needed when involved in collaborative work is the flexibility to use without hesitation a better plan than one's own (even if it comes from a rookie hired the day before) and the determination to convince others through discussion to adopt the ideas one believes in.

Here I digress to state that there are those, even now, who consider that the Disney Productions method of animation production is the best. In the Disney method, a group of main staff works on preparation, creates an image board, comes up with a story, and develops a storyboard. Then everyone suggests ideas. The members of the group are reassembled and shuffled; the storyboard is made into a film for further discussion (called a "Leica reel"[5]). They take a sample of the movements, and then complete the preparation process. In Japan, people tend to idealize the Disney method because it seems to draw on the creativity of everyone involved. Unfortunately this is a falsehood. This method, created by Walt Disney and his close associates, was the method best suited to their time, their film content (or goals, perhaps), and those people who were then gathered together. And in order to maintain this system, Disney Productions let go of talented

employees who did not fit in with their method. I think films should be created according to their times and places (by "place" I mean national conditions, including cultural differences), using different methods and taking into account the talent, enthusiasm, and stamina of the staff assembled. Some in Japan believed that following the methodology of a past golden age—probably a past when scarcity added value to theatrical showings of animation and audiences wanted more—would give birth to excellent films. Several examples of using the Disney-style storyboard method have been attempted in Japan. I stand by my assertion that they all have failed.

A system must adjust to the people involved. When we look into what is considered a good system, we find that it is one supported by personnel with talent. When even one talented person pulls out, a good system can turn ineffective and bureaucratic. It is best to create, each time, the method that is best suited to the kind of work you want to create and the people you can assemble.

Going back to scenarios, I think the role of the scenario should be determined by the needs of the production. Don't think that I am saying that technique and ability are not important. Without technique and effort, even if you dream of a wonderful work, you cannot make a decent film no matter how much money you pour into the project. In order to polish your technique, you need to accumulate experience, as well as have talent and enthusiasm.

What is a scenario?

Scenarios were not initially created for use in animation production. They were adapted from stage plays for use in live-action films. When animation films evolved from early works with simple content to become complex and long, people started creating scenarios for animation as well.

Instead of attempting to define what an animation scenario is (something I feel incapable of doing), I will note my thoughts by giving a few hypothetical examples. Let us say I

am unexpectedly handed a scenario. As I read through the script, my imagination is stimulated, I become excited, and I am so moved that I would love to turn it into a film. If this script were used to make a film it would be the foundation, the starting point of everything. The scenario would become the central force that gathered the people, drew out the talents of the staff, excited their creativity, and pulled together everyone's strengths and skills. Even if the scenario has not attained perfection, if I felt certain that the rough stone could be turned into a gem, I would want to polish it and let it shine. I have not come across such a case, but I think that this can happen for stage plays and live-action films.

When people think of scenarios, they think of material that has this kind of power. In such a case, the scenario embodies in written text what the creator wants to express and with an overall clarity that can carry the plan for the creation of the film, the particulars, the flow of time, the words to be spoken, and the characters themselves.

What do you do when you have to make a film based on an imperfect scenario—one that is unconvincing or even seems unusable?

Normally, you should work in collaboration with the screenwriter to rework the scenario, but often that is out of the question. Usually a writer has determined that his scenario is satisfactory, or that any further revisions are not worth the pay. In most cases the administrative work of accepting the scenario as the final version has already been completed and there is no time for rewrites. This situation is rampant in the current Japanese animation world.

We can only use this kind of scenario as a draft. Though the writer's name will be in the credits, the only thing we can do is to take it apart entirely and do the work of putting in different content. Even if we don't go that far, we are dogged by the need for small and medium revisions.

In this case, a confrontation normally develops between the director and the writer and his supporters (the person in charge of literary arts, at times the producer). As there is no possibility of compromise, the alternatives are either to quit or to make the other quit—or to obfuscate the scenario in some way. This develops into a power struggle that can't be helped.

However, if you don't have an alternative plan, this approach is impossible to take. When you criticize another person's work at the workplace, you need to have an alternative plan and the ability to persuade others that your option is better. The workplace has no use for a critic. If you don't have this persuasive ability, you have to grit your teeth and work with the original scenario until you develop an assertive voice. This is a hard thing to do.

I have drifted from discussing the scenario to the actual work process. What I want to get across is that I have not gone about my work thinking of myself as filling a certain job category such as scenario writer, director, or art director. The content of any job title will be determined by the power relationships among the people assembled to work on the project. A staff member who is an art designer may be powerful enough to have a voice in the directing and drawing areas; a powerless director may be influenced by a powerful animator. These are normal occurrences in this industry.

This is what I learned from my seniors when I was starting out and my own experience has confirmed it. When I discuss scenarios as a filmmaker, I tend to take this viewpoint. If I were asked to discuss directing, I would no doubt write about the same thing. As I noted earlier, this discussion is the product of my biased viewpoint and my actual experience.

When the project has finally been approved, whether based on a story or an original script, how does the filmmaking start? When there is an original manga, the basic image and story already exist, so it might seem easy, but that is not the case. Story manga have too many story lines, and it takes all one's

energy just to sort them out. When we work on a film, we have to start by tearing everything apart. Whether the original is a literary work or a manga, the workload is the same for those who turn it into an animated film.

First, we must build an organic whole consisting of the approach to the entire film: the strategic goal (what we want to say), the tactical goal (what we want to achieve), the period setting, location setting, and characters to fulfill this story. Many people start by focusing on writing a scenario, but in the case of animation, I think we work more efficiently without doing this. Even without spending time on writing a scenario, we always lack preparation time. I think it is more effective to use this limited time to create an image board. That said, drawing and writing should proceed simultaneously, and notes should be taken on their progress.

The order sent out to the writer is based on these notes and drawings. Understand that the first draft of any script will never be satisfactory. One way to use the preparation time—that is the time before the entire staff starts on the project—is to continually revise the scenario until the last moment. Or, if there is no time for this, the director and the main staff need to comprehend the entire concept of the work through the scenario that is in hand—if this is an easier way to have everyone grasp the idea, it may be the only way to go.

I myself stop working on the scenario with the first version. That is because I never have enough preparation time, and I have always worked under conditions where it seems impossible to realize a final scenario even after I request one. This may show my poor man's mentality, but in fact in this industry we exist in a state of poverty.

Fully aware that it is not finalized, we print the scenario when we see the large outline of the work. This scenario, in book form with a cover, is not for sponsors or the production company, but for us to take an objective look at all the work done up to that time.

With this as a starting point—and if necessary we pull the scenario apart, chop it up and change it, and we're even willing to throw it all out—we work up a more exacting plan. My opinion is that the preparation work is finalized with the completion of the storyboard, so all my energies are aimed toward this end.

In addition to serving as a starting point, the printed scenario allows us to calculate the scope of the entire project. This is a very important role, as at times—indeed, usually—we are forced to start drawing from the completed segments before the storyboard is finalized. The scenario is thus useful as a barometer to gauge our progress. If, for example, we are one-fourth of the way through the pages of the scenario, then the total number of seconds in the storyboard should be approximately one-fourth of the whole.

Theatrical films may have looser requirements than television programs, but that doesn't mean we can arbitrarily set the number of feet for the film. If we begin the drawing process before the storyboard is completed and have a thirty-minute overrun on a less than two-hour long film, we will have wasted a large amount of work, the staff's labor will not be compensated, the editing will be hellish, and the film will end up showing wounds from these cuts.

Readers may see these thoughts as slighting the screenwriter. Indeed, there are quite a few writers who oppose me. It may seem reasonable for them to be angry when—after have been given a detailed plot, handed pictures, told to read the notes, and write it up as suggested—their scenario is used only as a starting point and the resulting film is entirely different. But I think it is wrong for them to get angry. The director as well as the main staff should be throwing the ball back and forth with the writer. No matter how painstaking the work of writing the scenario, one toss of the ball is not enough. What is required is to recognize the intent of the entire work process. That includes your own trial and error efforts as a film is made, based ultimately on the mutual trust

gained from throwing the ball, catching what is thrown back at you, and throwing the ball again.

At a certain point in the history of the film industry, the scenario writer was given special privileges. He gained citizenship for doing work that embodied creative writing and individuality. No doubt he fought for and gained that privileged position by writing good scripts.

But it is wrong to adapt this, as is, to animation. I am not demanding that the rights of the writer be limited. I am pointing out that other important staff members suffer from a severe lack of rights. It is a mistake to view the screenwriter and the director as being special as far as creating animated films is concerned. To give an example, it is unconscionable when too much emphasis is placed on the original work, with the director and screenwriter getting only trifling amounts from secondary-use fees of the film, and other staff members getting nothing. This problem encompasses many difficult issues that cannot easily be discussed and resolved. An organic way of working is hardly possible for a staff that is bound by rights and responsibilities set out in a thick stack of contract papers.

In essence, I think that the writer's role in animation is not to fixate on a book that has his or her name on it, but to actively participate in the creation of the film as a member of the team. Only then does that film become something created by the entire staff—and at the same time something to which the writer has contributed that he or she can claim as his own work.

Actual scenario cases

My name is on several films as screenwriter. There are also several films that do not credit me as screenwriter although I performed that function. Leaving aside the issue of how those films were received or whether they are worthy of discussion, I will note here the actual situation concerning scenarios on a few of the films I have made.

▶ *Panda! Go, Panda! (Panda kopanda)*;
theatrical short: Tokyo Movie, A Pro: 1972

Told to come up with any kind of project starring a panda, Isao Takahata[6] and I worked up this idea in one night or two. The decision to greenlight the production came a long time later, after a news announcement that a panda was arriving from China. Then the project was immediately given the go-ahead.

We talked about a simple idea and what kind of film we wanted to make and sent it out to a certain screenwriter. While waiting for the first version of the scenario, we created an image board in the style of a storyboard, with specifics fleshing out our idea.

Dissatisfied with the first version of the script, we decided it would take too long to wait for a second version; we received the company's approval on the condition that we would write the scenario. Takahata and I talked the story over, and I wrote it up based on the image board.

The text wasn't in the form of a scenario, so I asked the person in charge of continuity to write it up clearly so it could be printed, and then started working on the storyboard with Takahata.

In the case of this film, we were in clear accord in our aim, thanks to the work we had previously done together. As I had written the scenario with the intention of making it a basis for our work, it was a self-styled document with a far greater number of stage directions than usual. At the storyboard stage, the pictures I had drawn for the script were expertly arranged by Takahata. The features I subconsciously had in mind for the characters were transformed into the language of film. This was very satisfying to me. I have never had more pleasure as I worked.

For the sequel, *Panda! Go, Panda! Rainy-Day Circus* (*Panda Kopanda: Amerfuri circus no maki*), we decided from the start that I would write the scenario. Lounging around at

Takahata's house, he and I chatted about what kind of story it should be and discovered that we shared a childhood attraction to floods. I wrote up a scenario that was very much like production notes. As I recall, I again asked the continuity person to write it up clearly.

As this was not a story that began with a dramatic event and then unfolded (our aim was precisely to avoid such a structure), a writer trying to develop a scenario in the usual fashion would not have understood our intent. Indeed, when it was written up as a script, it seemed extremely ordinary, and it would have been natural for anyone to worry if the material could be turned into a film. Yet I still believe that what we were aiming for was correct.

▶ *Future Boy Conan (Mirai Shōnen Konan)*; television series, Nippon Animation: 1978

I took on directing this project on the assumption that I could make major revisions to the original story. So I created a rough framework for the story, wrote the plot with as much detail as I could, and held discussions with the writer. It was then that I realized for the first time that when the plot was looked at objectively, as a scenario, it was full of holes. I was confronted with the problem that even though the scenario reflected my plot ideas, I was unable to make a storyboard out of it.

Every week, in my job as director, I would put in an order for the scenario and storyboard, but the result was that the plot, scenario, and the storyboard all became a basis for another reworking of the original scenario. Moreover, the story began to go off in a different direction than I had initially planned, so we had to create the storyboards anew. The schedule slipped and I caused a lot of trouble for the staff and the production company. This was entirely due to my failings, as I can only work following my intuition and feelings.

But whether someone else creates the scenario or I do it myself, I see the scenario as a basic starting point from which I

can make changes. What is more, it is often from the process of negating something that we see the direction we should be moving in.

For example, even if it is only a note scribbled on a single sheet of writing paper, the storyboard can come together in a single flowing act of creation if it comes from an idea that has been well thought out. When you stumble over something or when the plot doesn't seem quite clear, there is a problem hidden somewhere. But if you break down what you have piled up and look for another approach, you will eventually realize that there is only one way to go forward again. When the schedule is pressing, you want to get through somehow and you want to believe that all is going well, but it is important not to stifle even the smallest doubt. Only by being able to make the decision to trash a storyboard that you finished after several all-nighters can you see what portions can be used and what cannot be used.

What proves reliable is not logic but intuition. I do want to say that, to Takahata's credit, the storyboards he drew for five of the episodes were of a high level of perfection, and in my exhausted state this was as much of a relief as rain during a drought.

▶ *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro (Rupan sansei: Kariosutoro no shiro)*; feature-length film: Tokyo Movie Shinsha, Telecom: 1979

My responsibilities for this film started with creating the story. In order to give form to my vague idea, I began by drawing a bird's-eye-view picture of the setting for the story: the lake and castle of a small country. When I completed this drawing, I was confident that the film would go well. As to the scenario, we agreed that the credit would be shared and changes would be accepted at the storyboard stage. I created the story through to the last major scene and gave my treatment to the screenwriter. This first draft scenario was printed without change to its rough edges and with no divergence from the nuances of my ideas. At the same time, I

wrote out the sequences on a large sheet of paper, put this up on the wall, and began working on the storyboard. This was my way of checking to see how much I had covered of the entire flow of sequences; as I drew portions onto the storyboard, I crossed the sequences out with a magic marker on the paper on the wall.

In a work like *Lupin*, the story line may be set, but the important thing is how it is depicted, how characters enter and depart, and the story's hidden traps and subplots are portrayed. As such, plot changes are unavoidable when turning the story into a film.

I divided the plot turns and conclusion into four parts—A, B, C, and D—and as we proceeded in our tasks to part C, it became clear that we were considerably over the foot length and that we would end up way over the set film length. So we made midcourse modifications to simplify the plotline. As to part D, we determined that due to the tight schedule, we couldn't complete all the tasks required for our initial intended content, and we made a strategic withdrawal at the storyboard stage.

Because of this compromise, I felt a sense of psychological defeat for half a year after completion of the film. Even so, I do not think my method, which may look irregular at first glance, was a mistake.

▶ *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (Kaze no tani no Naushika)*; feature-length film, Top Craft: 1984

For this, I followed the same method as for *The Castle of Cagliostro*, but it took a long time for me to dismantle my own original story, and this placed me in dire straits. Despite having arranged for a cowriter for the scenario, I was unable to make effective use of this method. In the end, as time ran out, I had to start the film process with just the plot pasted up on the wall. My name is listed as the screenwriter, but for this work I didn't even write a basic scenario; it was only to satisfy the common format in the credits that we listed my name and

prepared a written scenario as if there had been one. My conclusion is that this wasn't a mistake in method. However, I would not encourage anyone who has completed a story in one format (manga, in this case) to then try to render it into another format, in this case film.

* * * *

This method of producing the final version of the scenario after the film has been completed dates back to *Animal Treasure Island* (*Dōbutsu takarajima*) in 1971, when the main staff made that decision. It was the first time, in my experience, that we formally used a highly developed storyboard as the basis for making changes in the scenario. This method is used not just by me but also by other directors. Some continually fight with their writers while others have collaboration-minded writers as colleagues, ensuring a smooth process. While this method arises from the realities of the work process, I'm sure it prevents leaps of imagination beyond a certain point, as does the experiential method. Also, there is the danger of too much concentration of authority in the hands of the director and the potential for deterioration that comes from sticking to old habits.

As I noted earlier, we are always in search of scenarios that stun those working on the project and point to a new horizon. We must continue to be humble as there is always the potential of coming across a powerful scenario whose brilliance fulfills the original essence of what a scenario should be.

How to write the best scenario

I do not know how to write the best scenario. If I knew, I would be able to write one. Scenario-writing ability comes from talent and effort and is not something that can be taught. It is not a technique but emerges from what one wants to express.

One must have the clear core of what one wants to convey. This is the trunk of the story that penetrates throughout in a

strong and simple way. What catches the audience's eye is the treetop, the shimmer of the leaves. What is most required of a scenario are roots that spread deep into the earth and a strong trunk hidden by the mass of shimmering leaves. As long as there is a trunk strong enough to support branches and leaves, the rest—hanging decorations, letting flowers bloom, and adding accessories—can be accomplished by everyone sharing their ideas.

The best scenario might be one that includes the mass of leaves and even the insects that crawl among those leaves.

Thoughts on Japanese Animation

Lecture. Films of Japan, No. 7. *Nippon eiga no genzai* (The State of Japanese Film). Published by Iwanami Shoten, January 28, 1988

Japan's first true full-length color animated film, *Hakujaden* (*The Tale of the White Serpent*), was released in 1958. I first encountered it around the end of that same year, in a third-run theater in a seedy part of town, when I was in my final year of high school and busy studying for my college entrance exams.

And here I have to make a somewhat embarrassing confession. I fell in love with the heroine of this animated film. I was moved to the depths of my soul and—with snow starting to fall on the street—staggered home. After seeing the dedication and earnestness of the heroine, I felt awkward and pathetic, and I spent the entire evening hunched over the heated *kotatsu*[7] table, weeping. It would be easy to analyze this and write it all off as the result of the gloom I felt over the exam-hell I then faced or my youthful immaturity, or to ascribe it merely to having seen a cheap melodrama. But, be that as it may, *Hakujaden* had a powerful impact on me.

At the time I dreamed of becoming a manga artist, and I was trying to draw in the absurd style then popular, but *Hakujaden* made me realize how stupid I was. It made me realize that, behind a façade of cynical pronouncements, in actuality I really was in love with the pure, earnest world of the film, even if it were only another cheap melodrama. I was no longer able to deny the fact that there was another me—a me that yearned desperately to affirm the world rather than negate it.

After that, I have always given a great deal of thought to what I should create. And at the very least, I can say that no matter how self-conscious and embarrassed I might feel, I also feel compelled to create something that I truly believe in.

I started working as a new animator for Toei Animation in 1963, but I frankly didn't enjoy my job at all. I felt ill at ease every day—I couldn't understand the works we were

producing, or even the proposals we were working on, and I still wasn't ready to relinquish my dream of becoming a manga artist. The thrill that I had experienced with *Hakujaden* had long since dissipated, and all I could remember of the work was how imperfect it had been. Had I not one day seen *Snedronningen* (*The Snow Queen*) during a film screening hosted by the company labor union, I honestly doubt that I would have continued working as an animator.

Snedronningen is proof of how much love can be invested in the act of making drawings move, and how much the movement of drawings can be sublimated into the process of acting. It proves that when it comes to depicting simple yet strong, powerful, piercing emotions in an earnest and pure fashion, animation can fully hold its own with the best of what other media genres can offer, moving us powerfully. While *Hakujaden* may have its weaknesses, I honestly believe that it has this same quality.

I then felt thankful that I was an animator. Someday, I thought, my colleagues and I might have an opportunity to do similar work. And with that, I resolved to buckle down, and to keep working.

Both *Hakujaden* and *Snedronningen* are hardly highbrow works. But even if I might hate *enka*, those mournful ballads so popular among the masses in Japan, I have to admit that I myself am hardly a highbrow person. After watching *Matka Joanna od aniolow* (*Joan of the Angels*), I continued going to the Art Theater Guild, but out of all the films I saw at ATG, I found that I vastly preferred *Modern Times.* In fact, I found that the timing of when you encounter a popular film is often what gives it its impact. Timing is at least as important as content, and for those in the audience watching the film their emotional state at the time can also determine the impact of the viewing experience. What's important here is not whether the film has some sort of permanent artistic value. The viewers —and I include myself here—usually only possess a limited ability to comprehend a film and tend to overlook many

important clues in it. But they feel liberated from their daily frustrations and feelings of being overwhelmed, are able to shake off their sense of gloom, to discover a feeling of adoration, of honesty, and of something positive that they didn't know they had in themselves, and then return refreshed to their daily realities and routines.

This, I think, is the true role of popular movies. Even if I find myself a few minutes later ridiculing the sentimentalism of a work I've just seen, it still has meaning for me. I'm not saying this because *Hakujaden* influenced my choice of occupation, but I think my encounter with the film had such a great effect on me precisely because I saw it when I was a student struggling so hard to prepare for my exams, when I was far more immature than I am now.

So, from my perspective, even if they are lightweight in nature, the more popular and common films still must be filled with a purity of emotion. There are few barriers to entry into these films—they will invite anyone in—but the barriers to exit must be high and purifying. Films must also not be produced out of idle nervousness or boredom, or be used to recognize, emphasize, or amplify true vulgarity. And in that context, I must say that I hate Disney's works. The barrier to both the entry and exit of Disney films is too low and too wide. To me, they show nothing but contempt for the audience.

Before writing about Japanese animation, I have taken the liberty of writing what could be construed as a confession of faith, or simply a type of experientialism, because I wanted to make my position clear. I simply can't discuss the business we are in without a bit of bitterness. Compared to some of the works from the 1950s that I will always hold as a gold standard, the animation that we are making in the 1980s resembles the food served on jumbo jet airliners. Mass production has changed everything. The emotions and thoughts that should be so moving have given way to showiness, nervousness, and titillation. And work that should

be done lovingly by hand has been whittled away at within organized production systems that focus on straight work for hire. I frankly despise the truncated word “anime” because to me it only symbolizes the current desolation of our industry.

I have never had any interest in being one who defends, represents, or even analyzes Japan’s anime culture. To me, anime is something that should be discussed on the same level as Nintendo’s Famikon, or “Family Computer,” or even fancy foreign cars or pseudo-gourmet food. When I do talk with friends about anime, the subject somehow always seems to devolve into talking about the state of culture in general, the decline of society, or how managed we are as a society. The anime boom has already come and gone in Japan, but even now, in 1987, we are still making thirty animated TV series per week, and annually dozens of theatrical features and straight-to-video anime films, as well as works jointly created in subcontracting arrangements with U.S. firms. But there’s no real point in introducing all that here. If there is something that I should touch on, it is the ideology of exaggeration/overexpression and the loss of motivation that plagues Japanese anime. Both of these tendencies have contributed to a general decay in popular Japanese animation.

An ideology of overexpression

Originally there were no limits to the techniques that could be used in animation. You can, after all, create animation without drawing even a single picture. If you put a camera in a fixed position, and shoot one frame of film a day from the same angle—in other words shoot for a twenty-fourth of a second each time—in a year you would have a film that was over fifteen seconds long. If you shot like this for ten years in the ever-changing neighborhoods of Tokyo, you might wind up with a fairly valuable work. Just imagine what your work would look like if you shot the same person nude, once a month, from the time of birth.

Innumerable techniques of this sort can be used, and even as I write this, there are probably many wonderful and artistic short works being created across the world. But it would not be an exaggeration to say that all popular Japanese animation is still based on cel animation.

"Cel" is short for celluloid, sheets of which were once used for film. Today's films use vinyl chloride sheets, but the original abbreviation is still in use. Drawings made on paper are transferred to cels (using carbon, which is deposited on the sheets in a process using heat), color is applied with acrylic paints, then the sheets are overlaid on backgrounds drawn with poster colors (sometimes other materials, too), and photographed. This technique, by the way, is not solely an American invention; it was also developed independently in Japan at nearly the same time.

Cel animation is distinguished by the facts that it is particularly suited to a collective form of work and that the images are extremely simple, clear, and appealing. That cel animation images are simple and clear is another way of saying that they also lack much depth and sophistication. To state this using more current lingo, they are pictures with very little informational content. This fact becomes obvious if you look at picture books made with animation cels; at first glance, they seem both fancy and clear but you soon get tired of them. And if you work in an animation studio one thing you soon learn is that even poorly rendered drawings start to look fairly good as cels, but conversely, when something well-drawn is turned into a cel illustration it starts to look diluted and weak. In other words, when transferred to cels, both good and bad drawings tend to average out in the middle. Yet at the same time, it is this aspect of cel animation that makes it possible to implement mass production using a large number of people.

With cel animation, it takes a team of highly skilled and patient people to create images of above average quality. And central to this team are the people called animators, for they impart the movement to the images. Developing a team of

really good animators is extraordinarily difficult. Some people say that animators are like actors, but if that's all they were it'd be better to use them as the cast of impromptu skits at end-of-the-year office parties. Before learning how to act, there are so many other things that animators need to know about including the ability—in 1/24th of a second—to analyze, recombine, and sequentialize movements involving gravity and momentum, elasticity, perspective, timing, and the fundamental properties of fluids. The animator thus confronts a mountain of homework so huge that he is in danger of getting lost.

For what is called "acting" in animation, even a hundred people probably wouldn't be enough. The moment the director of an animated work asked for acting on the part of the cast (in this case the "characters") he would probably experience terrible frustration with the animators. In fact, American and the Soviet animation productions began using live-action film as an aid to draw subtle gestures and get the timing right—precisely because they quickly realized the limits to the animators' imagination and drawing skills. But that stated, if you simply trace over live-action images, the acting ability of even famous actors will, oddly enough, be transformed into something rather muddled and indistinct. In reality, acting consists of far more than movements—it is created by a subtle dynamic continuum, rather than discrete flashes of 1/24th of a second, and is also informed by subtle changes in light and shadow, texture, and even changes in humidity.

When using human actors as models, skilled teams of animators required a broad type of acting that mainly showed the human form in silhouette. They came to the conclusion that, rather than the style of acting developed for dramatic films, stage acting was more suitable for animated films. This is precisely the reason that the gestures used by characters in Disney's animated films look like they come from a musical, and that *Snedronningen* depends on movements like those in a girls' ballet. There are many examples where using live-action

models can result in disaster. Ralph Bakshi's *The Lord of the Rings*, to mention one film, was doomed to failure because it relied on clumsy live-action sequences. Disney's *Cinderella*, for that matter, is living proof that modeling live-action images in the pursuit of realistic movement is a double-edged sword. In trying to achieve a sense of realism by using an average American young woman as a model, they lost even more of the inherent symbolism of the original Cinderella story than they did with their version of *Snow White.*

In Japan, modeling animation characters on live-action shots never really took off. I hate this technique, and not for economic reasons alone—if animators become slaves to live-action their enjoyment of their work plummets by half. You can say, of course, that the problems are partly caused by not having a proper style of acting to model. But in our case, our work was also too divorced from the Japanese acting worlds of *bunraku*,[8] *kabuki*,[9] and *noh kyōgen*,[10] and we weren't interested in ersatz Japanese-style musicals or ballets that borrow from these art forms. We just kept drawing (within the constraints of time and budget), relying on our intuition or subjective feelings at the time, and basing our styles on what we knew of films, manga, and a true goulash of other things experienced. In depicting characters' actions and behavior, the tendency is to resolve the more iconic emotions of delight, anger, sorrow, and pleasure into depictions of parts of the face (eyes, eyebrows, mouth, nose), and then to arrange, link, and compile these elements into a continuum. By creating drawings that rely on what is undifferentiated in the world of theater—the identification with a role, or the act of being possessed by it—we tried hard to overcome some of the degeneration that inevitably occurs with an iconographic approach.

It's important not to underestimate the simple strength of this approach. Stylization and refinement have no inherent relation to each other, but a drawing with emotion can be extremely powerful if it accurately captures what you want to

express. Frankly, I like the sort of power that can be depicted in animation far more than the clever movements in live-action films.

But let's return now to the more specific subject of Japanese anime. Japanese anime is the result of creating animation based on original Japanese manga stories, of appropriating manga character designs, and absorbing the power of manga; it generally has involved assembling production staffs of young men and women who are aspiring manga artists. There are exceptions, of course, but I think that I stand on safe ground in making this generalization. Prior to the start of Japanese TV animation in 1963, it is true that there was another style of animation in use—that of the Toei Animation company—which was closer to the style of illustrated books for children, but the explosion in production of both animated TV series and manga killed it off. Japanese anime therefore got started from manga, and—compared to theatrical feature animation—was based on a vastly shorter weekly production cycle. Because of time and budgetary constraints, the number of drawings used had to be reduced to a minimum. A shortage of experienced staff caused a huge influx of relatively unskilled and frankly unsuited workers, not only to the drawing departments but to all job categories, including that of directors and screenwriters. This resulted in an unprecedented bloating of work and inflation of job titles. The scary thing is that this trend has continued for twenty more years—the number of TV animated series produced each week has continued to grow for twenty years, and at the end of the anime boom reached forty per week!

When producing TV animation, meeting broadcast deadlines takes priority over everything else. And this usually means reducing to an absolute minimum the true hallmark of animation—the movement, or moving drawings—and creating a marketable product. I think the main reason that viewers accepted this odd sort of animation is actually because they had been conditioned by the visual language of manga—the

elder brother of anime—which had already suffused throughout society.

Japanese anime thus began by giving up on movement, and what made this possible was the introduction of techniques used in manga (and in *gekiga* or "drama-picture" comics). The qualities of cel animation were perfectly suited for the obvious impact of manga, to the point where strength, coolness, and cuteness were practically designed to jump out at viewers. Human characters no longer came to life through their gestures or their expressions, and viewers instead came to demand character designs so simple that everything attractive about the character could be expressed in a single drawing. But when specific expressions are emphasized, the tendency is to draw characters not as composites, but in a way that emphasizes only a few of their attributes, and uses a great deal of deformation. It is impossible to make drawings move smoothly if they are done in a more realistic *gekiga* style. And on top of that, if the drawings are mass produced by an inflated number of staff members who have no sense of solidarity or unity to begin with, the life really goes out of them. It becomes necessary to transform not only the designs, but the story development, the composition of specific sequences, the breakdown of scenes, their content, and even the movement in the film. This, then, is the origin of what we might call the overexpressionism of Japanese anime.

What's funny about this is that at the time some theorists tried to rationalize what was going on. Some even claimed that we were in a new age, one of "limited animation," where too much emphasis on making drawings move only hindered story development. They started saying that use of the *tome-e*, still images employed for effect, was a "new form of expression."

The result was a deformation not only of the designs of the story's cast and their characters, but of time and space itself. Animators would almost endlessly stretch the time it takes for a baseball to leave a pitcher's hand and slam into the catcher's mitt, putting all their passion into depicting the ball, and then

pursuing this stretched instant as a powerful new form of movement. Similarly, people began to rationalize their depictions of the small confines of a boxing ring as a virtual battlefield, because they believed that to the protagonists the ring *was* in fact a virtual battlefield. And what's really funny about all of this, is that in these situations the narrators of such anime scenes became almost like the narrators of traditional Japanese *kōdan*, or dramatic storytelling. I'm always amazed, frankly, by the way they sound like the *kōdan* narrators of old, dramatically recounting how Heikurō Magaki, the samurai, charged up the stone steps of Atagoyama hill[11] on his horse in old Edo.[12]

The technique of making drawings move was thus used to emphasize an extended and distorted sense of time and space, and was primarily relegated to a decorative function. Drawing a character's subtle but ordinary gestures—something that animators had never been very good at anyway—was actively eliminated as an unnecessary and old-fashioned practice; instead, depicting extraordinariness became the ultimate goal. The standards used to evaluate animators shifted correspondingly, and now included their ability to draw scenes of combat, competitions, and machines with ever-more detail, to emphasize nuclear weapons, laser guns, and the firepower of every conceivable weapon. When it was necessary to depict emotion in characters or scenes, the easiest and least expensive solution was simply to overuse the techniques of manga, and instead of making drawings move, to adorn scenes with music, frame composition, or the plentiful use of dramatic still shots. Sequences that weren't particularly interesting were increasingly regarded as a way of giving the staff a bit of breathing room in their tough schedules. And when animators debated how much weight should be given to the particular scenes that they had been entrusted to draw, they showed a renewed tendency to merely emphasize flashy or cool movements.

The hallmark of Japanese animation thus became works with a great deal of pretension, where vaporous and extremely deformed characters inhabited distorted and flashily colorized worlds, and where time was infinitely expanded. Characters had to be depicted with serious expressions or, when they laughed, with cold, nihilistic smiles, because if shown truly laughing their facial designs would fall apart. Female heroines usually had either, without any particular consistency, gigantic pupils or, when they screwed up, tiny dotlike ones.

In the beginning, people used all sorts of ideas fashionable at the time to justify this use of overexpressionism. And it was overwhelmingly supported, especially when theater audiences or TV viewers overidentified with particular works or felt a personal resonance with them, sometimes even more than the creators had intended. *Kyojin no hoshi* (Star of the Giants), produced during Japan's period of high economic growth in the sixties and early seventies, is an example. However, as the emotional impact of such films started to wear off, film production itself devolved into the practice of using the simplest techniques. To help shows recover after slumps in popularity, the creators then went to ever more excessive lengths to compensate. Whereas in the beginning they might have had two *mecha* machines combining together to form one giant robot, they began making three, or five, or ultimately—in a ridiculous extreme—twenty-six elements combine into a robot. The creators also put more and more emphasis on character designs, so much so that artists started using up to seven different colors to draw highlights in the giant pupils of female characters. They also started using more and more colors and gradations in the shadows depicted, and painting hair in every imaginable wild color in emulation of the latest fashions. As a result, for the animators—paid according to the number of drawings they produced—work not only got harder, but it was as if they were slitting their own throats. In spite of all these innovations, they wound up producing a large number of works that were frighteningly similar.

I may be somewhat guilty of overstating the problems of Japanese anime. I certainly don't want to give the impression that all anime works use overexpressionism. Indeed, some people have made great efforts to establish their own style of acting in animation despite the many constraints faced. Others have tried hard to depict both space and time in a realistic way. And some have tried to completely reject the idea that anime should in any way be the stepchild of the manga medium. That stated, I believe it is fair to say that the majority of works have tended to excessive expressionism, and that most young staff members at animation productions entered the industry infatuated with it.

As the formula "anime = overexpressionism" took hold, and society at large began to recognize animation as a legitimate medium, anime itself began to stagnate. Just as the old *kōdan* form of storytelling couldn't satisfy modern people's needs for entertainment, animators found themselves losing their flexibility as well as their sense of humility about the diversity of the real world—with the result that they eventually lost the support of their original audiences. Yet in spite of all this, most people working in the industry are still unaware how much they have been contaminated by the trends I have described. They continue to delude themselves that overexpressionism is somehow what makes anime so appealing.

In reality, in 1979, even as I write this, the boom in overexpressionism has peaked and the phenomenon has lost the mind share it once had. What survives has taken refuge in direct-to-video anime works, but despite a great deal of advertising of video as part of the "new media," we see very little actual growth in this market. Instead, what we see is a typical example of a shrinking reproduction process, wherein fans are trapped in a cycle of making films for fans. I could describe this situation as pathetic, but let me just say that it reminds me of Aesop's famous fable about the frog who inflated his stomach too much. On the one hand, television networks have begun to regret raising the target age for anime

as much as they did, so that there is a new emphasis on returning to more children-oriented programming. On the other hand, there has been no change in the environment or conditions that created the emphasis on expressionism in Japanese anime in the first place. There has been no change in the conditions that make people want to create animation with little movement, so it means that, rather than creating animated works for the sake of children, there are far more people on the staff of production companies who regard what they are doing as something regressive, as "just" for kids.

In the United States, people in the industry sometimes use the term "Saturday morning animators." This stems from the fact that in American society people normally take Saturday and Sunday off, and that television programming on Saturday morning is usually filled with cartoon shows used to babysit kids while parents try to sleep. The term is therefore used—somewhat self-derisively—by animators to describe those who make such shows. It gives an idea of how hard it will be, after all the hoopla is over, for Japanese animators to rediscover their work and view it as something that should be lovingly handcrafted.

On the loss of motive

In one of the Sherlock Holmes stories, Dr. Watson yells, "And you are a benefactor of the race!"[13] How much easier it would make life if we thought about the world in this way. And how much easier it would be to create stories if we really knew that love was supreme. Similarly, it would be so much easier to make dramatic films if we always had justice on our side and knew evil was something associated only with other ethnic groups, other people, or other households.

If one can say that in the pursuit of high-minded ideals people shouldn't flinch from making any sort of personal sacrifice, then one can also say that mere belief in the existence of such ideals makes any sort of work far easier.

On the other hand, if you decide that all humans, regardless of stripe, are equally stupid, believing in nothing other than advancing their own self-interest; that all noble causes and beliefs are inherently suspect; and that self-sacrifice is really just another way of calculating one's own self-interest, then it's also much easier. If you go out looking for something shameful or vulgar, then finding it in this society is one of the easiest things imaginable ...

I suspect that anime, out of all the various forms of popular culture media, has remained attached to high-minded concepts like love and justice the longest. And it's not because those of us in the industry have been pursuing any particular ideology or philosophy. Anime may simply have been a bit behind the times because producing it is a collective and highly public activity, and the industry has always followed trends that first occurred in manga.

Today, the creators of anime seem increasingly unable to give the protagonists of their stories any sort of spontaneous motive for their actions. For some reason, the futility of making any effort in our overly managed society is an idea that, without our fully realizing it, has become completely accepted. What used to be a great and ever-present enemy in many stories—poverty—has become a fuzzy notion, and it seems hard now to find anything worthwhile for heroes to fight against.

So, as with other genres of entertainment, what we are left with is just a type of work ethic. Robot soldiers fight because they are robot soldiers. Police chase criminals because they are police, aspiring singers defeat their rivals because they're aspiring singers, and in sports, athletes always try to do their best because they're athletes. The only other big motivator for protagonists in anime has become discovering what's underneath a skirt or inside a pair of pants.

This was, of course, inevitable. Who wouldn't tire of watching several shows in one week that all use the ultimate

cheap story-line trick—that of some organization plotting to conquer the world? For that matter, even love starts to seem a bit jaded as a motive when commercialized as much as it was in the *Uchū senkan Yamato* (*Space Battleship Yamato*) series. The anime boom may have been ignited by *Yamato*, but the irony is that *Yamato* also proved to be a graveyard for love and justice in anime. For that matter, when the sequel to *Ashita no Jō* (Tomorrow's Joe), was remade, long after the original show was broadcast in 1970, it was so far behind the times that it reeked of the stench of death, and not just as a result of the overexpressionism employed.

Loss of motive. Japanese animation is testimony to the horrors that occur when people keep producing works that don't assign independent motivations to the protagonists based on some sort of value system. You can't revile opponents just because you're a player on the Yomiuri Giants baseball team and they're on the Chūnichi Dragons, the Hiroshima Carp, or the Hanshin Tigers. If that's the case, everything merely devolves to a situation where no one wants to lose and everyone's in the same boat. Lots of robot-space-war anime shows like this have been produced, and the cast of characters is usually little more than a crowd of scattered young people. Young viewers originally saw this as a simulation of the society that they would eventually have to participate in and accepted this schizoid depiction as reality, but they also quickly sickened of these shows.

Work ethics and professionalism are, in a way, both dead value theories—ideas that tend to dissolve into theories about the struggle for survival. If we pursue them with the overexpressionism that I mentioned earlier, lo and behold, what do we wind up with? Everything becomes just a giant game.

Love becomes a psychological game, struggling or fighting becomes a killing game, and competitions become money-based games with defined results.

Japanese anime is drowning in games—to the point where even the life and death of characters is treated as a game, and the creators have become gods and run into a dead end. It was inevitable that Nintendo's Family Computer would replace the anime boom. With real games, more people could participate in the stories and probably derive a little more satisfaction from them, too.

In the United States, movie makers became sick of this loss of motivation, and hitched their wagons to Ronald Reagan. They had reached the end of the road in depicting nothing but Nazi bad guys, and had to resurrect Soviets and their guerrilla henchmen as bogeymen.

But when creators start depicting things that they really don't believe in, they start to betray themselves. Yet creators nonetheless deluded themselves into thinking that things like dynamism and action were most important. In the 1960s, some people made a great ballyhoo about *gendaikko* or "modern kids," but now these kids are parents and if we look at the way they are living as the befuddled baby boomer generation, it teaches us the obvious: whatever the times or the fashion of the times generates, it will never be anything more than just that, a fashion. It should come as no surprise that eventually the term *gendaikko* was merely replaced by *shinjinrui* or "new humans," and *baitaritii* (vitality) by *neaka*, the buzzword for eternally bright and optimistic.

Every day children are born and every day children grow up around us, whether or not we animation creators come up with a motive for our characters. And the challenges they confront haven't decreased in the slightest. They may no longer identify with and be encouraged by champions of justice as in the past, but they still want to be encouraged, still want to be taught how to appreciate the beauty of the world. If this weren't the case, why would so many children today run amok, even try to destroy themselves?

A loss of motivation describes the situation we are in today. This is what has given birth to so much mistrust, defeatism, and nihilism. But without realizing this, and by relying only on personal sensibilities and tastes, what can anyone possibly create? I believe that it is this foolishness—the foolishness of relying only on a sense of professionalism in producing works—that is corrupting Japanese animation.

An inconclusive conclusion

Over the years, there has been little real change in what the unspecified majority to whom we refer as the audience want. I think that it's hidden in the recent popularity of slang words like *dasai* (old-fashioned or uncool), or *imoi* (out of it). The times may change, but I believe that children will always be seeking something with the same sort of impact I experienced when I first encountered *Hakujaden.* If this weren't the case, I would abandon this business right away. And if I may be excused for making a few jumps in logic and uttering some very personal opinions, I think that in this business we animators are really like relay runners. Having grabbed the baton, we must continue running forward in order to hand it over to someone else. And in that sense, I believe that the very ordinary and popular work that we animators do is fundamentally different from most other artistic, creative, or even avant-garde pursuits. It's time, I believe, to stop trying to fool people by even calling ourselves artists.

I've frankly become quite sick of our work, and feel quite disillusioned about it all, but in the Japan of today it would be odd if one didn't feel disillusioned.

After working in cel animation for so many years, I've recently become more aware of the things I haven't been unable to do, rather than the things I have been able to do. I still think that encountering wonderful animation as a child is not a bad thing. Yet I'm also acutely aware that this profession is actually a business, targeting children's purchasing power. No matter how much we pride ourselves in being

conscientious, we produce visual works that stimulate children's visual and auditory senses, and whatever experiences we provide them are in a sense stealing time from them that otherwise might be spent in a world where they go out and make their own discoveries or have their own personal experiences. In the society in which we live today, the sheer volume of material being produced can potentially distort everything.

Most of my colleagues in the industry are having a hard time making a living today. But the more we moan and groan about our difficult straits, the more impossible it becomes to justify what we have done. In this sense, our work has truly become corrupt.

My personal dilemma over this has become increasingly pointed. I've turned my back on the flood of visual material being produced, but I'm struggling desperately in the hope of creating something a little better. In order to do so, I've even had to rationalize the art of navigating this world. I tell people I hate professionals, but I know that in the workplace I evaluate people on the basis of their talent alone. I say that I don't want to talk about animation, but here I am, talking about it all the time. I yell about how it would be better if Japanese anime just disappeared from the face of the earth, and then I turn around and worry about my animator friends who don't have any work. And after moaning and groaning about too much animation being produced, I right away start discussing new projects. I'm fully aware that in today's world, to create truly human-oriented works, we have to accept an inhuman daily schedule, and of course I wind up becoming a workaholic.

In spite of all this, if our work is to have any meaning, I believe we must ponder what our next steps should be. We'll never figure this out by limiting ourselves to Tokyo. We'll never figure it out by looking for clues in the worlds of TV and film. Unless we make a real effort to develop a long-term

perspective, we'll be like helpless octopuses trapped in octopus pots.

I believe my dilemma is a yoke similar to what audiences—who yearn to be liberated from their daily lives—must bear. It requires a strong will. So that's why I believe that the only solution for me is to go back, again and again, to my starting point.

All I Want Is to Maintain a Workplace to Create Good Movies

Animage, Tokuma Shoten, May 1991

An extension of what I have been doing so far

—Looking at the Studio Ghibli classified ad for animators and cleanup artists in the January and February issues of Animage *drawn by Director Hayao Miyazaki—yourself—it seems that Studio Ghibli is attempting a fundamental structural change. Is that the case?*

Miyazaki: First off, I want to say that for the past few years we have been fortunate. At least in terms of our performance, Ghibli hasn't made a film that's tripped us up. That has been a major advantage for us. I think it would be presumptuous to claim that it was our strength that accounted for that result. It is better to be humble. The success of those films has provided the economic foundation that allows us to try to create a structure. What we are doing in terms of creating a structure is in no way a change. My stance toward making films has not changed in any fundamental way since Ghibli was established. Look at Paku-san[14] (director Isao Takahata); he hasn't changed his methods since his *Heidi* days.

—How do you create your films?

Miyazaki: In terms of our projects, one guideline is that we purposely do not make sequels of films that become hits. Usually people try to go along the same line. But we consciously avoid that. For better or worse, we don't take that easy route. This seems to have been beneficial for us. This policy could well have tripped us up and ruined us. But, because it worked to our advantage, we were able to gradually strengthen our financing (film budgets), scheduling, theater negotiations, and how we put a team together. In terms of our production process, we all share the same attitude: we create films by working as hard as we possibly can and by pushing

conditions to their limit. This has been true from the time of *Heidi, Girl of the Alps* (*Arupusu no shōjo Haiji*).

—What was the difference between what you and your staff were doing and what other studios were doing at that time?

Miyazaki: Other studios may also have been pushing their limits. I do think they were all working very hard. But I think we were working the hardest. What I mean is not that we were just working hard, but that we consciously determined what we wanted to do and worked toward that. And, what we wanted to do was to create animation that had some meaning and was worth making. But at some point—I think *Nausicaä* was the catalyst—we were blessed by many kinds of good fortune. It could be that we were on the same wavelength as the times. For that reason, our financial situation improved.

Keeping up the quality of the work is the staff's responsibility

—The reality seems to be that not all studios are doing well. What are your thoughts on this as well as on the conditions of the animation world?

Miyazaki: If we look at the conditions, not at the projects themselves, we are failing in production control of areas like budget and schedule. For example, in the animation world, I think there is a rumor that we must be in terrible shape with the schedule for *Only Yesterday* (*Omoide poro poro*). After all, we have put ads in *Animage*; this shows that we're stressed because we don't have enough people. But we're probably a lot better off than other studios. The reason we have the stress of recruiting and hiring more people is that we don't want our quality to diminish. At first glance, our work looks different from simply producing animation. But, as the production of animation becomes longer and more time-consuming, we need to have a production plan and to make the effort to follow a budget and a schedule. Without this, we won't know where the money has gone and we may have days when nothing gets done. Then we become so busy that we suddenly have to off-load animation or coloring work to outside contractors. There

are too many studios that go into a panic at the latter stages of production and go bankrupt, aren't there? The lofty goals they began with are beaten down by production realities, and they begin to think, "This is just the way it is," or "We can redo it later." It seems to me that problems arise when studios can't sufficiently control these types of production conditions. This is in regard to theatrical release animation films.

—But isn't that the problem of the owners of the studios?

Miyazaki: It's not just the responsibility of the owners. The staff has to be responsible for the quality of the work. In order to protect quality, they need to be able to manage their production schedule. There must be an effort to decrease the number of days when the staff goes home early saying, "Let's take it easy today," or "That's enough for today."

In this regard as well, we must make an effort to sustain the staff's overall energy. It is my belief that we can't make films with just one or two animators who have brilliant ideas. A film can't be made without a dedicated, serious, reliable staff at its core. The way to keep that kind of core is for the management and studio heads to realize that the animators are the ones working to make the film a reality and to treat them well.

I want a healthy workplace for making movies

—Is that why you are making organizational changes at Ghibli to accommodate the core staff? Will you tell us what Ghibli is attempting to do so that we can understand it?

Miyazaki: As I said earlier, it's not that we are trying to make changes. All we want to do is to maintain a positive workplace in order to continue making films. To do this, we must consider the issue of how to make this happen. It's not that we just want to make our animation workers feel good. We need to ask ourselves: what do we need to do in an environment where it is increasingly difficult to make films? Providing a strong organizational structure in itself may be an act of self-interest. But we will be at an impasse unless we

improve working conditions for our animation staff. Without improved working conditions, we will not be able to maintain a productive workplace. We need to recruit in-between animators, we need to increase and nurture the new talent who will draw key animation, we need cleanup artists, and we need good background artists.

Just in terms of the issue of color, I want to go beyond thinking that the colors we have been using are good enough. We have created new colors with each new film, and in order to maintain these colors and create new ones, we must have people with a wealth of experience. Unless we offer better working conditions, we won't be able to keep our experienced staffers.

—When you say you won't be able to keep them, do you mean that they might go in another direction?

Miyazaki: Actually, I think it is fine if they go in another direction. The real problem is for those who want to continue in animation. They have fewer places where they can work. Healthy workplaces for filmmaking are the ones where employees face difficult challenges and still want to continue in animation—even if it involves self-sacrifice—as long as they can make good films.

We can no longer overcome inferior working conditions by staff spirit alone. Since we have had some financial success, we have to take the risk and reinvest what we have accumulated. We need to hire new staff, train and nurture them, and we also need to improve work conditions for our experienced staff.

Ghibli also suffers from becoming stale

—So, to summarize, at Ghibli you're now trying to structure the wage scale and work conditions for employees so that you can attract and retain them and create a good place to make films?

Miyazaki: Yes, we want to create an attractive workplace and maintain it. There is one more thing, a pet theory of mine. When a new studio is formed, for the first three years, or the first three films, everyone is very energetic. But after that a kind of lethargy inevitably sets in. In this sense, Ghibli entered its lethargic stage a while ago. Now when we work on a feature length film, we no longer think, "Wow! A feature film! Fantastic!" The studio becomes conservative, and many of its people are just there to make a living. Then it becomes impossible to continue making films in the way, by now stale, that we did in the past.

To keep Ghibli going, we must create a proper corporate structure. We need to stop assembling staff to make a film only to dismiss them once the project is completed. If we don't change this policy, we will have to quit being Ghibli. For us, it is too exhausting, at our age and with our limited physical abilities, to keep recreating a new workplace in Japan. That is why we have decided that we must leverage the foundation that we have built and improve Ghibli.

In addition, I think it's false to assume that just because animators love their work, we can keep their wages so low. That just isn't right.

—You have directed feature-length animation for a long time. Is there a part of you that thinks these changes are unavoidable because the circumstances surrounding animation have changed?

Miyazaki: There is that aspect. Ghibli has created more than three projects and has become stale. Our finances are solid, so we are in good shape, and we don't have to disband one work group only to create another new one. These three reasons have led us to form a real company, to hire new staff and nurture them through a training program, and at the same time, to turn the staff members who have already worked with us into secure employees. We have increased base salaries. We

didn't increase salaries at the top but we increased them at the bottom, though we haven't increased them enough yet.

I want to make it a place with a wide open door

—I can imagine that you would encounter many problems in forming a proper corporation and trying to create and maintain a healthy workplace.

Miyazaki: Certainly we face many problems. With a corporate structure, things will become more complicated because we won't be able to take time off after we finish a film. We'll need to consider new projects continuously, and we'll need to have a capable staff to decide whether or not we can take new projects on.

The pace of our work will also slow down when we turn the staff into employees and provide set salaries. We'll need to have quality and speed and the flexibility to absorb new human resources at any time. For instance, unless new directors emerge, we won't have a future. This is why I want Ghibli to be an effective workplace for our staff, so they can do good work. I want to prepare a good environment for this kind of work. I am not intending to commandeer the entire studio—I'm all for having someone pitch a script, and would be happy to give a chance to those who want to direct. While we are not interested in people with no experience, we don't mind having people who can say, "I've made this kind of film" knock at our doors.

We are still apt to be rather conservative, but we are making an effort not to be and to be humble as we evaluate new personnel. If things go well, we would like new recruits to use Ghibli as a place to create good films. I think it all comes down to that.

We want to make good films aimed at children

—Could you tell us about the direction of future Studio Ghibli projects?

Miyazaki: I think we should engage in many kinds of projects. But I do think that we should stay a studio that makes good movies for children to watch. That is the kind of studio I think we should continue to be. We can't stray off course from that. We may make films that target a different age group, but at the core, we should keep making films that give pleasure to children. That is the kind of studio I want it to be.

—What is your reason for that?

Miyazaki: I think it is vain to think that we can confront problems of the adult world through animated films. That is not to say that films aimed at children are easier; they can be even more difficult because they deal with origins and fundamentals. But I think these are concepts that are especially suited to animation. I want to depict the reality of present-day children in Japan—including their desire—and make films that will inspire heartfelt enjoyment. This is something fundamental, something that we should never forget. If we ever do, our studio will collapse. And we will also immediately collapse if we spend money to create a company and wage structure and then produce indifferent projects just to pay for the structure. Even if we didn't immediately collapse, we'd just make boring films that would still lead to our ultimate downfall. We need to plan fresh projects and make films that will always exceed the expectations of our audience and catch them by surprise. And I feel that we cannot do this solely with our current staff. This is why we must be a studio whose doors are always open to new human resources.

Animation requires directing but it also involves a lot of exhausting, simple labor. We aren't interested in people who can't or won't do that kind of work. If animators aren't willing to do the lowly or troublesome work, they cannot do the job. Without this, it will all be over for animation.

On the Need to Create an Easy-to-Use Studio

Animage, August 1991

—I'd first like to ask why you decided to create a new studio. Some very high quality films have already been made in your current studio in Kichijōji, including Castle in the Sky, My Neighbor Totoro, Grave of the Fireflies, *and* Kiki's Delivery Service. *Why can't you just keep using it?*

Miyazaki: Well, first of all, it was just too small. It was so small that we had to split the staff up just to work there—so small that, as you know, in Kichijōji we now have Studio 1 and Studio 2. With all the people we also have outside our studio, we're looking at a total of nearly a hundred staff members. So I felt that we needed a place where everyone could get together in one place, where we could communicate better. But no matter how hard we searched, we just couldn't find the right building. If such a building existed, we would have rented it. So that, in a nutshell, is why we are creating a new studio. There are quite a few general purpose, shared buildings in the area, but even if these are designed to be offices it still seems to me that they're mainly designed to look good when someone from the outside comes to visit; they're not really designed to make the jobs of the people working there any easier. They have too many problems—the ladies' restrooms are too narrow, or there are no rooms to rest in if people feel ill—so we were forced to conclude that we were better off building a brand new studio.

—Is there really a big advantage in having all the staff in one place?

Miyazaki: I think there is a big advantage. First of all, different sections of the organization can easily gather together in one place and discuss matters amongst themselves.

But I do have to say, there's no guarantee that we're going to create great works just because we've created a new studio. Creating a building doesn't guarantee we're going to be able to

foster good employees. After all, there are lots of examples in the past of wonderful works being created in truly horrible environments. I'm not so deluded that I think we're going to create great works just because we've built a nice studio. And I'm not particularly interested in becoming the owner-manager of a studio, for that matter, either. But it is true that the environment thus far—for those of us who have been working here—has been unacceptable. I don't know if the new place will help foster great new talent, but we wanted to at least give the next generation of animators a good work space.

—I imagine it's going to cost a huge amount of money, given the escalation in property values and construction fees.

Miyazaki: Yes, that's what they say. And most of it will be paid with loans. Some people might wonder whether we'll be able to continue working with big debts, but with or without debts, if we can't keep working, we can't keep working. Animation is a business, and it seems to me that it's probably best to make the investment and take the risk. Some studios try to create works on an almost guerilla basis, but then the problem is that the staff may not stick around. If we're going to moan and groan about too many listless animated works being created recently, when the people with drive and motivation aren't assuming any risk at all, then we've got a problem too. So that's why I think there is real meaning in improving the working environment.

Highlights of the new studio

—Were you the one who came up with the original plan for a new studio?

Miyazaki: Yes. Others wanted to work on this, too, but I happened to have the time then, so I'm the one who drew up the plans.

—When you designed the studio, were there any other studios that you used as a reference?

Miyazaki: No, not particularly. But in designing it, I did try to take into account what I imagined would be easier and more convenient for me when directing. For example, I tried to make it super easy for me to get from my desk to a conference, or to a discussion with the various production sections, or to the clean-up department. And then, when people from the clean-up department had to go to another job, I also tried to consider things like what course they would take or when someone from the art department went to see a screening, how they would walk there, etc. ...

—What are some other highlights of the new studio?

Miyazaki: Well, we actually planned a room to take a break in, which we call "the bar." I hate to see people forced to eat lunch at their desks, so we designed it so several people could get together and eat their boxed *bento* lunches or drink tea. Until now the in-between artists, the art department people, and the clean-up people have been too scattered about to get together easily, so I wanted to create a place where they could gather and communicate with each other if need be, and even have parties. We therefore located the bar in the center of the studio so that it would be easy for people from any section to get to, and right in front of the bar we created a spiral staircase. And we will also plant as many shrubs and trees as possible around the building. This won't be done just for the employees, but also because we don't want to ruin the surrounding environment. To discourage employees who commute from leaving their bicycles or motorbikes in the neighborhood, we'll have an extra-large parking lot with a roof. Hopefully, the neighborhood will be improved a bit by our building this new studio.

A base to create films

—I'm sure there are many other highlights of the new studio, but let me ask, in conclusion, what was the basic concept you used in designing it?

Miyazaki: The main idea was to build a base to create animated movies in Japan; we would, of course, have to depend on the help of outside contractors, but we wanted a studio that was not completely dependent on them, that would also have in-house employees whose talents could be fostered as we worked. We knew that we couldn't accomplish this overnight, but we wanted to at least start with enough space to do the actual filming.

In other words, I thought it would be too hard to maintain our direction if we kept expanding while maintaining only a few production staff in a few rooms and farming everything out or sending everything overseas. I think this came out of the same ideas used when soliciting new employees.

—When do you expect the studio to be finished?

Miyazaki: We haven't started construction yet, but if all goes according to plan, we hope to be able to move into the new facility around July of next year.

The World of Anime and the Scenario

From a speech given on August 6, 1994, for the Association of Scenario Writers, Japan; published in *Scenario*, January 1995

Why manga and anime are so popular in Japan

Japanese TV animation is now being broadcast in Europe and America, and it represents an interesting phenomenon. Foreign journalists often come to Japan to do interviews on this subject, and they all seem to refer to Japanese animation as "manga." They obviously have animation in their own countries, but from their perspective the animation that we are creating here apparently all seems just like manga. They seem to see manga as an umbrella term for both comics drawn on paper and animated films. We, of course, believe that drawing manga on paper and creating films are entirely different things, but from outside the industry that is apparently not the case.

So the first questions we always get are "Why is manga so popular in Japan?" and "Why, way out here on the edge of Asia, in addition to producing all these automobiles, are you also producing so much manga?"

Well, I do have some theories about this. To start with, when I talk with American animators, I sense that they tend to interpret objects in a very different way. They tend to want to look at the volume and the three-dimensionality of objects first. But we Japanese tend to think of the lines used to represent the objects. Their view is more like that of computers, which don't really use lines to identify objects. The computer interprets the object as planes and points. In other words, in Japan and other East Asian countries, it seems that we have some sort of special sense that things should be represented by lines.

Our brains seem to be organized this way. In Europe, artists have a very long history of drawing rays of light to represent the texture of matter; of course, people in Europe have produced some fabulous line drawings, too, but overall, it

seems, they have emphasized trying to express volume or quantity. For example, when depicting a human face, if we try to apply shadows, we first draw some lines, and based on this then assign colors or tones, and that's enough. My American friends, however, invariably go out of their way to apply a gradation of tone. They say, for example, that there are no lines in the shadows.

Rather than this simply being the result of our animation industries having different histories, there seems to be something more profound at work here, and I believe what I have described is probably not unique to Japan, but applies to Korea and China, too. Perhaps we're more sensitive to line, or to the edge that it represents. There may even be an ethnic aspect to this.

Recently, some wonderful reproductions have been made of picture scrolls executed from Japan's Heian period[15] and the Kamakura period.[16] And when you look at these, you can tell that Japanese people really believed they could depict the human world in its entirety in this format. They thought they could express nearly anything with drawings and words, whether it was related to politics, economics, art, religion, the supernatural world, or even erotica.

Illustrated narrative scrolls disappear at a certain point in Japanese art history, but during times of peace they become *ukiyoe*,[17] or illustrations of the floating world. Ukiyoe had little in the way of a narrative element, but since we're dealing with hypotheses here, I'm going to take the liberty of postulating that this was because during the Edo period[18] Japan was at peace. When I tell my interviewers from abroad that we see same the same phenomenon in the turbulent history of modern Japan, as we did in the ferment of the late Heian period or the Kamakura periods, and that in this period narrative picture scrolls were resurrected as manga, then they all go home happy. [*laughter*]

Starting around 1963 and the opening of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, there was a qualitative change in manga. Of course, manga for children existed prior to that, but in thinking of my junior high school friends and me in those days, there had been a tendency to stop reading manga around the time we graduated from junior high school. The pattern, in other words, was for children to read manga, and then, when they grew up, to graduate from reading them.

I spent my high school years in the period right before Japan's economy entered its high-speed growth period. And during that time I was probably the only guy I knew in high school who actually read manga. If I'd told people then that I also drew comics, they would have treated me as though I were an idiot. I had an alibi ready, of course, so it was easy for me, because at the time I thought that anyone who didn't appreciate the potential of manga had to be an idiot. [*laughter*]

That was around 1963. And around that time kingfishers started vanishing from the twenty-three wards of Tokyo, and common nicknames for teachers in the classroom fell into disuse. Nuclear families became more and more common, and a variety of social changes started to occur in a very concentrated form. During the same period, publishers started issuing manga magazines on a weekly basis, and they have continued to do so ever since. Children who began reading manga then have kept on reading them, even after becoming adults. It's why we see adults so openly reading manga on trains today.

One of the things that seems to first surprise foreign journalists who come to Japan is in fact this sight of adults, wearing business suits, engrossed in reading weekly manga magazines. I try to tell them that no other country has undergone such traumatic modernization, and that manga serves as an important form of stress release when we need to cope. [*laughter*] I also tell them that I can foresee manga becoming enormously popular in China and Korea very soon,

too. Of course, I really don't have any solid evidence to back this up. [*laughter*] But at least that's the way it seems.

I think that what ultimately determines whether manga will become popular in a country is whether the people there use chopsticks or not. People who eat rice with chopsticks inhabit an area that includes the Korean peninsula, China, Taiwan, and Singapore. The population of this area also seems to share a very similar taste in music. For example, if you look at the New Year's Eve musical shows on TV in this area, with the exception of the Philippines, in Singapore, Taipei, and Seoul, they are all frighteningly similar. The only difference, it seems to me, is that the costumes worn by the young women dancing in the background are a little plainer than Japanese styles. I unilaterally refer to this phenomenon as the "commonality of Pacific Rim popular culture," [*laughter*] and there are indeed an almost disturbing number of similarities. I also think that Japanese manga will probably have a big influence on these countries. They, too, are in the process of experiencing very high economic growth rates and traumatic modernization, and it seems to me that manga will probably become an increasingly popular source of stress release. What I'm saying here is that these three factors are also reasons that manga took off in Japan.

Manga-style thought is dramatically influencing Japanese culture

One of the hallmarks of Japanese culture today seems to be, not that there are so many manga around, but that manga are having such a big influence on so many different genres of entertainment. In other words, there are many people who have grown up reading manga, and would love to be manga artists, but because they can't draw have started writing novels, or who, after reading manga have thought of turning a story into a play or a film, or who have been inspired by manga to create music "image albums." These cultural feedback loops have recently become quite striking.

For example, if we look at the most popular reading material for children, there is obviously an awful lot of silly material included—material even worse than manga. Often the authors haven't made any effort to explore the human condition, nor have they made any real observations about the world. And compared to manga, which have become quite sophisticated, it's often much easier to read these text publications. Some people say, for example, that Shūeisha's *Cobalt* series (and other works of light fiction for girls), are read by many junior high school coeds because girls' manga have become too difficult, and it's therefore more interesting and less time-consuming to read Cobalt novels. So that's why we have the phenomenon of girls' manga being novelized. There's no need for me to go on giving such examples, however, because I'm sure all of you have observed them in your daily life. But what I would suggest is that all of us should probably examine how much we have been influenced by manga-style things, or manga-style thinking.

So why are manga now influencing so many areas of culture? I would say that one of the biggest reasons is because with manga it's not necessary to read what you don't want to read. Now, I know there are some people who purchase the weekly *Shōnen Jump* manga magazine for boys, and read the whole thing. I know some people even read the letters to the editor corner [*laughter*], but most people just read their favorite stories, and when finished toss the magazine in the overhead racks of the subway cars without reading the rest. It's clear that people are either not reading stories they don't like, or just scanning through them. But if the stories are interesting, they may go back and read over them again, or read them much more carefully.

People take a completely different approach with other forms of entertainment. I really don't think, for example, that many people would leave a theater after watching only five minutes of a boring film. And it's probably why people have so many strong opinions about films. They often sit through

films even while feeling angry and wondering why the heck anyone made the thing in the first place. People don't get angry about manga because if they don't like the stories they won't finish reading them. I think we can say this is one of the biggest cultural characteristics of manga. It's no wonder that manga criticism is such a barren field.

Another hallmark of manga is that an almost limitless deformation is possible. To give a somewhat dated example, in *Kyojin no hoshi* (Star of the Giants), an entire episode concludes while the character Hyūma is throwing a pitch. [*laughter*] Everything about life is encapsulated in that one pitch, and the artist depicts a whirl of recollections in the time it takes for the ball to travel. It's hard to imagine anyone other than the Japanese pulling off something like this.

Of course, infinite deformation of time and space is something that we Japanese didn't start doing with manga; it's just something we like to do. It's obvious if you listen to traditional *kōdan* storytelling. One of the scenes in the story of Heikurō Magaki ascending the stone steps of Atagoyama hill on his horse is exactly like animation. He jumps on his horse with a "Hi yo! Cloppity cloppity clop!" and I can just picture what the scene would look like in animation. It's because the *kōdan* stories also use limitless distortion of time. By twisting both time and space, it becomes possible to create a more fantastic, magical world. It's one of the hallmarks of Japanese entertainment, and in manga—especially boys' manga—it also seems to me that it allows depictions of abstract human drive and tenacity to actually exceed those of real physical powers.

This trend didn't start with manga; ninja used *mizugumo* or "water spiders"—circular pods that allowed them to walk on water—but of course Europeans would never believe this sort of thing. They'd say it violated the principles of Archimedes, or some such theory. Japanese, on the other hand, tend to believe that if we work really hard at it, we'll be able to walk on water. [*laughter*] It's something we Japanese just have in our blood. We like this sort of stuff. So when we obtained the

techniques for animation, and the medium of manga, you suddenly saw a huge amount of this sort of thing. It's just an extension of what we had in the old days, in the *kōdan* stories and in the fantasies about ninja.

Differences between manga and animation

People don't read what they don't want to read—which makes it hard to form a true opinion about it or for it to become an object of criticism. And both time and space are infinitely warped. The fact that these two phenomena have greatly influenced Japanese culture is our biggest problem. And it is a problem in the sense that it has both good and bad aspects.

When works created in this fashion are taken to places like Europe, where people have no exposure to what I have been discussing, they tend to go crazy over it. It was true of the Japanese manga and anime *Candy Candy*, which really took off in West Germany, Italy, and even France. Of course, now it's *Sailor Moon*, and they say that in Spain everyone is nuts about the work, with even adults watching the show, enthralled. [*laughter*] This sort of thing is actually happening.

So why am I talking about all of this? It's because, in the world of live-action films, things are completely different.

Unlike manga and animation, live-action films create a continuum of time and space. If you think that just because there's an interesting manga, that it ought to be easy to create an equally interesting anime, you're liable to fail miserably. The anime will inevitably be much more boring than the manga.

You can see the reason for this in *shōjo* or girls' manga. There's a reason *shōjo* are interesting. They depict the inner workings of the mind, so no one draws anything they don't want to see. And in the images depicted, what we see is not the character, but what the character is looking at. And the stories

become interesting because they deform thoughts and psychological states in a more pure fashion.

One of my favorite subjects to discuss when I'm sitting around chatting with people is whether or not *shōjo* manga works can be successfully animated. The question is how much of a person's psychological state can really be represented with visuals. In *shōjo* manga there are, of course, drawings, but most of the real depictions are done with text. Text and the blank space on the pages. There's a mysterious evolution going on with *shōjo* manga here in Japan. The moment that people started trying to make movies out of *shōjo* manga, the result was the *shōjo* manga stopped being *shōjo* manga. I find it a really interesting phenomenon.

One of the hallmarks of manga is to not look at what you don't want to see. And to not show what you don't want to exist. So in *shōjo* manga few parents ever appear. And even when they do appear they play a role more like a vending machine that dispenses food: if someone comes along, the kibbles just pop out. In *shōjo* manga, you wonder what parents are really living for, or what they could possibly enjoy about life, because they don't seem to be represented as real characters with real personalities. In *shōjo* manga, artists and readers never have a problem with such deformed representations of reality, but that's also a reason why, when someone tries to turn a *shōjo* manga story they like into a film, it almost invariably flops.

The same is true with animation. In Rumiko Takahashi's manga work, *Maison Ikkoku*, for example, the heroine is a young woman named Kyōko Otonashi, but I frankly have no idea what's really so great about her. I always read manga believing that the hero or heroine is supposed to be great. It's something essential for manga. No one would read the manga every time it came out in serialization if they hated the girl. The only ones who would go for this sort of work would be the males whose first thought was that she was cute, and were therefore willing to overlook everything else.

Now, let's take the example of live-action film. No matter how much you try to distort the sense of time and space, there are limits to this with live action. If you want to at least create a sense of the world that the characters inhabit, you need to show them getting up, sitting down, eating, and so forth. Then heroines instantly become utterly boring. Of course, this is obvious. It forces those producing live-action films to really question whether the heroine they are trying to depict has anything attractive about her at all. They wind up having to flesh out the character by incorporating impressions of people they have acquired from other places, or of people they actually know in their daily lives. Or they have to find an actress who will help them do this.

People tend to put down Japanese films when comparing them with their American counterparts, but if we look at films in their totality from a cultural perspective—or from the world of animation, at least—the picture is different. Over twenty million videos were reportedly sold of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast.* Given that America's population is twice that of Japan's, this would be equivalent to selling ten million videos in Japan. When I saw these numbers, I suddenly remembered that *Shōnen Jump* manga magazine reportedly sells six million copies per week, and I felt that, well, the situation really isn't that different. [*laughter*] In other words, in America they don't have any comic books that both adults and children read. There are, of course, comic books for adults, like *Heavy Metal*, but this is only one tiny piece in a giant mosaic. It has zero influence on other genres of entertainment.

Many people in Japan are thrilled to see that manga are making inroads into the American market, but this is just the equivalent of one tiny tile in the corner of a typical tiled bathroom floor and that's all. In American society, rather than manga, what really holds the whole society together is movies. In Japan it's probably television and manga, with films, it seems to me, relegated to a corner of society.

Animation scenarios

Is it really appropriate to base animation on manga, to treat anime as the little brother of manga, or to just rip pages out of manga stories and try to turn them into films? I'm sure that some people want to do this, so I've no intention of saying it shouldn't be done. Yet if there is something you want to create, and if you want to create it using a visual language that is not just for us Japanese but has a more universal appeal, then it seems to me that it is necessary to use a more standard approach to the flow of time and space.

Without doing so, I personally don't think it is possible to create a successful work of anime based on manga, no matter how popular the original manga work may be. And this has an intimate connection to the problem of the scenario.

I'm often listed in the credits of animated films as the author of the original story, the screenwriter, and the director, but in reality, in my case "author of the original story" doesn't mean that I've written a book or anything like that. I don't even write the scenario. I work as the director, and if you want to know why I'm also given credit for the original story and screenplay it's because of legal issues. Without these credits, there would be no copyright.

What I'm saying is that for us, the continuity sketches *are* the screenplay. With continuity sketches, you have drawings in frames and next to each frame a description of the content of the frame, with stage directions on the left side and dialogue on the right. When you look at the page, therefore, you can get a pretty good idea of what's going on, so it's what animators use to base their drawings on.

For *Whisper of the Heart*, we had planned on a ninety-minute film, so we wound up with nearly 450 pages of continuity sketches. With *Kiki's Delivery Service*, it was about 550 pages. For *Castle in the Sky*, it was around 650 pages. This is frankly a huge amount of work. There's no way in the world that I could possibly have the time to write the original

story, turn it into a script, and then draw all the continuity sketches. So we find ourselves in the ridiculous situation of trying to simultaneously create the story and the scenario and the continuity sketches, and then, when the film is finished, we actually *do* have a story and a screenplay ... [*laughter*]

So, why don't we script the film in advance? Well, it's mainly because this is the way my brain has been trained to work. I've tried writing the story out many times before, but even if I think a story works great in text, when we render it in continuity sketches it's usually unusable. It just doesn't work, and usually reveals how shallow my original ideas were.

So I decided to stop writing out scenarios. But then, you might wonder, why don't I have someone else write them; why not carefully plot things out and after lots of discussions, have a screenwriter put the ideas on page? I've tried this; however, I always find problems with the result. It's really insulting to the writers, you know, to have them script out everything and then tell them that you can't use a scrap of what they have done, but that you'll make sure they at least get a credit ... So I decided to stop doing that, too. And when I did so, I wound up using continuity sketches from the beginning of production as the basis for the scenario after all.

From the standpoint of someone actually involved in film production, what's problematic about this approach is that ideally one doesn't start production until all the continuity sketches have been completed. In the old days, we always thought getting the sketches first was essential, but the problem is that drawing the continuity sketches seemed to always get behind schedule ...

This is because I find myself continually ruminating on the continuity sketches I have drawn. And in trying to create a continuity of time and space based on the flow established by the sketches, I find that I can't replicate the scenes that I had originally imagined in my mind. That's when I really start feeling like I am making a movie—and that's also the same

time that our production schedule really starts to get out of whack. I always wind up with the same unfortunate result.

I'm not trying to defend what we're doing here, but in terms of the animation aspect of filmmaking, it makes more sense to start working on the key animation while continuing to create continuity sketches rather than starting out with a fixed schedule and then drawing the storyboards according to that schedule. If you keep working, making adjustments here and there, in the process you really develop a much better understanding of the characters you are trying to animate.

I've had this experience several times: when writing sections of a scenario where certain characters do not actually appear, I realize that a particular character should have a certain past, or background, and in the process I am better able to flesh him or her out. This definitely happens, and when it does, you may realize that although you had intended to have a character smile or laugh at a particular juncture in the story, that he or she would definitely not laugh there. What also often happens is that you realize that in the initial scenario a character does not reappear at a particular place, but that in the story you are trying to create you really need that character to reappear, and without him or her you're in a real fix.

Because of such experiences, while I may demand that other staff members hurry up with their continuity sketches, I have actually come to realize that it takes time to make good sketches, and that they really can't be finalized almost up until the moment the film is completed.

So, since I'm doing with the continuity sketches what normally would be done with the scenario, you might think that I don't value scenarios very much, but that is not so, for I would always like to have a good one to work with. I can't imagine anything better than to have a good screenplay come my way, or better yet ten screenplays come my way, then asking if anyone wants to produce one and choosing the best.

At Studio Ghibli we currently conduct what we call "project study meetings," where we select a scenario and all read it. Anyone in the studio, regardless of job title, can participate, but they absolutely must read the scenario. Everyone can voice opinions on it at the meeting, taking into account three issues: if the scenario were to be made into a film, would the film be interesting, worth making, and possibly profitable? We've had such meetings for years, and the participants have no obligations other than the ones I have mentioned—otherwise they are free to say whatever they want.

Out of this we might come up with two scenarios. One of them might be for a film we are convinced few people would come to see at this stage, but it's ours, a company asset to do with as we see fit, so even if it might not be feasible at that particular time, it might well turn into a viable project six months down the line. We don't choose projects that we could do right away. We're trying to select things that are somewhat offbeat.

For example, a narrative picture scroll from Japan's middle ages might spark a story idea, and we would then debate whether it could be turned into a scenario; if someone comes up and says he could write a scenario set in Japan's Edo period, then he would get busy going to the library and studying up on the Edo period, or take some free time to go to the library. No one knows at this point whether the idea will work or not, but that's the way we run our project study meetings. We do this because we want scenarios—so let me next address the question of what sort of scenarios we want.

My preferred scenario

When you watch a film and like a particular aspect of it, it's like looking at a Christmas tree and marveling over some pretty and shiny ornaments: a Santa Claus figurine, a glowing star, a lantern or candle.

Of course, there are people who specialize in making such things. They create an array of ornaments, like glowing stars,

that they think people will love to look at. But this doesn't work alone, because it doesn't make the Christmas tree. You need a tree to have a Christmas tree. And you can't have Christmas tree without a trunk. You need a trunk. A really good trunk that stands solid, and supports lots of branches from which you can hang your ornaments.

Some people will think of a tree without any needles, or if they have needles, something without a trunk or branches—or maybe they'll just try to attach the decorations to the needles. And when we tell them it's useless because it's not a real Christmas tree, then they'll bring us something that's all trunk. They'll talk about the "fate of mankind" or something similar; an idea that's like a Christmas tree but is little more than a trunk, a giant log, standing upright, without any branches or needles. I'm sure some of you ladies and gentlemen know exactly what I'm talking about. [*laughter*] We get an awful lot of scenarios like this sent to us.

Some people also suffer from the misconception that Isao Takahata-san and I are both some sort of environmentalists, and that we will make a film out of anything as long as it has an ecological theme or message. Nothing could be further from the truth. Such a film would be like a big fat dried-up log, propped upright. What we need is a living thing, with strong roots, a solid trunk, and branches, so we can then be creative in the way we hang the ornaments.

When we watch films, we may marvel at the ornamental aspects, but those aspects are only part of a totality. I don't know if it's a particularly appropriate example, but some people may be aware of a live-action film called *Babette's Feast.* It depicts a grand Christmas dinner being held in a truly humorous way, but to tell you the truth we never actually really know if the feast tastes good or not. If offered sea turtle soup, I'm frankly not sure whether, after taking my first sip, I would say that it tasted delicious. And would I really want to suck the brains out of a whole roasted quail? Well, probably not. But these things are all shown very skillfully in *Babette's*

Feast. The coach driver who brings the guests to the feast is shown partaking of these foods in the kitchen, and the old man has such a happy expression on his face as he nibbles at everything. We get periodic glimpses of him as the story unfolds. The quality of the food is beautifully demonstrated by these scenes of the old man eating in the kitchen. It's one of the secret ingredients that make this movie work.

I always dream of getting a lovely scenario like this—where the roots of the tree are already firmly planted in the ground, with a proper trunk and branches to which fancy ornaments can be applied here and there. And ornaments are something that everyone competes to put on, so in production I always find myself praying that everyone won't just bring ornaments, or just bring a log. It would be wonderful if we could have about ten long scenarios given to us, and then we could just say, "Let's do this one ..." But after we finish a work, we always seem to hit some sort of air pocket, and start running about wondering what to do next.

I have all sorts of scenarios and they're all a bit offbeat. These are not scenarios that I would just cynically try to figure out how to make money with, but ones that I think just might possibly be worth making in the future—something I think of as a real asset. So it's not true that I despise or look down on scenarios; it's just that as someone who came up the ranks, from an animator to a director, I'm only capable of thinking in pictures now, so I have wound up creating "scenarios" that give priority to continuity sketches.

Problems creating scenarios

Let me next touch on one of the biggest problems that we run into when making a film, which you will probably also run into.

Up to a certain point in time, when creating a drama all you had to do was to depict the relationships between people. This was true until relatively recently. Even up until around 1960, I would say. But now you can't make a film just focusing on

human relationships. In other words, up until a certain point, the world as we thought of it was infinite, or as people often say, it had infinite, untapped potential. Put simply, we believed that if human relationships were handled properly, and if things like the distribution of wealth and the means of production were properly taken care of, everything would get better. Everyone would be better off and we would all get along better.

In my opinion, however, this sort of thinking ended on a human-wide scale around 1960. It was around this time that we could no longer ignore the fact that our society—including our homes and families and way of living—was actually predicated on and supported by photosynthesis in the natural world.

One might think that if this were the case, we should make a film proclaiming the importance of nature or photosynthesis, but that, frankly, would go over like a lead balloon. Still, we are the ones who have to figure out how to live in our world.

If you were to look down on Japan from an airplane, you might think that there were too many people, that the situation was hopeless, and that Japan was covered with nothing but golf courses. But even if we start thinking this way, even if the situation may be depressing, it's also human nature for our pulses to race when we see some good-looking person next to us, and to feel happy for a while.

These two tendencies seem totally contradictory, for when we are thinking about the future and feeling dizzy from all the overwhelming problems we face, we are at the same time still creating dramas about such eternal themes as the nature of families or the meaning of humanity. These two trends may seem unrelated and schizoid, but it seems to me that one of the issues for all of us—and not just in the film industry, but in Japan and even the entire planet—is to somehow create films that address both trends in an integrated fashion.

For example, it makes total sense to me that films from China and Korea are doing well now. Japanese films were doing well, too, at one point. And perhaps it was because we really believed that poverty was our biggest problem.

But today if you make a film in Japan stressing the evils of poverty, the reality is that no one will get it. So most filmmakers today have lost one of their traditional, virtual enemies—poverty. And it seems to me, at least, that we haven't yet come up with a good replacement. And just concentrating on ecology somehow won't do the trick.

It's not enough to go around saying that we have to respect nature, that we should always live a pure and proper life in nature. If that's the case, what should today's people who have to live in cities do? Aren't their lives of value, too? Well, I certainly think they are.

For example, when I go to my mountain cabin, I always make sure that I talk with the local farmers. I'll say, "Gosh ... really great weather, isn't it? Lovely white clouds, aren't they?" and the farmers will usually reply, "Well, actually things used to be much better ..." But this never ruins my enjoyment of watching the clouds. I reply that, well, I suppose it was better in the old days, and make a point of not being disappointed. If I'm feeling impressed by that day's clouds, I make sure that for me, this is enough.

As humans, we probably can't go on living unless we believe that within the finite environment in which we exist we can enjoy a variety of experiences, feel happy, and be emotionally moved. In truth, I think that's the way most of us live. In the same sense, I am sure that many of you are worried about a huge array of issues, but that the moment your scenario is selected to be made into a film, you'll be yelling "hurrah" at the top of your lungs. It's in the nature of humans to do so. In this context the idea of remembering both of the aspects I have mentioned while trying to create films becomes an exceeding difficult problem.

Now in our line of business children are the main audience, so sometimes we can take refuge in our audience. Rather than seeking to get children to talk about the serious issues I have raised, we really just want them to grow up healthy. We want to create films that will cheer them on and encourage them to live in a healthy way.

I know this is a cop-out. There is the problem of what adults should do, since we're the ones living in this world right now. We've been making films, all the while aware that this is a cop-out. We're still doing so now. I'm not saying this is a good thing to aim for. But when we do create films, at the very root of the story, I think our views of nature inevitably come into play.

Usually, people ignore these issues and instead create dramas solely about human relationships, or for these substitute problems between different peoples. When they're really in a jam, they focus on even more immediate problems. There are lots of religious problems, conflicts over borders, and conflicts between different ethnic groups, but they're all really substitutes for what I have mentioned. When there's a problem that we can't solve ourselves, we tend to blame it on others. It's an incredibly popular thing to do, and will surely remain so for the foreseeable future.

What makes for the best scenario?

When people talk about making films, they often use fancy and hip phrases like "being creative," and in reality you do have creative choices until you select the topic for your film. Say, for example, that you decide to make film where the heroine is a junior high school girl wondering how to live. Well, you can choose all that yourself. You're choosing one possibility out of an infinite number of candidates, so when you all write your scenario, you have the choice of what motif to use.

Now, you may make this choice based on some deep subconscious desire, but once you have decided to make your

film, you're not really making the film—it will be making you. For example, you may decide that a particular person lives in a particular era in a particular setting, and you can go part way like this in developing your story. But then when things start to develop further, these elements will start making the film. And then the problem will be that when you try to twist the story in this or that direction to fit your own tastes, the film may fall apart.

I often tell people that films are something that exist not in your mind, but somewhere above you [*points above head*]. Once you've decided to make a film and put the process in motion, in modern Japan, at this age, with the physical conditions imposed upon you, with the staff you have ... well, there is only one ideal way for you to carry out your work with your own internal conditions and all the energy you possess. There has to be that certain way. And the trick thus becomes finding it.

It's no use trying to get off easily, thinking that if someone else made such-and-such movie in such-and-such a way, then you can just use that way, too, because it won't stick. Because it won't be the best way. And when you realize it won't work, you'll simply have to start searching for your own idea. Yet you won't find it inside your head.

It's one of the reasons I spend a lot of time on continuity sketches when making a film. It's something that you have to face directly and can't run from. You just have to wrestle with it. And when you're stuck, something deep in your brain will start thinking for you ... That's the only way to look at it. It'll be some experience from the past that you don't recall, some fusion of a variety of things, something that will make sense to you if you do it in a specific way, something that appears to be at the limits of your ability ... And it'll probably pop out all of a sudden. So the issue for me is whether I can force myself into that state. That's the most important thing for me. And if I can, then I'm not making a film; instead, it feels like the film is making me.

What I am trying to say here is that, when you create your scenarios, there is always only one ideal scenario. There is always something with a particular motif that may not be in you, but will always be somewhere here [*points above head*]. To write a scenario means to search for this.

It doesn't matter if you're thinking about using a particular iconography or wondering how this or that will develop if you add some particular something. Films were once made from nothing. In fact, the first films were merely moving pictures shot of plays being performed on stage. Film techniques such as close-ups and so forth only developed much later.

And actually, all this stuff about the methodology of writing scenarios and making films is a fiction anyway. If you have an idea of what you really want to make, you can make it. Of that I'm certain. And once you feel that you can somehow make your film, you can. And when that happens, you won't make it using your normal common sense; the most important thing will be for you to try as hard as possible to find the intent of what you imagine, the thing that seems to be floating around here [*points above head*]. Without this, you'll never be able to make a film.

When you do think of this—whether we call it your thoughts, ideas, philosophy, or even your feelings—in the midst of this thing that will be your foundation, you will find included not only your daily life, but world affairs, politics, and even economics. And, as I mentioned earlier, you may not be able to easily integrate everything—even the things that you are most interested in and are the foundation of your world—but the whole world is also struggling because it can't do this; it's normal that you can't either. But as you struggle, I hope that you will finally experience being made by your film.

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1 The Temple of Flourishing Law, one of the oldest wooden buildings still standing, and an important Buddhist temple in Ikaruga, Nara Prefecture, Japan. Hōryūji is also a seminary and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

2 “Dramatic pictures,” a style of comic book art aimed at older audiences. Similar to the term “graphic novel” in the United States.

3 Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai, the Japanese Broadcasting Company. Public television paid for by reception fees; analogous to the UK’s BBC. NHK uses English characters for the initials of its name.

4 Kazuyoshi Miura (July 27, 1947–October 10, 2008), a Japanese businessman accused of hiring hitmen to kill his wife Kazumi Miura on November 18, 1981, while the couple were visiting Los Angeles. The killing was initially believed to be a random street crime, which helped shape Japanese impressions of the level of violence in the U.S. Although Miura was convicted of murder in Japan and spent thirteen years in prison, his conviction was later overturned. In February 2008, Miura was arrested by American authorities during a trip to the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. While the state of California eventually dropped the murder charges, the charge of conspiracy to murder was upheld. Miura was extradited to California on October 10, 2008, where he died in custody that same day. The controversy continues—while the LAPD claims Miura committed suicide, Miura’s attorney contends that his client was murdered in his cell.

5 Now called “animatics” by animators, these simplified animated reels of storyboards frequently include audio tracks. Leica is a German camera company; Leica cameras were often used in animation studios, both to produce these reels and for other purposes.

6 Isao Takahata (October 29, 1935). Legendary director and longtime Miyazaki collaborator. Most famed for his Studio Ghibli film, *Grave of the Fireflies.*

7 A low wooden table, often covered with a futon or blanket, containing a charcoal or electric internal heating source. Designed to warm the body of someone wearing a robe.

8 Traditional puppet theater, in which sophisticated puppets are manipulated by several puppeteers working in concert. The lead puppeteer is sometimes visible on stage while others wear black and go hooded. Many *kabuki* plays are also performed by *bunraku* troops.

9 Traditional theater that combines stylized acting, dance, and music.

10 Comic interludes performed between acts of traditional *noh* theater performances; often slapstick.

11 The shrine atop the hill can be reached by a steep staircase of eighty-six steps set at a nearly forty-degree angle. Magaki charging a horse up these steps is an impressive feat.

12 Former name of Tokyo, and the capital of Japan under the Tokugawa shogunate starting in 1603. The city was renamed in 1868.

13 Watson says this to Holmes in “The Red-Headed League” after the detective confesses that his interest in crimefighting is all that saves him from “ennui” and the “commonplaces of existence.”

14 Takahata earned this nickname from his habit of coming into the office noisily chomping on bread each morning. (Onomatopoetically “paku paku” in Japanese .)

15 794–1185. The imperial court was at the height of its power, and the influence of Confusionism and Chinese culture generally very strong. The art and literature of this period, including *The Pillow Book* and *The Tale of Genji*, are considered classics.

16 1185–1333. The Kamakura Shogunate rose to power in this period, which saw a flourishing of Buddhism and resistance to two Mongol invasions.

17 A style of wood block printing popular beginning in the seventeenth century. The "floating world" refers to the emergent urbanism of the period—the merchant class enjoyed the mass-produced prints, which often depicted scenes of city life.

18 1603–1868. A peaceful period of shogunate rule, in which an early form of national bureaucracy was developed to handle the tasks of a modern state.

ON THE PERIPHERY OF THE WORK

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Thoughts on Fleischer

FILM 1/24, No. 30, Anido, November 1, 1980

At the University of Tokyo's Science Fiction Club, I saw a screening of *Mister Bug Goes to Town* and three works from the *Color Classics* series—*The Song of the Birds*, *Somewhere in Dreamland*, and *Small Fry.* I returned home feeling very satisfied, but the more I thought about it later, the more I was overcome with disappointment and frustration.

What I am about to say here may already have been pointed out by others and thus be superfluous, but it represents my true feelings, so I hope readers will indulge me.

I like Fleischer works. And when I say "Fleischer," I do not mean Dave Fleischer the individual, but the whole animation staff, which probably included members both young and old and represented an entire trend in animation that is symbolized by the word "Fleischer." In fact, I had a strong sense that *Mister Bug Goes to Town* was a work that might not have even been created or animated by Dave Fleischer. This was the first of the problems that I had.

I also thought that all three of the *Color Classics* works I saw that day were complete flops. They appeared to have been created by some tasteless artist trying too hard to impress, but who ultimately hadn't tried hard enough. The themes hadn't

been developed sufficiently, the drawings weren't clean, and the use of three-dimensional miniatures damaged the sense of space in the films and—instead of creating a new world for us—wound up looking fake and cheap. And it was overly obvious that being unable to insert the miniatures between the animation cels and the camera was a fatal flaw. Was the fact that the staff tripped up in the use of miniatures a result of Fleischer making too many demands regarding the depiction of space? I don't think so. I think it was the result of someone having had an inadequate understanding of space. And, at the same time, I think it was the result of someone not having had enough faith in the power of drawings.

In both *Popeye* and *Mr. Bug* we begin to perceive the space on the screen after we've given up on the miniatures. Then, whether it's the sharpness of the spatial sense occasionally seen in *Popeye*, or the superior spatial composition in *Mr. Bug*, there is a quality not seen in other Fleischer works. While mere speculation on my part, I suspect that a few of the staff on these two productions later developed into truly talented animators. The Fleischers pursued an almost crude and vulgar vision, but the chaos resulting from their vision was also filled with power, and it gave birth to some highly talented staff members with a more refined power, in terms of both technique and sensitivity. These members, it seems to me, must have become central to subsequent Fleischer productions.

Having first honed their talents on *Gulliver's Travels*, in *Mr. Bug* I think these individuals were able to surpass Fleischer. Nowhere in the *Color Classics* do we see anything like the best ideas in *Mr. Bug*, or the skills demonstrated by the way the ideas are assembled into a story and the screen is composed.

My opinions are of course highly personal and biased, but they are also impressions formed by my professional instincts. The decadence in *Betty Boop* leads right into the squalid nature of the *Color Classics*. Rather than say that I like the

over-the-top and unsettling nature of *Betty Boop*, I should say that I'm amazed by it. And what I sense in *Betty Boop* is probably the same basic energy that was used to create *Popeye.* But what starts with *Gulliver* and is perfected with *Mr. Bug* is simply too strange and too different from what we see in those other works. I'd even like to suggest that this shift may have reflected a generational turnover in the production staff. When talented people start emerging in the animation industry, the changes in production leadership are not always reflected in the credits of a film, especially over the span of only a year or so. I'm just speculating here, of course, but I even wonder if a clear split might not have appeared between Fleischer animators who were content to continue business as usual and those who wanted to explore new directions. I can even imagine that there would have been a few arguments.

Despite this, *Mr. Bug* is way too Fleischer-like. Relative to the level of technical perfection, the theme isn't fully developed and as usual it shows. Perhaps this is one of the great weaknesses of works directed by Dave Fleischer. That, at least, is my frustration as a viewer. The bugs climb up a building and their earnestness is heartwarming. I love the composition as a fully animated scene, but doesn't the film's ending leave us feeling awfully empty?

What I found so frustrating is the emptiness or meaninglessness of the "nature" depicted on the roof of the skyscraper; rather than the sort of nature we refer to today, the film seems to really show a wealthy private individual, living protected by the power of money. Fleischer, the director, chooses very up-to-date elements and deals with profoundly modern themes, but here he seems to be secretly swapping them for his own ambition to succeed as an artist. What was really too much for me, and made me consciously look away in disgust, is that he creates a sun room in a rooftop garden—a garden probably outfitted with artificial turf that would be a hard place for insects to live!—where he shows a composer and his wife penning popular songs.

The line at the very end of the film—about the humans on the streets way below looking like bugs—seems reasonable at first, but it's no more profound than anything a small child might say when standing on the observation deck on the fifty-second floor of the triangular Sumitomo Bank building in Tokyo and looking down at the ground. To me, the director merely seems to be showing us some bugs looking down at their fellow bugs and feeling smug because they've transcended being bugs.

To create a good cartoon movie animators have to lie and audiences expect us to lie well. But some lies are over the top, and the ending in *Mr. Bug Goes to Town* definitely falls into that category. I'm sure the staff got all excited when they came up with the idea of having the bugs escape from their situation by climbing up a skyscraper under construction. But in reality that wouldn't work. If you ask me, they probably never would have made it to the top of the building; instead, they would have been forced to seek out new territory somewhere outside of the city for a place to live. They'd have become like Chaplin in *Modern Times*, or been forced to flee like the families in *The Grapes of Wrath.*

I know I shouldn't criticize others, but why do the final scenes of cartoon movies always have to be so ridiculous? This was true with *Snedronningen* (*The Snow Queen*); its ending was that film's greatest flaw. And the ending of *La Bergère et le Ramoneur* (*Adventures of Mr. Wonderful*) makes it look like the production staff went out to have a wrap party. Not only that, at the ending of *Hakujaden* (*The Tale of the White Serpent*), Bai-Niang looks truly stupid. In fact, when I saw Mushi Productions' *Aru machikado no monogatari* (*Tales of a Street Corner*), it was the first time I was really able to say "sayonara" to Osamu Tezuka. The story is all dressed up with the theme of war. It's a case of narcissism revolving around an apocalyptic beauty (and I really hate to use the word "beauty" here). As was true with *Space Battleship Yamato*, there's a uniquely repugnant aspect to Tezuka's generation, and it

manifests in this film where a man and woman shown in posters on the street go up in flames. In spite of their burning up, the little girl character survives. It's almost as if Tezuka avoided depicting a nuclear war and showed a conventional war instead, just so the girl could survive. Rather than being modern, the fascism and the bombs he depicted in the film wound up looking more like something from a historical drama.

To depict a war head-on in animation is to choose to depict a subject just as preposterous as the life of bugs in a city. But even if you're only making a cartoon film, the moment you choose such a subject you should not flinch from pursuing it. In the case of *Tales of a Street Corner*, I think the only correct approach would have been to show that the little girl's death was completely meaningless!

Both those who make cartoon films and those who love them tend to have a certain immaturity to them, and they tend to go easy on each other. But I'd like to see effort put into filmmaking sufficient to withstand the bare-knuckled criticism that I'm providing here. Cartoons have certain weaknesses that we normally don't notice, and a type of laxity arises precisely because the films are treated as mere cartoons. When discussing films, I therefore believe we should expose both problems—the weaknesses of animation and the laxity in discussing them—to the full light of day. Most importantly, even if a film develops an extraordinarily stupid theme, we have a responsibility to find other themes that conversely show more brilliance. Several of the *Popeye* films are absolutely first-rate, whereas *Mr. Bug Goes to Town* is only second-rate.

My new conclusion is therefore as follows: *Mr. Bug Goes to Town* is both wonderful and incredibly stupid. People say Dave Fleischer created it, but I would like to extend my heartfelt greetings and congratulations to the nameless staff members who managed to claw their way out of his control. (It's okay if they only exist in my imagination.) I do wonder where they went. They probably scattered throughout the

industry, lost their powers, and either went through a masturbatory period of creating Fleischer's *Superman*, or disappeared into doing work on not particularly memorable films.

—May 7, 1979

Thoughts on *Fantastic Planet*

FILM 1/24, No. 31, April 1, 1981

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for inviting me to watch the screening of *Fantastic Planet.*

I've had so much pent-up frustration since seeing the film that it's been hard for me to put pen to paper. I've finally been able to organize my thoughts, however, and now realize that my frustration is not due to the film itself but due to the work that I and those around me have been doing.

It's all about an absence of art.

I'm not saying this because there aren't enough talented art designers. It's something I've particularly been sensing about myself as of late. I don't dislike popular literature or films created for the masses, but I have this feeling that we've just been producing works according to an established formula. Even when I'm trying to be creative, I fear that I'm being overly influenced by the cheap, spiritually feeble, third-rate quality of the last thirty years of postwar Japanese popular culture. Artistically speaking, both *Heidi* and *Nobara no Jurii* (*Julie the Wild Rose*) are of the same quality. There may be a slight variation in the level of skill or workmanship, but that's all.

Regarding *Fantastic Planet* itself, I found it interesting, but it was not a film that I particularly liked. On a technical level it was amazing, but the work itself didn't resonate with me—I'm glad I saw the film, but I doubt if I would want to see it again. It's well made, but I also felt that its story is crude. I felt the creators started with Roland Topor's world and then looked around for an original story that would allow them to develop his world. I hardly think that the main theme of the story is a success. But the film clearly does succeed in bringing director Roland Topor's world to life.

On the day of the screening I told Tomisawa-san[19] that *Fantastic Planet* looked like a Bosch painting, but I meant this in the sense that it looked like what Bosch paintings mean to me. In other words, it's attractive, pretty, and at the same time it clearly invites a type of physical revulsion ... It reminds me of the shock I experienced when I first saw medieval images of Christ. I couldn't believe what repulsive images the artists had used to represent God. I was simply aghast; there was no way that I could have regarded them as beautiful.

I am glad that I am Japanese—I find our *Kudara kannon* statue of the Bodhisattva of Compassion far more beautiful. It's probably because I'm a typical Japanese, but to me the carnal world of Bosch, the weird images of Christ, the films of Topor, and the ceiling paintings that I saw in an old country house at the folk museum in Zurich are all terribly ugly, and if I had to look at them all winter long I would probably go insane ... So for the same reason they are probably also incomprehensible to me. I frankly feel the same way even about drawings of the *Moomin* cartoon characters. (As the animated film *Belladonna* showed, more Japanese are trying to draw in a European style, but I think this is only a superficial fashion because the images they create aren't at all scary.)

I'm an animator, so I always feel a little resistant to the idea of overemphasizing art when making films. The animators who supported Topor's film were all guys who in a sense stepped into a technical and constricted style of filmmaking, so I worry for their futures. I know what they were trying to accomplish, but there is no denying that the absence of art in their film will confine them to second-class status. It has occurred to me that the absence of art in the film may in fact be caused by the loss of local culture. The European who said that *Taiyō no ōji* (*Prince of the Sun*) had no added artistic value was right on target. We had always hoped to create something very "Japanese," but if the work's artistic quality had been at the same level as *Julie the Wild Rose* ...

Either way, concerning the absence of art—as art is the theme of this letter—there's probably nothing left for me to do except to start sliding into a mood of desolation, tortured by my own conscience. It has really made me think about how I have to work to somehow open holes in the walls that surround us.

In reality, I've always been a fan of popular culture. And it's always been one of my dreams to convey to the children of today the same sort of thrill that I experienced when I read Tetsuji Fukushima's *Sabaku no maō* (Devil of the Desert).

So, in conclusion, it was a very thought-provoking film. And I got to see it for free. Thank you very, very much.

Until next time,
Hayao Miyazaki

On Animation and Cartoon Movies

Second Anniversary Lecture delivered at Osaka Animepolispero. Afternoon portion,
July 27, 1982. Toei Kaikan, Sonezaki-Shinchi, Osaka.

I've been making animated films now for over twenty years. So what do you suppose I'm thinking about these days? That's what I'd like to talk to you all about today.

For my generation, animation was something to treasure

I love airplanes, so if I were to make an analogy between animation and airplanes, I'd say that animation is probably in the jumbo jet era now. But there was also a pre–Wright brothers period of animation history. It was a period when animation often tried to flap its wings to fly and crashed. But in this midst of this, and mainly in the United States, a variety of commercially successful works, such as *Mickey Mouse* and *Betty Boop*, among others, did emerge.

When animation entered the second stage of its history, it began to show an extremely high level of technical achievement. Centered around Walt Disney's *Silly Symphonies*, animation that even adults could enjoy started to appear and it in fact became an entirely new genre of entertainment. During this same period, people also started creating longer works.

In Japan, around this time we still called such films *manga eiga* ("cartoon movies" or "cartoons") not animation. They were not something that we got to see very often. We usually only saw them once during summer vacation—or if we went to see a regular movie, we might be lucky enough to see an animated short that happened to be screened along with it. That was about it. Usually we only saw things like Disney's *Donald Duck* or *Mickey Mouse.* That pretty much represented the relationship that we, as kids, had to animation.

So for my generation, cartoons were very rare and something to be treasured. When we happened to see

something that was particularly good, interesting, or exciting, we felt extremely lucky. We felt as if we had finally encountered something special, something that had until then been shining far off in the distance.

Today, we are in the midst of a flood of animation. To me, at least, it seems that if you sit in front of a TV set these days, you are immediately deluged with a vast amount of animation. We are now in what might be called the mass consumption era of animation.

I have no intention of merely waxing nostalgic about the good old days, but while we're on the subject of my involvement with the medium, there are a few older works I would like to mention.

One, for example, is *The Old Mill*, the last work in Disney's *Silly Symphonies* series. If anyone here hasn't seen it yet, I strongly recommend doing so. It's a great example of effects-oriented animation created by the Disney staff. It depicts a storm by showing moving clouds, water, and wind. It's a short work about a storm entering an old windmill on a hill and then leaving, but it represents a pinnacle of achievement, something never surpassed by any subsequent Disney animation.

The Disney animators later used the same techniques developed in *The Old Mill* to create the full-length feature *Snow White.* And if you watch *Snow White* today, you can really sense how the animators were clearly burning to try out a variety of new techniques. In fact, *Snow White* demonstrates how animators can complete a work in a very healthy way, achieving a type of perfection in the process.

Other wonderful examples that come to mind are *La Bergère et le Ramoneur* (*Adventures of Mr. Wonderful*) from France and the Russian film *Snedronningen* (*The Snow Queen*).

I used to create feature-length animated works for Toei Animation, but compared to the works just mentioned, they

were obviously far inferior, at least technically. Sort of like showing rabbits slipping and falling, that sort of thing. We wondered if we would ever catch up to the level of what was being done in America, France, or Russia, or if it were even possible to do so. Frankly, we really didn't know.

To begin with, we didn't even know what we had to do to reach the same level of excellence as the best works out there. We knew we had constraints, such as short production schedules, small budgets, and so forth, but above and beyond that, we began to develop an inferiority complex: we wondered if we even had the basic talent needed to proceed. In retrospect, the only thing that probably kept us going, and drove us to pursue such a long-term goal, was our determination.

The important thing is to be interested in people

When I compare those days with today, there clearly has been a huge increase in the number of people who want to create animation, as well as in the number of people who show a great deal of understanding of it. But when I talk with them I really don't sense the same determination that we had at their age.

Some young people watch short works on TV and think that is the only type of animation that exists. We had one young person come to our studio, hoping to become an animator one day, but when we asked him what sort of works he'd like to create, he merely said he wanted "to draw explosions." When we asked him what sort of work he'd like to create after he learned how to depict explosions, it turned out that he didn't have a clue.

You may have to draw explosions when creating animation, but you have to draw a lot of other things, too. The most important thing of all, it seems to me, is to have an interest in people, in how they live, and in how they interact with things. Then you can have Magnums along with the humans, or have planes flying around. You can incorporate your own hobbies

and do a variety of things to make the work more interesting. But if you're creating an animated work just to get the chance to draw explosions or airplanes, I have to say that your thinking is a bit warped.

In that context, I do worry about today's young people. When watching animation, it's not enough to fall in love with a particular explosion or combat scene; you also need to consider what the overall work is trying express, and whether what has been expressed succeeds. I know that some animated works are pure entertainment and don't even have a particular theme, in which case it's meaningless to try to find one. But even if a work is trying to appeal to an audience not with a particular theme but purely by being interesting, it should be possible to identify which scenes actually work.

Even when creating or enjoying lowbrow works, I hope that you will aim higher, try to achieve far higher goals. I'm waiting, in other words, for more animators to appear who have the spirit and the mettle to do so.

To make an analogy to airplanes, when you fly one for the first time you feel happy that you've simply been able to fly. Well, when you create animation and see your drawings move for the first time, you also feel very happy. It's the same thing. Airlines started scheduled flights not too long after man first flew, but in the very beginning it would have been hard to call flying a particularly pleasant way to travel. A Fokker Super Universal, which could hold six people, flew between Tokyo and Osaka in the early days, but it had only one engine, and that was in the front of the craft. As a result, the roar of the engine was deafening, exhaust streamed back into the passenger compartment, and passengers sometimes had their faces and clothes drenched with engine oil. When there was any air turbulence, the fuselage would rattle and shake, so that flying was truly taking your life into your hands. [*laughter*] Even so, most people spent a small fortune to fly in those days, not to arrive at their destination faster, but simply to land

at an airport having experienced the pure thrill of having flown.

In the old days, we rarely got the chance to see cartoons, but when we did we left the theater thinking, “Wow!” It was probably the same sort of thrill the passengers on a Fokker Super Universal felt when they landed. Today, experiencing animation is more like flying on a jumbo jet. There’s hardly any shaking going on at all.

In fact, in this jumbo jet era of animation, it’s become impossible to experience the same thrills people in the old days did by flying on a Fokker Super Universal. In the jumbo jet era, we therefore need to view animation in a way that is more suited to this era. And I don’t mean that it’s enough to watch some series made for an audience with a Lolita complex and think that it’s a good work merely because the girl characters look cute ... [*laughter*]

It has always been my sincere hope that you will watch animation from the perspective of your own, real life.

The only things I’ve been able to rely on are my own determination and ambition

Compared to the old days, animators seem to have become quite wealthy, haven’t they? But being wealthy doesn’t mean we can afford to drive around in Cadillacs. Just that we can afford to live normal lives, like normal people.

When we were around twenty-four or twenty-five, shortly after we started working as animators, we had no guarantees, no prospects, no money, and not even any particular talents. For us the job of being an animator actually depended on one thing and one thing only, and that was having what might be called hope or ambition.

So in those days, when animators got together the only thing they ever seemed to talk about was whether they should get out of the business, or whether they might find better work somewhere else. But then it seemed everyone stopped talking

about it. And just when they stopped talking about it, I noticed that more and more young animators suddenly had pot bellies and could afford to purchase their own homes. It's because they had work, of course. The labor market in the animation industry, in other words, is now a seller's market. And when that happens, we have to ask ourselves whether the work we are now doing fits with the ambitions and dreams we had in our younger years, or whether the work even approaches it; my feeling is that the work is probably moving even further away.

When animated shows started airing on TV, the TV stations at first really had no idea what to do, so they basically left us alone to do as we pleased. As a result, we were able to come up with a variety of ideas and implement them, and these were the shows that were then broadcast. Now, however, we have to create shows that help sell more toys, increase profits from licensing, or help publishers make more money; we're faced with all sorts of constraints and locked into a tightly controlled system. To give you an example, nowadays the share of revenue that a show will generate from licensing is already divvied up before the production even starts. If we were to earn, say, ten dollars, one group will have to get $1.50, another will get two dollars and yet another will get fifty cents. And the result is that we have to choose projects that are safe and do everything possible to ensure that everyone involved gets their expected cut.

Those of us in the animation industry therefore find more and more aspects of our jobs nearly impossible to deal with. For example, we can't make any changes to the characters in the series *Urusei Yatsura* (Those Obnoxious Aliens). That is especially true right now because the original manga series is at the peak of its popularity. On the other hand, for shows about robots, since the stories will never be serialized in manga magazines, we can do just about anything we want, as long as we use robot designs that the toy manufacturers can incorporate into products. It gives us the room to do a lot of

improvisation in the actual production. And as long as the show helps sell lots of toys, the sponsors will be happy. But in most other areas it seems to me, we face many more constraints on production.

Having so stated, I've been in this business for twenty years now, and I've gotten to the point where I figure that things will usually work out on their own somehow. If not, well, I just have to accept it as fate, and with that attitude, be patient and continue to work.

Either way, the initial boom is over in the world of animation, and we have entered an era of true mass consumption. In other words, I firmly believe we are now in the Age of Animation and no longer in the Age of Manga. And this, I think, is also a good place for me to wind up my talk.

Having Seen *Machi* and *Purezento*

Anicom Z, No. 2, Waseda University Animation Club newsletter, April 3, 1983

Note: This is a review of the films *Machi* (*Street*) and *Purezento* (*Present*), shorts produced by the Waseda University Animation Club.

***Machi (Street)* (1981) 3 min. 15 sec., 8 mm, color paper animation**[20]

Story: A girl picks up a dog from a trash can on a street surrounded by cold office buildings. She is making friends with the dog by giving it some bread when a large mechanized robot shaped like a crab appears. Stretching its arms and grabbing the dog from the girl's arms, the robot tosses the dog into its mouth-like slot. And then it spits out a toy stuffed dog. After the robot departs, the crying girl hugs the stuffed animal and hurls the rest of the bread onto the street.

***Purezento (Present)* (1982) 4 min. 22 sec., 8 mm, color paper animation**

Story: A town where fighter planes fill the sky. A soldier steals into a girl's room and leaves a picture book by her pillow. Picture book in hand, the girl goes out to the street where soldiers come and go. A bird places a flower in the girl's hand. When she falls and snaps the flower, the bird flies off to the field where flowers bloom. The landscape there is the same as in the picture book. The bird gives a second flower to the girl who pins it to the chest of one of the soldiers on the street.

I have no desire to critique *Street* and *Present* from the point of view of either an animation director or an adult over the age of forty. When I was the same age as the creators of these films, I possessed neither the power nor the guts they have shown. I am immensely impressed just by the fact that they made these films.

At the same time, I feel as though these works are forcing a type of earnestness on me. This is because the longings and

sentiments at the core of these two films are exactly what I felt when I was the same age as the filmmakers—and I still haven't been able to entirely rid myself of those feelings.

At a certain period in life—that unbalanced time of transformation from boyhood to youth—young males with a certain tendency start to see a sacred symbolism in stories about girls. I do not intend to analyze the reasons for this. All I know is that, for better or for worse, such youths are recreated year after year. Their repressed feelings are too deep to be dismissed by insisting that they just have a Lolita complex or that resolving it in role-playing games is perfectly fine. This type of youth begins to feed the girl within himself. The girl is part of him, and a projection of himself. She is someone of the opposite sex who offers him unconditional forgiveness. What is more, she is not like his mother, who swallows him up in her womb and strips him of his strength. Instead, he is able to take action and display his strength for the sake of this girl. Some call her an idealized female, but I disagree. The ideal is universal, whereas in this case, it is someone of the opposite sex who exists only for him as an individual.

Women who are striving for their independence despise these girls. They feel this ideal is a one-sided attack on the part of men who are trying to fit women into a mold. But we are not really like that; we cry out that men are also crawling on the ground and writhing about. Women who pretend to be cute have two things feeding their rage: they are forced by men to behave a certain way and are masochistically unable to ignore men's attitudes toward women.

The girls who appear in the two works *Street* and *Present* are girls in the minds of their creators. Although the drawings in the two works differ somewhat, they are unmistakably the same girl. On streets that have lost their humanity, amid throngs of people whose parents have been taken off to war, only these girls retain their kindness and affinity for beauty, because they seek a genuine human emotional connection. From one viewpoint, these stories could be taken as criticisms

of civilization. But I would hazard that this was not the true intention of the creators. The street appears to me to be a projection of the outer world—the blank, massive, rough world of the unknown—that the filmmaker must enter after ending the moratorium of his student days. The street offers the imagery of both anxiety and aspiration. It is an inorganic place and, in the sense that the youth has not yet come to know or experience it, a world of blank, lined white paper. In contrast, the girl is the attachment the filmmaker feels to himself as a youth, the childhood self he must leave behind. She is the projection of protection, a symbol of rights that he was unaware he had and which he must now discard as he grows up. These girls express nostalgia for a self that was free of the detritus of life. The girl is not living outside him; she is the very self that he has nurtured inside himself.

As I stated at the start, I am also one of these filmmakers and have no intention or qualification to discuss whether this sort of film is good or bad. It may be that even now, as I see women who live in reality, I am still trying to find my own projection rather than seeking to understand the actual essence of women. I do not want to be dismissive of *Street* and *Present* as subjects of analysis and criticism.

What is the good of analyzing, negating, and suppressing the longings and feelings that exist as definite forms inside me? The work of creating a film should be different from that. How would the film turn out if the girl in *Street* chased after and fought with the crab robot to reclaim her puppy? What if, instead of just tossing the bread, she tried to feed the bread to the puppy while it was trapped in the crab robot? What if the girl in *Present* tried to find in the line of people the faceless man who gave her the picture book?

The films might end up becoming too long. The stories might become too rambling to fit into film form. The pure girls might not be able to stay pure. But there should be no harm in that.

It occurs to me that this is the distinction between making a film and creating a film—a problem that continues to confront me.

About Period Dramas

Rekishi Dokuhon (Historical Reading), Shinjinbutsu Ōraisha, April 1985 (transcribed)

The period films that we are accustomed to watching do not necessarily reflect the real Sengoku period[21] or the real Edo period. Their style incorporated Kabuki's aesthetic manner, making them entirely different from historical fact. The reason we have so few period films these days must be because people have become bored with the format; in the same regard, we have strong preconceived notions about the historical eras depicted in period films. People have been talking about the decline of the film industry for a while now. If there is to be any real hope of its revival, I think we need to reconsider period films from a different perspective. What would have strong appeal to audiences is a more vivid and earthy Japanese period drama.

It may be true that if period films were made solely based on historical facts, the fictionalized characters such as Heiji Zenigata[22] and Kōmon Mito[23] would not hold up. Without a single local drinking establishment in sight, the stories might be deadly dull. Yet, might it not be possible to make entertaining films without such formulaic formats and preconceptions?

Novels presenting military commanders of the Warring States as corporate executives have been quite popular. But I feel that this kind of portrayal constricts the scale and defiles our image of Japanese history.

In movies that are marketed based on their visual qualities, I would like to see more solid depictions of actual battles rather than decorative scenes taken from gorgeous classical imperial scrolls or castle donjons actually built after the battles.

The mountain bandits in Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (*Shichinin no samurai*) were realistic and yet entertaining, but in *Kagemusha* the mounted units were arrayed in groups, the

uniform colored banners fluttered, and they charged like a unified cavalry. I can understand this as a deformed image, but such a scene could not have occurred in reality; the assault would have been made with foot soldiers and warriors mounted on horses charging in unison.

The impression we have from movies made nowadays is that battles were fought only in wide expanses like the foothills of Mt. Fuji or the plains of Hokkaido; in reality there may have been fighting beside a wayside stone Jizō Boddhisatva statue, and soldiers and horses must have run along footpaths between rice fields and pools of manure. I would think they battled as they brushed aside reeds and undergrowth in the thickets. Won't someone make period films that more carefully depict scenes with these kinds of details?

How dirty were the forces of the Warring States period? From the little research I've done, soldiers weren't fed well. They must have had only unreliable supply routes and though the soldiers carried some of their food supplies, they couldn't have carried much. So they must have advanced by repeatedly plundering local areas.

Our impression of the lowly *ashigaru*[24] is that they were not a well-defined group, however, by the end of the Warring States period they were part of the regular troops, soldiers who moved in an organized force under established military rules. Why aren't there films that take on the *ashigaru* as a modern-style squadron equipped with rifles, rather than contrasting their pathetic position to the samurai commanders?

I am fond of the novel *Kassen* (Battle) by Sanjūgo Naoki. I don't know if the battles he writes about were fought just as he describes, but at least they seem realistic and he portrays the battles in a cinematic way. Reading it I see the battles of the times unfolding before me.

Realism pervades his depictions of the Battle of Nagashino. In the Battle of Osaka, where the Sanada clan fought the Date clan, I can hear echoes of the shots hitting the armor of the

Sanada forces, who lacked firearms, and can see the men using the bodies of their fallen comrades as shields to protect themselves from gunfire. The attacking cavalry's horses did not gallop full force, rather they plodded heavily as they pressed on. It would have been impossible for the small Japanese horses of that time to carry warriors in full armor and gallop at full speed; they surely would not have lasted long.

Such military forces and their battles no doubt looked very different from what we have been shown in movies. I'm not insisting on historical accuracy, but can't anyone recreate the reality of battles using richer images on screen?

You may ask why I don't do this with animation. It was difficult enough to draw the sword hanging from the waist in *Nausicaä*, so it is beyond my powers to show the cords laced through lacquered armor plates. I can only wait for the appearance of someone else who will make this kind of effort.

On the Periphery of the Work

Asahi Shimbun, September 14, 16, 17, 21, 22, 24, 1987

Animators

In animation film production, we call those who put motion into drawings animators. It is said that there are some 2,500 of them in Japan now, but no one can tell the exact number. It is impossible to find out because not only are they scattered throughout a fragmented system of outsourcing and subcontracting, but their ranks are also constantly in flux. By nature, the occupation of the animator requires an innate aptitude, but now the job has become merely the easiest means to becoming an illustrator. During the last ten years, workloads have continued to increase, resulting in a dearth of animators. It has gotten to the point that anyone who can draw a line with a pencil is acceptable. As the number of animators increases, their relative value declines.

The average animator is extremely young. The main characteristics of these young people are their good-naturedness and their poverty. Most are paid by their output, and for a television series they subsist on 150 yen per page. (The theatrical films we produce pay 400 yen per page.) Many of them earn less than 100,000 yen a month in their mid-twenties. Some cannot even subscribe to the national pension system or medical insurance. They may have started in this line of work because of their love for it, but it is not something of which they can make a career.

Yet, even if these young animators switch to other work, they often return. In essence, it is carefree work. They don't have to kowtow to anyone, nor do they have to compete against others. Japan's animation has reached the highest production rate in the world thanks to these good-natured and poor young people who don't fit into Japan's overmanaged society.

But I do wonder if we have to produce so many animation series.

Human resources

Once, when I was visiting an American animation studio, I was asked by the director as he checked the key animation drawings, “Do you have good animators?” He seemed to be frustrated and irritated because of the quality of the drawings in his studio. When I replied that finding a good animator is harder than finding a speck of gold in a vast desert, he nodded deeply. Actually, it was the famed Walt Disney who reportedly used this phrase. They say that Disney Studios failed to nurture successors. The core animators, called the “Nine Old Men,” stayed at the top too long. They became stale and lost their energy. In reality, Disney did try to cultivate new animators. Disney formed a school and trained animators and unearthed talent, even bringing animators to the U.S. through immigration. And yet no successors to the Nine Old Men emerged.

You can teach someone that by shifting the drawings, you can make figures appear to move. But you can’t teach them why you want the figures to move and why you want them to move in a specific way. If you try to teach this, the results will only look forced.

Newcomers appear unexpectedly from unrelated areas. Just look at Disney and the Nine Old Men who sprang up from the California desert.

Talented people are always in short supply. We are forced to create our work with insufficient resources, and that weakness becomes our very strength.

Hiring test

Several years ago I was involved in an animation company’s hiring process. The job category was animator. The process consisted of identifying, recruiting, and training individuals. The company wanted to develop talent by selecting ten or so

hires from several hundred applicants. We were prepared to not hire anyone if we found that no one fit our criteria. The selection process was similar to other corporate hiring procedures. The candidates passed through the process by submitting several drawings; then they drew pictures on designated themes, wrote essays, and were interviewed. We didn't give them the usual written test for general knowledge because those of us doing the selecting didn't have enough knowledge to evaluate the test. But we ran smack into a wall as soon as we began scrutinizing their portfolios.

We could not criticize imitation on the part of the applicants. In the realm of popular culture art, many young people start off copying the styles of others and then gradually develop their own style. (That said, there are many who seem to be strong but never go beyond imitation.) Not one applicant had any obvious creative ability or brilliant talent. The hiring process therefore turned into a complete muddle. We became desperate, as if we were digging for gold flecks in the sand, to discover at least one person who might not yet be a good artist but had the potential to improve. We wanted to find a diamond in the rough that we could polish. In the interviews, the applicants were all so nervous. Their eyes shone, making them all appear to be bright candidates. While trying to be cautious and objective, in the end we simply had to rely on our own narrow range of experience.

Since then, I have changed jobs and made several films. On each project I have met young people whom I rejected during that selection process. Several of them are even core members of my current production staff. These newcomers, although rejected at that time, have grown and are working side by side with the others.

I wonder what the meaning of that selection process was after all.

Television series

The following took place a while ago, when there were fewer television animation programs than now. Our team created our first television series, called *Heidi, Girl of the Alps*. We were ambitious. We wanted to create a work for children that wasn't frivolous, and we wanted to break away from the compromised and slapdash television animation shows of that time. Our building was a shambles, but our young staff responded to our eagerness and marshaled their strengths. Declaring a year-long state of emergency, we worked at a ferocious pace. Due to lack of sleep and fatigue, we were under such stress that we didn't even catch colds. When the broadcast began, the response was far beyond our expectations. It was most gratifying that our own children loved the series. Though limp with exhaustion, we were happy. This prodded us to complete our work. We were pleased that we had pushed through our initial vision and had taken it as far as we could. We thought we could now return to a more tranquil everyday life. It was only then that we came to understand the danger of television.

Television repeatedly demands the same thing. Its voraciousness makes everything banal. We realized that television required that our state of emergency become a normal condition. Our work may have been successful, but our work environment did not improve one bit. Would we have to repeat that year again? The only way to have a long-term relationship with television is to lower the level of production quality to one that can be sustained. This is the cause of the decline in the quality of television programs. Even so, I wonder. It may no longer be possible for me, but with the talent, will, and the powerful endurance of a few people it should still be possible to escape from producing formulaic television programming. I believe this effort is worth pursuing.

Hiking

It is rare to have the chance to create theatrical releases. Thus, once we start production, it's at full throttle. The

schedule is always tight. I urge the staff to take no breaks, to draw, to run, while whipping myself along as well. This was all right when animation companies had a permanent staff. Careening along at full speed was a way to educate our young staff members and to give them a chance to distinguish themselves. After the final push, they could take a breath while they worked on less urgent projects, preparing for the next all-out effort. Nowadays the staff members are more likely to be gathered and put under contract for a film only after the project has been approved. What is more, they are paid by work output, so when the final push is over, they must scatter to other projects with no time off. We part after a period of about six months without getting to know each other or even learn all the names of our coworkers. People are treated as if they were disposable. Even now, we have a young female staff member who is working twelve-hour days for us. She is still able to take Sundays and holidays off, but that will soon end. As usual, we are behind schedule. We jokingly tell her not to fall in love with someone just because she has some free time, but of course she never has any free time.

When I was in my twenties, I could afford to treat the last month of a project as a kind of festival. Knowing the stresses we face, even though we are in the midst of producing a feature-length film, on the 24th, we are taking the entire staff on a weekday hike for the first time. We will have to ask them to work on a holiday to make up for it, though. I pray that the day will be sunny.

The thousand-year forest

Recently I've been fantasizing about a thousand-year forest.

This involves securing a forest of a considerable area that is no longer profitable and, with the collected knowledge of human beings, restoring the plants to their native habitat. The restoration would be planned for units of a hundred years. Plants that have died would be replanted, those that are lacking would be reforested; unfortunately wolves wouldn't be

possible but all types of animals, insects, and birds that still survive would be released into the forest. In order to patiently maintain a gentle balance, human intervention would have to be restricted to an absolute minimum. To ensure this, rangers with a full sense of the mission would be put in place and provided with the necessary legal authority.

In fifty years time, this forest would become a special park and a fine location for observation and wandering. Narrow paths and lodging facilities would be built for visitors, but strict limits would be set for dealing with bodily wastes and meals. There would be no concrete, asphalt, gift shops, or alcohol. Automobiles would be left far away and prohibited from entering, and even rangers would be barred from using vehicles inside the park. For a thousand years no ax would be used in this forest. And whether a wisteria vine choked a tree, there was an outbreak of a certain insect, or an animal was wounded, humans would not be allowed to intervene.

A thousand years from now, when the seventh-century pillars of Hōryūji Temple have begun to rot and the eighth-century East Tower of Yakushiji Temple[25] has started to lean, several of the tens of thousands of Japanese cypress trees growing in this forest could be used in their reconstruction. If humans survive for a thousand years, having managed to curb acid rain, this forest would become the treasure house of the world. At its boundary, let us therefore erect a marker of natural stone. Let us inscribe on it—not with mechanically chiseled letters that will quickly chip off, but with the handiwork of stone cutters—words in every language in the world stating that this forest represents the origins of humanity. We are all born from the forest.

A Greeting of Solidarity—Afterword

Gorō to Keisuke: Okāsan no ikuji nikki (Gorō and Keisuke: A Mother's Illustrated Diary) Akemi Miyazaki, Tokuma Shoten, September 30, 1987

Until they were in their lower grade school years, our two sons always enjoyed looking at my wife's six-volume scrapbook of their upbringing. They read them like they were picture books. It would be a mistake to say that these scrapbooks had a good effect on our children's emotional stability, for the drawings in them were not made with any such purpose in mind. But there is one thing that bothered me. Compared to the number of drawings by our older son, there were far fewer by our younger son. Moreover, the diary notations were full of comments about how, compared to our older son—the younger son was slower to walk or talk. This was because my wife wrote these comments for herself, not for the children. As a parent, a comment about a child beginning to talk later can be a way of recognizing his individuality and intended as an expression of love. Having been a second-born son myself, however, I feel I can understand how my younger son may have felt when he noticed, even while enjoying the pictures, that there were fewer drawn by him.

That our second son produced fewer pictures is due to the parents having become accustomed to our role—it was our second time around—and because he spent only a short time in preschool. But our son, who is living his own present for the first time, has no way of comprehending such excuses.

I think there is no way that we can live and "not cause difficulties for others," as the saying exhorts us. I have come to think that, even when we are overflowing with love and goodness, the world of human beings is one in which we cast our shadows onto each other, giving each other troubles as we grow and live.

My elder son gave me the chance to recall what I wished for, what I was enamored of at each stage of my own

childhood. This experience has been invaluable to me in my profession.

My younger son gave me the chance to experience anew the process of my personality formation by observing again what I had felt as a child, including the reason I chose this line of work. I think I have come to understand myself a bit more than when I was young.

The period of time for us as parents to influence our children has passed. Our sons can now only fulfill themselves through their own power.

I recall the night when my younger son was a middle school student and began to study for a test the next day. I realized that he was at the point of experiencing the instant that his carefree childhood was ending—something that I didn't notice when I went through the same thing—and I was assaulted by a feeling I can only call keen sadness. Looking at his hunched-over back, I silently gave him a "greeting of solidarity," to use a phrase popular at that time.

Having Seen *The Man Who Planted Trees*

Notes for Laserdisc *The Man Who Planted Trees (L'Homme qui plantait des arbres,* "Ki o ueta otoko" [dir. Frédéric Back, 1987]), Pioneer, June 25, 1988 (transcribed from comments)

Even were I not involved in animation, I still would have thought I had seen something wonderful when I saw this film. This is a powerful work that couldn't have been made half heartedly. It is a merging of Back's own motifs and ideas. What is more, the material is based on a story of someone who actually did this at a time when the future was uncertain.

We have enormous admiration for someone like this old man of Prov-ence who embodies a sage of the fields, someone full of wisdom who takes the long view. My hat goes off to Back for giving such wonderful form to this motif by using such an expressive medium as animation.

Even more, I offer my deep admiration to those at the Société Radio-Canada/Canadian Broadcasting Corporation who funded such an obviously noncommercial work. I believe this is a broadcasting station in Quebec, and Quebec is Canada's French-speaking province that often causes problems by wanting to declare independence, isn't it? The setting of the film is Provence, an area of southern France that has a strong ethnic consciousness. So perhaps there is some connection there.

When I first saw this film I didn't know where it was set. When I learned that it was Provence, it made perfect sense to me. It may be that the story the film is based on (by Jean Giono) was connected to the movement to resurrect the arts of Provence by writing poems and fiction in the Provençal language.

* * * *

I have driven through Provence by car. The flatlands are lush with greenery and broken up by many windbreak forests. The

mistral wind blows strongly there. I thought it was naturally so green, but watching this film, I found it had been planted.

The old man of Provence in the film was not a particular person but an amalgam of characters in stories told of various people from the region. This type of figure is found in many places in the world; in Japan there are many such tales from the Edo period.

In Japan, greenery increased with the construction of the Tamagawa Jōsui and Nobidome Yōsui waterways. The Musashino plain was a bleak expanse of grassy fields. The windbreak forests at the base of Mt. Yatsugatake were also planted.

The opposite case is also all too frequent. Windbreaks planted by our ancestors who settled in Hokkaido to reclaim land have been cut down in modern times because they got in the way of mechanized agricultural equipment. This has caused the soil to erode, so they are now replanting trees, I hear.

We talk about conserving nature, but nature has not arbitrarily created the situation I have described. Many places have been touched by human hands. Time has worked to establish these plantings. We human beings need both nature left as it is and man-made habitats.

In Japan we came to leave nature as it is in groves surrounding the village shrines, while planting trees to establish a certain type of scenery. This created a certain natural stability throughout the Edo period, but that stability has been steadily destroyed by Japan's modernization ever since the Meiji period.[26]

I don't think the kind of story in the film exists in Canada, but I can fully understand Back's desire to depict the tale of what this old man did—transforming a wasteland into a fertile, green expanse where life is lived to its fullest.

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The first film by Back that I saw was *Crac!* (1981). Isao Takahata (producer of *Nausicäa*, *Castle in the Sky*; director of *Grave of the Fireflies*) and I saw it on a double bill when we were in the U.S. for work four or five years ago. It was a shock to both of us. As we trudged home after the film, I remember saying to Takahata-san, "So, I guess we're failures, aren't we …"

And now we have *The Man Who Planted Trees.* In the cel animation production that we are currently working on, we've found drawing plants to be very difficult. If we draw just the plants waving in the breeze, it looks formulaic. Plants exist in the weather and light rays that surround them—waving in the wind, shimmering in the sunlight. I am always puzzling over how to draw such things. I've given up and have resigned myself to realizing that we cannot draw plants with our usual techniques. But Back has taken this problem head on and mastered it. For that alone, I say, "Hats off!" His imagery is beautiful.

One can't suddenly come up with such a fine film. I believe that because he had made *Crac!* he was able to make *The Man Who Planted Trees.* It was possible thanks to the techniques he developed in *Crac!*; also he had the support of his camera operator and other staff members. The staff must have felt the good response to *Crac!* Without a serious effort to improve the quality of the content, they could never have made the current film.

I doubt the impact would have been so great if the same material had been filmed in live action. The animation method Back used in this film isn't something that can be generalized. Talking about the possibilities of animation leads us into a meaningless dead-end discussion about what material is best suited to animation.

What you want to express should determine the techniques that you use. If you don't have anything to say, technique

alone is not enough to create a work. Technique is something people develop in order to express something.

In this respect, I think the method Back started using in *Crac!* fully matured in *The Man Who Plants Trees*. To my mind, it doesn't need to be developed any further, as it has reached its epitome here. If Back were to create another work like this, he would only be repeating himself.

* * * *

What made it possible for Back to create this work is the way he perceives the world.

It is only when he looks at things from this world perspective that he discovers what he holds in common with audience members. It is the viewpoint of a man who lives deeply aware of what is being passed on. The old man in this film has the face of a philosopher, doesn't he? I can well understand why Back chose this face. Back wanted to draw someone with a far-reaching gaze, someone overlooking the planting of trees, someone watching them grow and become forests and homes to honeybees.

I once happened upon a short newspaper column discussing the difference between Japanese and European views of life and death. It said that in old age Japanese want to become one with nature, while Europeans want to confront nature and stare at it. Most Japanese probably imagine themselves being embraced in the bosom of nature, but it isn't just Japanese who want to return to nature. Even those who live in the Gobi Desert feel a certain oneness with the nature surrounding them. The setting where one is born and comes to know the world is crucially important for any group of people.

Frédéric Back comes from Alsace, on the border of France and Germany, and that is no doubt where he discovered the importance of place. He must have made *Crac!* because his feelings for his homeland were awakened when he saw scenes

—such as people making maple syrup—that seemed familiar to him.

In our world, where nature is inexorably being destroyed, we feel even more strongly about the earth we live on, the surrounding landscape, the trees and plants. This feeling allows us to understand the sentiments of the man who lived in Provence and planted trees. That is what I felt in *The Man Who Planted Trees.*

I was moved when I watched this film. In the same way that I feel about Yuri Norstein,[27] I am glad we have such a talented person as Frédéric Back.

A Nation that Merely Dithers Around

Shūkan Asahi (Asahi Weekly), Asahi Shinbunsha, February 22, 1991

I had thought that, thanks to us having lost the war, we Japanese might have finally become a little more skeptical about national claims of "righteousness" and "just causes." Watching [George H. W.] Bush, I can only think he is possessed by the ghost of John Wayne, telling him that "this is the way a real man should act." Saddam Hussein's sense of righteousness is the same.

However, Japan, which should not have done so, is responding to the Gulf War solely out of a desire to do business with and be "good neighbors" to our allies. I know that some Japanese politicians may equate Saddam Hussein with Hitler, but no one says he is like Hideki Tōjō. Our country has abandoned its "just causes" but not developed deeper principles. Our flighty country sways to and fro, caught in each gust of wind. If we ever dismantle our Peace Constitution, we will have nothing left.

When I look into the faces of my sons, I think that no matter how poor Japan might become, I wouldn't want to send them off to war. And I feel the same for other people's sons. As a filmmaker, I have continued to think that the main challenge we face in Japan today is to survive without being crushed to death by our repressive society. For the last ten years, I had been thinking of addressing this topic by making a youth movie set in present-day Tokyo, but I'm giving up the idea. It would only become a depiction of neurotic defiance without any core principles, and it would not persuade people around the world who live in fear of chemical weapons and for the lives of their sons. I want to find something that can become our core principles. I haven't figured out what that is. But I think I might find an entry point for the film in my hazy thoughts about how our country has not yet made a full accounting for the Second World War.

The Type of Film I'd Like to Create

From a talk given to section three of the sixth grade class at Hachiman Elementary school, Sendai City, June 19, 1992

Good afternoon, boys and girls. My name is Hayao Miyazaki. I'm not particularly good at speaking in public, so if I run into any trouble I intend to have your teacher Yamazaki-sensei back me up. I've been creating animation for thirty years, so based on this experience, I'd like to share something with you—something that I think I may know a little bit more about than you do. I'd like to talk to you today about *time.*

Has everyone here heard about the Jōmon period?[28] Do you know how old most people in the Jōmon period were when they died? Well, apparently it was around thirty. Now, I'm fifty-one this year, so that means I've already lived twenty years too many compared to them.

In other words, in the Jōmon period most people died before they became what we think of today as grandfathers or grandmothers. That's how short peoples' lives were. So in those days most people became fathers or mothers around the age of fifteen. [*Miyazaki points at a student in the audience.*]

So you, for example, would be a mother at fifteen. Now, obviously, to become a monther, you must give birth to a child. But lots of babies died in childbirth, so it was necessary to give birth to a lot of them. If you became a mother at age fifteen, then when your child was fifteen, you would already be thirty years old. And you would die around then. So you can see that everyone died awfully early.

But in the Jōmon period, people didn't feel very sad about the fact that nearly everyone died around the age of thirty. This was because, when someone *did* reach thirty, they would be recognized as an elder and be respected by those around them. You've probably seen this in manga stories—how the village elder, who seems awfully old, is respected. In reality, most of the elders in the Jōmon period were probably only around

thirty years old. Of course, not everyone died at thirty. Some people lived to be thirty-two, or even thirty-five, which would make them *really* respected.

Why am I telling you these things? Well, in winter trees dry up and shed their leaves, but in spring they send forth new buds and shoots. And people are the same, for they have babies, the babies grow up, and then they have their own children. Of course, babies look like their parents, so even as people die they in a sense reappear. Both humans and trees, therefore, seem the same to me.

A step for a human, a step for a mouse

When drawing pictures for animation, we have to study how fast lots of different animals walk. And if we were to look out the window and carefully observe how fast children of your age walk, we would find that it takes them about half a second to take one step. So in other words, in one second you can take two steps.

When I'm really exhausted, I tend to think, "Wow, I feel beat …" while I'm walking. And if you compare the speed I walk in the morning, when I've got lots of energy, with the speed at which I walk when I'm coming home at night, you'd see that I walk a lot faster in the morning.

Now, let's think next about how fast a mouse walks. If a mouse only this big takes half a second per step, it will take him an awfully long time to walk from here to here. [*Miyazaki points from one edge of the teacher's desk to the other.*] Since mice can only take very small steps, at one half second per step the mouse would also be walking very, very slowly. But mice are actually really fast, right? Sometimes mice walk really slowly, but most of the time they're scampering about. They're moving super fast.

Now what about elephants? When we're making an animated film and drawing pictures of elephants walking, we have to think about how long it takes an elephant to take a

step. Take the example of a mammoth. Mammoths are like long-haired elephants, except that they were hunted to extinction long ago; when a mammoth took a step it didn't take half a second. Mammoths obviously walked much slower than that, but I think they probably could walk about as fast as a human, or even faster.

When we create animation, we draw twenty-four pictures for one second of film. So we always have to think about how we should use those twenty-four drawings to depict one second. And after doing this sort of work for a long time, I realized that a human child takes half a second per step when walking, an elephant takes two seconds, and a mouse walks much, much faster. But I also began to realize that to the child, the elephant, and the mouse, they're all taking steps of the same relative length, so that to an elephant, a human, a mouse, or even a bee, what we think of as a second is experienced differently.

Now let's think of something on an even larger scale. Has anyone here heard of "mantle convection?" What? You haven't? [*laughter*] Well, have you heard that entire continents actually move? You have, right? That's what we call mantle convection. At least, that's according to current scientific theories. We call the very center of the earth its core, and the mantle oozes out from somewhere between the earth's core and crust, slowly slithering and moving; it pushes the continents, which causes them to move. For example, the Japanese islands are apparently pushed around, little by little, by a part of the mantle called the Pacific Plate. And they say that this movement is what causes earthquakes, too. Now, how fast does the mantle move? Apparently about thirty centimeters a year. Of course, no matter how long and hard we stare at something moving thirty centimeters a year, there's absolutely no way that we can see it move. We can't see it, but if you boys and girls were animals a thousand meters tall, or if you were giant living creatures made out of rock that lasted on average ten thousand years—or, since that's probably not

enough, a million years—you might actually be able to see the mantle move.

Bees can avoid rain drops

We live a hundred times longer than bees do. So, my personal interpretation of this is that, to these insects—which only live one-hundredth as long as a human—our one second probably feels like one hundred seconds. Of course, I don't know if this is really true or not, and it may be that I'm the only one who thinks this way. [*laughter*] In other words, if you write what I've said on your tests, you might flunk. But I like to imagine what it would mean if what I have said were really true.

You may have heard of the story *Mitsubachi Māya no Bōken* (*The Adventures of Maya the Bee*). The hero of the story is a honeybee, but the bee is almost like a human. Real honeybees of course don't actually carry pails to put honey in when they fly around, but this one does. I often imagine how different the world would look to a honeybee, if it were to see our one second as a hundred seconds. Of course, I haven't made such a film with a honeybee hero yet, but I'd love do so someday.

I often wonder what rain would look like to our honeybee hero. What do you think it would look like? [*Miyazaki points at child in front row; the child says, "I think the bee probably couldn't see the rain …"*]

Really? But if one of our seconds feels like one hundred seconds to the honeybee, then to the bee a drop of rain would also seem to take one hundred seconds to fall the same distance that would only be one second to us. Yes? So instead of falling fast, the rain would seem to be falling very, very slowly, right? And when it rains we get wet, right? But I'll bet the bee doesn't get wet. The rain may seem to pour down to us, but it would seem slow to the bee, so I think the bee can probably avoid the drops. Bees flap their wings at an incredible speed, but to the bee, its wings probably seem to be

flapping at roughly at the speed we would see a walking person swinging their hands. And if that's the case, bees probably also see individual raindrops very clearly. By the way, what sort of shape do you think raindrops really have?

[*Miyazaki asks a student to come up and draw a picture on the blackboard.*]

Right, that's how most people would draw them. But why do you suppose people draw them this way? I think it's probably because humans can't see individual raindrops. And because we can't see them, we just imagine that, well, if water's going to fall out of the sky it must look like this. In other words, we're just drawing from our imagination. And it's because we humans don't have eyes like those of bees. But do you have any idea what water looks like if it's released inside a spaceship? If water starts drifting in a weightless environment, it gets all loopy, like this. [*Miyazaki demonstrates with hand gestures.*]

The water gets all loopy while sort of collapsing at the same time. So when a bee flies through the rain, it'd see one of these blobs over here, one way over there, and another way over there, too. As it flew, it'd have to weave its way though all these loopy blob things falling all about. And if you made a cartoon film showing this, do you think everyone would know that these blobs are raindrops? Well, they probably wouldn't, right?

[*Children laugh and chime in with, "No, they wouldn't."*]

But from the viewpoint of the honeybee, I think the world would probably look like this. Don't you think so?

[*Miyazaki draws a picture. The children marvel and say, "Maybe he's right ..."*]

And it's not just bees. Think about fish, swimming in the water. Well, some fish sometimes jump out of the water. But when the fish are swimming in the water, do you think that the fish actually think they're in the water? You boys and girls live

in the air, but I doubt you're going around thinking about living in the air. Still, you'd really get upset if the air started to disappear. You'd probably say you were suffering. And not only that, if there was something weird in the air, you'd probably say that it really stank. You'd complain that it was hard to breathe. Don't you think so? It's just like when you jump into water—since humans can't breathe underwater you probably take a deep breath before you jump in and try to hold your breath as long as possible, right? But that's not the way fish feel about water. They think it's completely normal to be living under water. Their way of viewing things is completely different from that of humans.

Now, you can probably imagine all sorts of things if you start thinking this way. You've heard of giant tortoises, right? They're said to be some of the world's longest living animals, maybe living up to two hundred years. Well, the giant tortoises on the Galapagos Islands eat cactus, and I suspect that if they see a human walking by, that the human probably looks like he or she is walking awfully fast …

Birds must be able to see the wind …

Let's talk about birds next. If you compare an airplane with a bird, one thing you'll notice is that an airplane has control surfaces. It has what are called ailerons, and the way they work is that if one goes down the other one goes up. And airplanes have what are called elevators, which point up or down. And they also have something called a rudder that points either left or right. With the rudder,you use your feet, and if you push the control stick forward the plane's nose pitches down; if you pull it back the plane goes up and if you move it to either side the aircraft will bank. You always have to use your controls carefully, taking into account the direction and force of the wind.

But birds are different. Just like when we're walking around on two legs, birds probably don't think about how they hover and fly when they're fluttering their wings and tails in the air.

But how is this possible? I have to confess that I'm only guessing, but I think maybe it's because birds can actually see the wind. And maybe it's because birds don't live as long as we humans do. So although it only takes a second for a strong gust of wind to make us humans get all upset, for the birds that second probably seems to last for several seconds, giving them time to react. In other words, I think that to birds wind probably seems much slower than it does to us. Of course, I'm only guessing here. [*laughter*] Everything I'm saying is from my imagination. But as animators, our work is all based on imagination. …

Now, why am I telling you this? I think you've all heard of gliders, haven't you? Gliders can achieve what's called a "glide ratio" so that for every meter they descend they go forward sixty meters. And during that sixty meters, if there's what we call an updraft or rising air current of one meter, and the wind rises a meter, then they can keep flying forever. But sometimes the updraft disappears. Then, what glider pilots over continental areas do is to look for places where big birds such as condors are flying. Far off in the distance, they can often see condors slowly circling. And where there are condors, there's always an updraft. So if the glider pilot can make it over there, he or she can catch an updraft, and slowly, ever so slowly climb on the air current. Of course, you could search all day for condors in Japan and never find them, but you might locate a few crows … [*laughter*]

Still, if we're talking about a place where there are condors, the glider pilot will seek them out. Then the question becomes, how do the condors know where there is an updraft? The only explanation for this that I can think of is that condors can probably see the wind, or even see the air. Now, I know that air is colorless, so they can't really see it in the normal sense, but I like to imagine that where there is an updraft there might be some sort of air spirit that rises up, or that in another place the air spirit might be descending. And maybe, just for a second, what the condor sees is something ever so slightly

different. You've probably seen how air shimmers in the heat and makes the scenery seem to move. What I'm talking about may even be more subtle, but perhaps it's visible to the sharp eyes of a bird. Of course, this is all something I'm imagining now, so for the facts you'll have to ask the birds.

Sensing a second

One thing you've probably noticed about adults is that if they decide to make something like a movie, they immediately start planning for things way in the future. It's 1992 this year. Next year is 1993. And the year after that is 1994. So by the end of 1992 we have to decide what sort of movie we're going to make, set aside some time for planning, start drawing by the spring of 1993, finish by the spring of 1994, and somehow release the film in the summer of 1994. It's the only way you can make animation.

I can give you lots of other examples. By 1994, you'll all be in your first year of middle school, right? And you'll be in your second year by 1995. But that's really no time at all for us grown-up animators, because by the spring of 1993 we really start to get nervous and feel the heat. We really feel like we're running out of time. …

[*Amazed children exclaim, "You're kidding!"*]

Believe me, a year's really not enough to create a two-hour animated film. It's something I know from experience. And if we were to extend our schedule for a year, we wouldn't finish until 1995. [*laughter*] We're not even sure the world will be around that long. [*laughter*] So not just in our line of work, but in the entire grown-up world, everyone's always complaining about there not being enough time. Summer vacation comes all of a sudden, and it's over all of a sudden, too. But when you're a kid, a month seems like an awfully long time if you're waiting for summer vacation to come. Am I right? And once it starts, doesn't summer vacation seem awfully short? So then the question becomes, if we're talking about the same span of time—a month—why do children and adults perceive

it so differently? Well, I think it's because different people and different forms of life sense time and the length of time in very different ways.

If you're a tree that lives five thousand years, a day probably seems to go by in a flash. And then to that tree winter comes, followed by spring; to the tree a single season probably seems like a day does to us. In the same way, for a bug climbing from here to here—[*Miyazaki raises hands a short distance from desk, indicating height*]—represents a huge distance.

For the bug, it's not a small world at all. And if you think of things this way, the world of plants is also incredibly huge. Of course, what I'm telling you is all from my imagination, but when we create animation and draw images of living things, we have to study their movements. If you did, I'm sure you would ultimately come to the same conclusion that I have—namely, that a second for a human is an altogether different thing than a second for a plant or an animal. And if a second is sensed differently, if you think that a dog's been barking for fifteen minutes and it seems like a long time, well, to the dog himself it probably seems like hours. A tree won't tell us if it feels hurt, but I always think it would be great if we could tell if trees are suffering. My dog made a big fuss this morning, asking me to take him for a walk, but I left home telling him I couldn't because I was busy. [*laughter*] These are the sorts of things that you think about when you create animation.

And there's more. I'm sure you're all familiar with animation shows in which giant robots appear and smash big buildings and stuff like that. Well, I often wonder what it would be like to be that large. Now, I know there are lots of different styles of robots that appear in animation. Some of them even weigh tens of thousands of tons, and are so heavy that in real life they'd probably stomp themselves right into the ground. [*laughter*] Of course, it's a cartoon world so they don't, but if robots so big *were* really to walk around they'd

probably sink out of sight. A road paved with asphalt probably feels as gooey to them as a rice paddy feels to us.

You've all heard of the planet Jupiter, haven't you? Well, it's a gas giant. And you know that it has this thing in the middle that looks like a belly button, right? I'm sure you've seen the photographs. It's actually a huge swirl or vortex. You've probably tried stirring up a vortex inside a drinking glass, so I'm sure you know what I mean. Well, the swirl on Jupiter is just like the swirl in your glass, but the timing is different. It's one of the reasons that animators who are good at drawing water are also good at drawing trees. I'm sure you've seen large groups of people milling around or groups of kids performing a variety of movements at school sports events. Well, as animators, you get better at drawing those scenes, too.

So everything in the universe operates at different speeds. In other words, every creature probably has a different sense of time. In my personal opinion, whether things are really big, or really small, they probably all move in the same basic way. So if you have a good understanding of one thing, you can probably understand everything. [*laughter*] Of course, it's not really that easy, but it's the way I feel after thirty years of experience in animation.

I still need to study and learn about a lot of other things, but if you look at the world in the way I have described it I'm sure you'll discover that there are lots of amazing mysteries out there. Remember the honeybee I talked about earlier? Well, as you know, honeybees often make balls of pollen, what are called *kafun dango* and sound like a sweet, round tasty rice dumpling. If you look at the bees when they've alighted on a flower, they're gathering pollen and attaching it to their legs in little sacs. I've only seen pollen under microscopes, so I don't really know what it looks like, but from the perspective of the honeybee maybe it looks like sausages or Japanese *manjū* sweets or even sweet *dango* dumplings. I'm certain of one

thing, though, and that is that the bee knows whether it's tasty or not.

Rather than make a film with bees in it, using an electron microscope to just magnify and reveal their world, I've always thought that it would be far more interesting to make something from within the world of the bee, from the perspective of the bee. Such a film like this would probably be much more interesting than one about going to another planet. I've always thought this, but somehow it's always been too difficult to do.

Sometimes We Need Stories About the Old Days

Afterword to Tokiko Katō's[29] *Tokiniwa mukashi no hanashi* (Sometimes I Want to Hear Stories about the Old Days). Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, August 31, 1992.

Everyone has a story about themselves in the old days. But the moment we start telling these important stories, we sound like old folks repeating the same thing over and over again. And it's hard to strip the past of whatever sentimentalism and glamorization we have added to it. A memory that may have been the size of a single postage stamp at one point all of a sudden grows into a five feet by four feet tableau.

For this reason, I have decided not to look back. I've done a lot of foolish things in my time, but I won't regret them. I have resolved that I will shoulder the responsibility for them and not forget to take this responsibility with me all the way to the incinerator in the crematorium. But perhaps, after all, this is just a way for me to justify things.

As the era we live in began to change, I found myself increasingly perplexed by and reminded of my own stupidity. But when that happened, I heard about Katō-san's book *Tokiniwa mukashi no hanashi* (Sometimes I Want to Hear Stories About the Old Days). I had a profound realization: remembering the past is not a bad thing at all. On the contrary, during that period I too once made works that were true to myself. Even today, I cannot deny my own starting point.

The Tokyo I Love

The *Sankei* newspaper, September 19, 1992

If I choose a time when few people are out and about, and I walk through back lanes where there are few passersby, it is often hard to believe that I am in the midst of metropolitan Tokyo. And I am astonished by the fact that a deep evergreen broadleaf forest could have been planted here during the Taishō era,[30] from trees donated by people throughout Japan. It's a fine example of how a forest can be created in a short time, provided people have the will to do so.

The Power of the Single Shot

Ikiru laser disc; Toho, October 1, 1993

Among the works directed by Akira Kurosawa, *Ikiru* (*To Live*) is one of his all-time classics. It was created forty years ago, but it has lost none of its power. When viewed anew today I find it has an even greater ability to impart awe. In fact, we can truly appreciate *Ikiru's* extraordinary power best when we consider the turbulence of world history, the changes in thinking and ideology, and the dramatic expansion of industrial structures that have occurred in the last forty years. Usually, films set in the modern age do not hold up as well as period dramas, especially when exposed to the tides of history. But not so *Ikiru.* In this sense, it is a true film.

You immediately get something out of a truly powerful film even when you start watching it in the middle. Just a few shots or a string of images are usually enough to instantly convey the creator's philosophy, talents, resolve, and character. In other words, no matter where you cut the film, you know right away whether you have hit the jackpot or not. In this sense *Ikiru* is sort of like traditional Japanese *Kintarō*[31] candy, cut from a long roll that cleverly reveals the same perfect face of young Kintarō in every piece. But what I am describing isn't true of B-grade or C-grade films. Cut them, and you'll only see B- or C-grade faces.

In a truly powerful film, in any string of shots you will see several that can stand alone as the representative "face" of the entire work. These images do not necessarily come at the climax of the film. They may come at the end, or seemingly appear out of nowhere in a bridge sequence. But they will burn themselves into the consciousness of the viewer and in the viewer's memory eventually grow to symbolize the whole film. In *Ikiru*, this sort of shot appears in the first act in the sequence in the government office.

The section chief of the Citizens' Affairs department is shown seated in front of a mountain of documents, busily turning pages and stamping his official seal on them. He turns a page over, stamps it, and then places it on a pile along with others he has already processed. He then picks up the next document and gives it a cursory look, but he already knows it's not important enough to read. He picks up his chop and again affixes his stamp. The pile of documents behind him grows even larger. The screen is suffused with shadows, but we see the movements of a man carefully and precisely performing his sad task, over and over. The scene is filled with a painfully beautiful tension and sense of presence. The instant I saw this scene I knew *Ikiru* was a film that had to be viewed with utmost respect. In watching it, I had this powerful realization that I had encountered a very special film, the likes of which a director makes only rarely in his or her career.

There are many other memorable scenes in *Ikiru*, but to me the essence of the film is compressed in this single shot, of a man stamping a mountain of documents. It is such a beautiful image. And what beautiful images the old films of Japan had! I keep remembering them, over and over. And I keep asking myself, "Why was I so moved by this or that image? What is the secret power of a single image?"

I always used to think it was stupid to discuss the story lines, themes, or messages in films. But if the shots I mentioned had just been some silly way to ridicule working in a government office or leading a meaningless life, the scene would never have had the emotional impact it does. There's no way that an image of a mountain of paperwork could ever have the rustic beauty of the image of the old-style earthen, roofed walls known as *tsuijibei*—or any other timeworn wall for that matter. To emphasize my point even more, even if I'd not seen but had only heard about the shot or had an outline of it, I still wouldn't have hesitated to argue that *Ikiru* is a classic.

It's been quite a while since I went to the movies just for fun, and I have a bad habit of not watching films in their

entirety. To confess, I can praise Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* to the heavens, but I haven't actually seen the whole film. I probably only saw the last third, and then just happened to see it on television. But that was enough for me. I was overwhelmed and had no desire to see more. This sometimes happens out of laziness. I know that if I were to watch films all the way through, their emotional impact would be greater. And I know the film's creator wants us to watch his or her film all the way through. But with *Stalker*, I was thrilled to the bottom of my heart. To watch any more would have been too much.

The shot of the mountain of documents in *Ikiru* had the same impact on me. I wondered what it meant and after meditating on the question for a long time finally arrived at a conclusion. If you consider the scene to be meaningless, you have to consider how much difference there is between a life spent stacking up a mountain of documents and a life spent stacking up film cans.

If the scene represents nothing but wasted time, then that's all there is to it. The man's dutiful, sad performance of his work is the sadness that we have in our own lives. Our lives do not take on meaning because of something we have accomplished. If there are both sunlight and shadows in the world, we are constantly suffering in the cruelty of shadows. The sense of presence that the mountain of documents provides is not simply the result of the clever use of props or lighting; we are moved because the gloomy shadows of the scene pierce the pall hiding in our own souls. To repeat, life does not have meaning because of something we have accomplished. In *Ikiru*, seeing the man's life enables us to see something far more profound. This film could be viewed as a complete affirmation of living the best one can or exerting oneself on behalf of others, but this single shot sheds light on something far more powerful and deep. This single shot makes Akira Kurosawa's *Ikiru* truly worthy of being called a classic. It once again allowed me to appreciate what a powerful medium of expression images can be.

My Theories on the Popularity of Manga

Acceptance speech given on being awarded the Japan Cartoonists Association's Prize, June 20, 1994

Lately I find myself in a position of being asked by foreign journalists about manga. Not only American and Europeans, but also many of our Asian neighbors appear to lump both Japanese comics and anime together as manga.

They want to know why manga have exploded in popularity in Japan, but it isn't easy to answer their questions. It's actually a bit of a pain in the neck, so allow me to hereby provide some theories.

First of all, perhaps because of the way our brains are structured, Japanese people like to recognize and perceive things in outline form—as lines. There are, in contrast, other peoples in the world who like to perceive things in terms of volumes or solid shapes. This is clearly apparent to me when I compare the different tastes of Japanese and American animators. There is, therefore, a physical reason that Japan mass produces and consumes manga as black-and-white line drawings.

Second, we must consider history. As the popularity of narrative picture scrolls during the Heian and Kamakura periods shows, Japanese people have a long tradition of believing that they can represent all worldly phenomena with a combination of drawings and words. Politics, economics, religion, art, war, eroticism—there is nothing that narrative picture scrolls did not attempt to depict. We have inherited this tradition and continue it today.

Third, manga was an ideal way to relieve the excessive stress that we Japanese felt during our period of high economic growth. We yearned for modernization with *Astro Boy*, we showed how tough we were with *Kyojin no hoshi* (Star of the Giants), and to satisfy our idiosyncrasies and save us there was always the experimental manga magazine *Garo.*

In a similar vein, I expect that we might also see a boom in manga in our now-modernizing neighbor countries.

These, then, are my theories on the popularity of manga, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts about them sometime.

Thank you very much for this award.

Things That Live in a Tree

Kyoboku o mi ni iku (On Going to See a Giant Tree), Kōdansha Culture Books, July 25, 1994

As giant camphor trees often appear in films of mine, such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, many people assume that I have childhood memories of such trees, but it's not true.

When I'm making a film starring a young boy, I think of many things that I have felt or imagined. But I actually remember very few things from my own childhood, so instead I tend to remember scenes of children that I have seen as an adult. I think of my own children, the neighbors' children, my relatives' children. As a result, my films often depict what I would have felt had I been a boy at that time. Giant camphor trees, for example, are something that I began fantasizing about when I was more than thirty years old and developing a strong interest in the natural world.

In thinking about how I came to love trees, it occurs to me that it may be related to a memory I have of gazing from my classroom window at a Chinese evergreen oak during middle school. It was a tree growing in the sports field next to our school, and it seemed wonderfully big and pleasant looking. I recall thinking that perhaps I could draw it sometime.

There was also a period when I simply loved to draw big things above all else. This wasn't limited to big trees; I also drew steel pylons and anything tall, for I probably dreamed of climbing them. I must have been psychologically attracted to anything big and tall at that age.

I became fascinated by the world of plants because it seemed to best symbolize the complex and varied world we live in. When creating animation and trying to draw big trees in the background, it's really difficult to make it look as though the wind is truly blowing through them. A single photograph has far more impact in this case. But every tree has many things that live in it or are parasites on it. Images may in

fact be best at capturing the totality of this relationship. Although it might not be possible, I've always wanted to make a film about a tree from the perspective of the tree's own world.

Humans have their own sense of time—so do birds, insects, and even bacteria. Each sense of time is different, but to each form of life it is also equivalent, at the same time existing within the gigantic space of a single tree. The bird sees one scene when it flies by, barely missing a group of leaves; the caterpillar sees photosynthesis happening up close. And then there is the view from the rocks next to the tree. If we look at the tree from all these perspectives, a single, very ordinary tree in a wooded area starts to seem like a truly incredible world. From the perspective of humans, the tree starts to look not like a purely pleasant and comfortable place, but something quite different, where insects prey on weak plants and where, if humans rudely interrupt the lives of these insects and pests, all hell can break loose. From the perspective of insects, a single drop of rain looks like a giant and mysterious transparent ball with amazing properties of surface tension. The film that I would like to make would show this—it would develop around a single tree and show the tree from a totally different sense of time and perspective. Of course, one of the big challenges for me would be to also make such a film entertaining …

Because I would love to make this sort of film, it may sound as though trees have a special significance for me. Rather than symbolizing a quest for personal memories, however, I think trees represent something I inherited from far, far in the past. There is something psychological here, for I obviously feel that a landscape with trees is preferable to scenes without them, but if I had been born in the desert I might not feel this way. There is also a big difference between realizing and not realizing that the trees alive today have been living on this earth far longer than we humans can even imagine. If trees had not been growing on earth for thousands of years, we would

assume an earth without them, and it would probably never occur to us to try to plant them.

In this context, we may be on the brink of something today. We Japanese have changed our environment so much that we must either change ourselves or, clinging to our memories of the past, try to regenerate the trees that once functioned as our mother. That doesn't mean, of course, that we should think of protecting the environment to the exclusion of all else, because we do ride in automobiles. We must live with contradictions.

Recently, whenever I look at the mass of midges that have bred in the ditch near my house, I don't just think of them as something filthy to be gotten rid of. I don't think such measures should be determined on the basis of whether they are pure or polluted. We humans, after all, created the reason for the pollution. The midges disappear in one fell swoop with a single downpour of rain, but once the water in which they live starts to stagnate, they come right back. In fact, nowadays I find them noble creatures in their own right, and I don't think it's appropriate for us to reject or eliminate them just because we think they're dirty.

I, of course, always want to do my part to preserve and protect the environment, but I can't brag about it much. Still, as with films about trees, I hope I can always maintain the perspective that the midges in the ditch near my house are just as important as the prized sweetfish in the clean waters of the Shimanto River.

On the Banks of the Sea of Decay

"I'll still keep planting greenery and cleaning the rivers"

Iki iki mizu bukku (*Living Water, Loving Water*) *Asahi Original, Kurashi to kankyō* (Living and the Environment), Asahi Shinbunsha, July 20, 1994

We came up with the idea of completely covering the roof of the offices at Studio Ghibli with greenery, so right now I'm in the process of asking my son, who studied landscape gardening in college, to draw up the blueprints. I asked him because he said he'd do it for free. [*laughter*] It'll help prevent direct sunlight hitting the building, so we should save on air conditioning costs, but that's only a secondary benefit. I've always thought that, if given the chance, I might as well do what I really want. That we ought to at least try something that I've always wanted to do. My half-baked idea is that we should plant the toughest, almost-wild grasses on the roof, and by scattering weed seeds all over the place, we'll eventually reach what's called a "climax vegetation" or natural equilibrium.

Now, some people were opposed to this idea of planting grass because, among other things, they wouldn't be able to laze about on the roof the way they have been, but I quickly stomped on any opposition. [*laughter*] This is an example of how leaving decisions up to the collective wisdom of the masses just results in collective foolishness.

Not too long ago one of my neighbors cut some branches of the zelkova tree in front of his house. He claimed that the tree had grown too big. After the fact, he went around the neighborhood explaining and apologizing to everyone, and there were of course some people who complained that he shouldn't have trimmed the tree, whereas others welcomed what he had done because their roof gutters were getting clogged with leaves. Now, when it comes to trees on the street, city officials tend to listen to the people who complain the most. So they wind up cutting branches. They trim the trees even when they don't need trimming.

In such a situation, I think it's important to not only solicit people's opinions but to put forth a clear, concrete argument for what you want to do. At least, that's what I think our vaunted public institutions should do. In other words, they should try to enlighten the public rather than just blindly follow public opinion.

When it comes to living with greenery in our daily lives, we need a new worldview. It's not enough to just go around saying how wonderful nature is; we also need to explain what sort of inconveniences and even harm nature can bring to us. If people are worried about their gutters clogging, I'd like someone to start a campaign to urge development of gutters that don't clog.

We also ought to tell people that it doesn't make sense to rake up fallen leaves and burn them because the leaves themselves fall off trees with the intent of turning into soil. And when large residential complexes are built, people should be responsible for raking the leaves of the trees on the street in front of their homes and putting them in designated holes. Maybe we should make it a condition for people who live there, maybe even make them sign a contract. It's the only solution, as far as I'm concerned.

Of course, when it comes to green problems, I'm just trying to get a little serious here. But defiantly making declarations probably sounds a bit odd. What I'm trying to say is, maybe these ideas might really work. [*laughter*] It's the same thing with water. The Yanase River[32] runs near my house, and all it takes for me to feel really good is to see a few minnows swimming about in it. Twenty-five years ago, when I moved to the area, the river was more like a polluted ditch, filled with leeches and midge larvae. I was amazed by how noble these midges were and impressed that they could live in such a place, but recently I have noted that, depending how much rain and fresh water enters the river, the water can suddenly and momentarily become incredibly clean.

As the area is developed—and as they do more and more work to reinforce the river's levees—there are fewer spots where the river runs next to the woods the way it used to. There is probably less than a hundred meters, now. But two or three years ago, ducks started coming to spend the winter here. In fact, at the peak of this winter, there were around fifty spotbill ducks. So everyone in the neighborhood started bringing breadcrumbs to feed them. It's quite a sight to see the oomph with which people toss them out. But of course it's probably just contributing to the river's pollution. [*laughter*]

There's now even an Association to Clean Up the Yanase River, which tries to clean up the area three or four times a year. Of course, there's always more trash floating down from upstream, so the river remains polluted. When it rains, the water in the river also suddenly rises, eventually washing over the roots of the trees in the wood. At night, if you go there with a flashlight, it's super scary but fascinating. The water rushes there, right through the woods. And then when it recedes there are usually all sorts of vinyl trash bags stuck to the tree roots. So the cleanup efforts of the association are hardly likely to produce dramatic results. Ironically, the movement to clean up the river is actually a result of the fact that the river itself has become cleaner. Twenty years ago, the river was so filthy people felt helpless. It was just like a giant drainage ditch. It was truly awful. So the idea is to be grateful for small things. It's the only approach we can really take.

Around ten years ago, I think it was, we started seeing duckweed growing in the river. We were thrilled to see something green thriving in such a barren wasteland, but the presence of the duckweed just indicates how polluted the river actually is relative to other rivers. Because duckweed, you see, grows mainly in filthy rivers. Nonetheless, when we're talking about cleaning up our river, it seems to me that the benchmark can't be the same as the pristine rivers of, say, Yakushima Island, or—although I've never seen it—the still-clean Shimanto River. If we quibble too much over concepts of

“polluted” and “pristine,” or abuse the concept of cleanliness, it all just seems quite pathological.

Still, you can understand a lot about the world from looking at a single river. The filthiest water comes from covered water stored for agricultural use. If there are fish, then everybody gets all excited about how wonderful it is. But if it rains, and the riverbed and banks have been reinforced with concrete, the fish have nowhere to escape and are all washed away. If there are still woods in the area, then the fish have nooks and crannies in which to hide. It’s something that becomes very obvious. And in realizing it, we all become a lot smarter.

Before going on about how precious water is, or how precious greenery is, let me stress the need for a place to enjoy them both. Without that, it’s all just talk …

The Yanase River has its source in the Sayama hills, and the Totoro Forest[33] Project has been tenaciously active there. Before getting involved in the National Trust movement, many of the people in the forest movement actually had a bird-watching association in the same area. So you know they’re all nice people. And movements do tend to take on the character of their participants. These folks are not about waving the flags of justice; they’re just saying that they’ll get involved wherever people want to protect nature, so they’re really very flexible. As far as they’re concerned, the most important thing is to preserve nature. And unlike some groups that feel very proprietary about what they start, they never go around complaining about how others are trying to steal their movement, either.

Luckily, the movement took place during the economic bubble period, so the coffers of both Tokorozawa City and Saitama Prefecture were then overflowing. As a result, the city and the prefecture were able to purchase the land around the Totoro forest. Thanks to this quite a bit of greenery around the first Totoro forest will be preserved. I should mention that they’re in the process of looking for a second site as well.

I spent half a day participating in a trash removal project at the first site. We swept up dead leaves and cut back the bamboo grass. The idea is that by doing so the soil will become more fertile, allowing broadleaf trees such as beech-like chinquapin to then grow. But as you can probably imagine, since all the volunteers in an effort like this are very gentle people, they did not want to cut the bamboo grass. One of the members, a farmer, even had to come over and tell everyone, "Don't worry, folks, no matter how much you cut the bamboo grass, it'll grow right back. Have more faith in these plants!" But still they had trouble with it.

Also, everyone always seemed to have a different opinion, saying things like, "Should we really rake up so many leaves? Shouldn't we leave some to become fertilizer?" Some people said we should just leave things as they were. Others insisted that we had to maintain the woods, trim the larger trees, and revitalize the area. Still others said that if we piled up a lot of leaves, *kabuto mushi*—rhinoceros beetles—could burrow in them.

Ultimately, though, the group made the decision to do what it could. And that's all you can do. There's no point in getting too intellectual about it all and worrying too much about what will happen if you do this or that.

What is hope? Perhaps it's nothing more than facing hardships with people you think are important?

In the story of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, the Sea of Decay was supposed to have been created by humans a thousand years earlier to cleanse the environment. But even the ancient people who made it had no way of predicting how the Sea would eventually be transformed. No matter how many genius ecologists were consulted, no one could have forecast what would actually happen.

In the same way, we could plant zelkova trees next to these offices here. But we can't know what will happen to them. What will the trees do to people? Will they cause people to fall

in love? Will they eventually just fall over and throw the whole building off balance too? Well, there is no way we can foresee this. When we think we can predict something, we're really just revealing our own arrogance. Humans are capable of creating an opportunity for something to happen, of putting something in place, but they can't know what really lives in that something, even if it's a deity, because this is beyond our ability. To me, this seems to be the best way to look at the world.

What is intended and what actually happens are two entirely different things. So although in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* the Sea of Decay began as an artificially created ecosystem, over time it changed. Similarly, rather than saying that it's no use maintaining trees planted by man because they can never become a truly natural, primeval, or virgin forest, I prefer to think that even man-made forests can ultimately function on their own and that they will eventually become ecosystems far more complex than we can imagine.

The idea that nature is always gentle and will give birth to something like the Sea of Decay in order to restore an environment polluted by humans is a total lie. And I believe that the idea that we should cling to such a saccharine worldview is a big problem. That, at least, is what I felt while writing *Nausicaä.*

From the very beginning, I suspected that I would arrive at such a conclusion. There was always this thought that such a conclusion wouldn't work for the story, that it would be a betrayal of my readers. But that thinking was flawed. Ecosystems can't possibly exist for a particular purpose. I probably shouldn't get into this but I suppose I have to. In the story, Nausicaä, the heroine, learns the truth behind the Sea of Decay, but it's almost impossible for her to explain it to people in words. I felt that if people had some intimation of what she had done before, or some premonition of what she might do, that would be enough. Because one should not speak too facilely of hope.

The question then becomes, what is hope? And the conclusion I'd have to venture is that hope involves working and struggling along with people who are important to you. In fact, I've gotten to the point where I think this is what it means to be alive.

We don't know what'll happen when we plant grass or clean rivers. Is it something that even connects us to the future? No, not at all. But nothing will happen unless we do it. And if we do it, we know it will also create problems in our daily lives. But we have to enjoy it.

Of course, the moment we say that we don't know what's going to happen in the future and we must leave everything up to fate, then we'll face other problems. And we have no idea what those problems will be. It's sort of like the line in Yōsui Inoue's song "Saigo no news" (The Final News), which goes, "Will there be so many people on earth that they will spill over, far, far out into the sea?" Whether we're aware of it or not, this is an idea embedded in all of our consciousnesses.

Right now, if you add up all the earth's land, including the desert and polar regions, and divide this figure by the earth's population, you reportedly come up with about 170 square meters per person. Fifty years from now, when the population reaches ten billion, it'll be 120 square meters per person. If the population reaches fifty billion, humans will probably be the only animals left on earth. Isaac Asimov, the science fiction writer, once did some calculations and concluded that fifty billion people is probably the maximum sustainable limit for organic material created from photosynthesis on earth.

The only way to go on living is to make lots of children

The problems in Yugoslavia are a manifestation of the competing layers of history of different ethnic groups, but the underlying cause is the barrenness of the soil. During the Roman Empire, civilization caused the extermination of a great amount of vegetation. The mountains were stripped bare, not only in Italy, but also in southern France and across Spain.

The areas where civilization had been most advanced—where so many people lived comfortably—were turned into barren mountains and hills. All the trees were cut down.

When thinking about such problems, it's probably inevitable that we be most concerned about our fellow men. It feels good. It's frankly like the J-League[34] soccer matches. If all we have in Japan is the J-League the only thing left for us will be to become completely Latin in our orientation. From the perspective of spectators, soccer is the epitome of living for the moment.

Of course, Japan also has professional baseball teams. Unlike professional baseball in the United States, though, our baseball style is a bit piddling, sort of like having coach Nomura in command. But this is more likely to result in a restoration of the ecosystem. No proof of this, of course. [*laughter*]

Earth's population could reach ten billion in the future, but of course with humans we also have to consider the possibility that it could decrease to 200 million. Just as there have been plenty of such examples in the past, any number of tragic events could happen in the future. So how do we go on living? If you ask me, the only solution is to make lots of children. Let your children give you hell, suffer through illness … In my opinion, that's what it means to be alive. So these days, whenever I attend a wedding and make a toast, the only thing I feel I can really tell the couple is to make a lot of children. Because there's no use worrying about the future. But rather than saying there's no use, what I should really say is that we have to realize what sort of creatures we really are. If we have to choose between two alternatives, it's best to have children and let them give us lots of headaches.

Saying that it doesn't matter what we do, or that nothing will work, is pointless. We're all going to die sometime, so if we say something's useless then everything's useless. The way

I look at it, humans have definitely given up on the idea of becoming extinct. That's for certain.

As everyone knows, dinosaurs are a popular field of study. Scientists used to say that dinosaurs became extinct when they reached the limits of their dinosaur-style evolution, but nowadays there's a different theory in vogue. Apparently the Greek goddess Nemesis did not deliver her punishment in accordance with some sort of karmic retribution; instead, they say that a giant meteorite collided with Earth, creating something like a nuclear winter, and that this is what killed off the dinosaurs. Or they say that it wasn't a meteor, but that there were major changes in the earth's crust, with repeated volcanic eruptions, so that 70 percent of all species died out, and then a new genesis of life occurred. So in other words, the earth isn't the nice gentle place we thought it was. But if all this hadn't happened, dinosaurs would probably have continued living all the way up to the present. The dinosaurs didn't die out because of anything they did. It was the fault of the earth.

At the end of the twentieth century, at least, this has become the most widely accepted theory. And humans have resolved to go on living, ballooning ever more in population and creating more and more pollution.

There Should Be Commercials Thanking Loyal Customers

"Advertising Meeting" (Senden Kaigi), *Senden Kaigi*, December issue, 1995

Filmmaking is the act of selling candy wholesale to a candy store

—Mr. Miyazaki, your films create their own world and touch many people. What is at the core of your films?

Miyazaki: We don't take a high-handed attitude about delivering messages or about the role our films play. Rather, my attitude is that I make candy to sell wholesale to the candy store. Of course this candy must taste good; I would run into trouble if my candy didn't sell as well as the other candy in the store. For this, my candy must be colorful. I have to create something that looks like it tastes better than the others. We shouldn't think that just because it's candy it's all right to mix in toxic colorings or problematic artificial preservatives. Even if our costs go up, we must make decent candy that children will reach for and that isn't inferior to other sweets.

A message is like the nourishment that should be obtained from meals, but movies are a time for candy. It would be a problem if people spent all their time on candy while cutting out their meals, but I don't think it's necessary to get our calcium intake from candy. This is the way I try not to become arrogant, to think we are doing something truly extraordinary. But I do endeavor to make films that express my own ideas about what is important and what is wrong with the world that we currently live in.

—What kind of advertising do you engage in when a film is released?

Miyazaki: We try not to spend a lot of money on advertising. It seems that nowadays in Japan you have to spend about 500 million yen [$5 million—Ed.] to gain recognition. In our case we spend a lot of money on production costs, so our advertising budget is low. Of course,

we use various means and put a lot of effort into having people see our films. But we don't sell off parts of our films with tie-ins before the films reach our audience. There is already an overabundance of choice in this world, so it's essential for us to at least let people know that we have made a film. We can't let the film disappear without any response, so we have to advertise.

—What are your impressions of recent advertising in general?

Miyazaki: The media are pervaded with positive, direct, upbeat, optimistic types of messages.

When we make a film, we sometimes say that it has a certain kind of message or theme, but advertising, in particular, seems full of such statements. And as a result I think advertisements end up being extremely empty. Just think, how can someone's expression possibly turn so happy just from drinking a can of soda? I find it very odd that advertising images are filled with this kind of exaggerated fantasy.

I notice this especially in cigarette ads. Recent ads for cigarettes stress that, with only 0.1 milligrams of tar, this or that brand is good for you, but smokers don't like the taste of these cigarettes. Cigarettes are made of tar and nicotine, whereas these new types dilute this reality.

Some cigarettes, like Cherry, aren't advertised at all. And we have more and more cigarettes that are packaged indicating they are harmless. But smokers like the poisonous aspect of cigarettes. [*laughs*] So wouldn't it make sense to make a disgusting ad befitting the toxic qualities of cigarettes? And wouldn't it be good if the ads not only tried to hook new consumers, but also thanked existing smokers for continuing to smoke their brand of cigarettes? [*laughs*] To my mind, few commercials seem to solicit an affinity with those who are actually watching or using the products.

Corporate largesse could change advertising

—Many corporations are taking up environmental causes in order to improve their image. This is one factor transforming the very essence of advertising, it seems.

Miyazaki: I'm concerned that this will eat away at the environment in a rapacious manner. Look at the advertising posters cluttering the city—we should be prosecuting not the people who are pasting up the posters but those who hired them. If we regulate the plastering of posters, we should be able to get rid of the offensive ones.

Opening an art museum is certainly a cultural act, but isn't it also engaging in culture to consolidate electrical power lines, decrease the number of traffic signs, and make the city look less unsightly? Those who have driver's licenses all know what "no parking" means, so adding more no parking signs shouldn't be necessary. By just following some simple rules and common sense, Tokyo could become a much more pleasant and beautiful place to live.

—Is this because we lack interest and deep consideration about life around us?

Miyazaki: Many Japanese think people inherently don't behave the way they should. This is why they are not particularly pleased when something goes according to the law, but take pleasure in outwitting the law. Japanese society has traditionally had this tendency. It would be good if we could become better mannered in this respect.

I wouldn't mind paying a broadcast receiver's fee if television stations showed decent programs. I am disgusted when a commercial breaks into something I am watching intently. Why can't a company announce, "Our corporation is sponsoring this hour without breaking for any commercials"? [*laughs*] I realize that corporate realities may not allow them such largesse. But if they did attempt it, it might solve the serious problem of broadcast commercials not resulting in actual product sales.

To go one step further, I think there are too many television stations. A major cultural issue for Japan these days is overabundance. To have too much quantity changes quality itself. There are people who say the cartoons of yesteryear were better than those shown now. But what has actually happened is that in the past there were fewer cartoons broadcast, so they were simply more memorable. Seeing this as a good thing, how would it be if we had more than fifty quality programs broadcast weekly on television? It would make us uneasy, wouldn't it? With so many books and magazines, not only is the worth of each volume devalued, but we also end up not looking at each one carefully—which leads us to miss what we should be taking in. I think it is important to be able to discern what is truly essential.

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19 Yōko Tomisawa, then editor of *FILM 1/24*.

20 Animation in which the characters and backgrounds are pieces of paper manipulated frame by frame rather than drawn on cels. An inexpensive method often used by student and hobbyist animators.

21 The "Warring States" era (approx 1392–1568). The rise of the money economy led to demands for greater local autonomy from the central government in Kyoto, which in turn led to nearly two centuries of military conflict. Various *daimyo* (regional leaders) ruled over territories, clans rose and fell, and the notion of a social meritocracy emerged, roughly similar in social dynamics to the Dark Ages of Europe after the final collapse of Rome.

22 The hero of a number of Japanese novels, films, and TV dramas. A policeman of the Edo period who uses large coins (*zeni*—an archaic word for money) to capture criminals. In *Lupin III*, Miyazaki's animation series, an Inspector Zenigata pursues Lupin.

23 A vice-shogun who seeks out crime and corruption on the long-running historical television series of the same name.

24 Peasant footsoldiers, not members of the *bushi* (military) class.

25 A famous Buddhist temple in Nara, founded in 680 AD by Emperor Temmu. The East Tower is the only part of the original temple still standing.

26 October 23, 1868–July 30, 1912: "Meiji" or "enlightened rule" refers to the restoration of the imperial center of power after the decline of the Tokugawa shogunate. The rule of law, the creation of deliberative assemblies, and private property brought Japan fully into the modern era.

27 Yuri Norstein (September 15, 1941); a Russian director of short animated films.

28 The Japanese Neolithic period (14,000–400 BC). This period was marked by rudimentary agriculture, semi-sedentary populations, and the development of textiles, metalworking, and the earliest myths of the Shinto religion. Jōmon means "cord pattern," referring to the decorative details of the era's pottery.

29 Tokiko Katō (December 12, 1943). "Japan's Joan Baez," a folksinger and activist affiliated with the World Wildlife Foundation.

30 July 30, 1912–December 25, 1926. This "period of great righteousness" saw power shift away from the oligarchy and toward the Diet and other modern liberal democratic institutions.

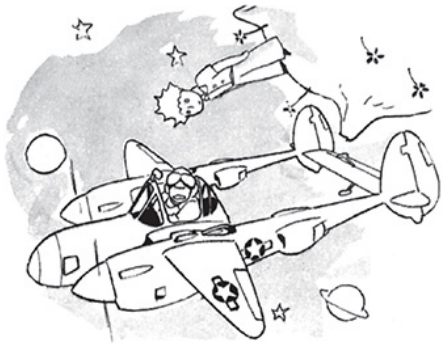
31 "The Golden Boy," a mythic hero of great strength who wielded an ax as a child and who befriended forest animals. The candy has been a popular treat since the Edo period.

32 A river that starts in the Sayama hills (which straddle Tokyo Metropolitan Area and Saitama Prefecture) and runs for nearly twenty kilometers between the Shingashi and Arakawa Rivers.

33 A forest in the Sayama hills, purchased by the National Trust movement known as "The Totoro Home Fund," which is based in Tokorozawa City in Saitama Prefecture. Total area: 1200 square meters.

34 The top-ranking Japanese soccer league; its players are competitive on the international scene and would easily dominate lower-ranked Japanese teams if cross-league matches were held.

PEOPLE



▶ PEOPLE

A Woman Finish Inspector

Lecture commemorating launch of *Animage bunko* (Animage Library), Tokuma Shoten; at Tōyoko Theater, Shibuya, Tokyo; December 21, 1982

I'm able to come out and give a lecture at this time of the year, when everyone is busy at the year's end, because I'm not currently directing an animation series. If I were in charge of a series, I would not have any spare time to do something as cool as giving this lecture.

In Japan, some forty anime programs are now broadcast on television each week. Those involved in anime production work under incredible pressure to create these programs. Just before the New Year holidays, they are doubly busy. It's a make-or-break time for them because the film processing laboratories close for the New Year holidays. The machines that print the films are down. Unless the material to be broadcast during the early part of the new year is sent to the processing labs before year end, the programs won't be ready by air time. What is more, with forty animation programs a week, none of the animation studios has stock, so they must make do with the risky method of live shooting (creating film using pictures that are not yet colored so that they can first finish the voiceovers and dubbing).

The workplace is chaotic; its conditions inhumane to the extreme. This isn't unique to the animation world. You can tell from the newspapers that many people are in dire straits in this

recession economy. There are always articles on people who can't repay their debts to loan sharks or families that commit suicide because they've reached a financial dead end. Even some of you here today may be facing hard times by the end of the year. Perhaps you should be studying for university entrance exams but have stumbled upon this lecture; or maybe you should have been offered a job by now, but are still drifting about. [*laughter*]

Well, I'd like to tell you about someone who embodies this kind of hardship. This person happens to be in the animation industry, but her story is not unique to animation. It's something with universal elements.

A woman bundled in a blanket asleep on the couch

(Yasuo) Ōtsuka-san and (Isao) Takahata-san—I feel like I may bite my tongue calling him Takahata-san, so let me call him Paku-san as I always do—and I have aged so that these days we are asked to step onto the stage as if we were the principal creators of the films we produce. In reality, we are not. Animation is created by an incredibly large number of people. It is actually completed by all of the people working together and carrying out their assigned jobs.

One of the jobs is the finish inspector. I'll give you a brief description of what it entails. First there is color design. This involves deciding on colors—such as Brown c9 for a character's brown hair—from among over three hundred hues of color and then writing that number in red ballpoint pen on all the frames. This is done so that anyone can color it in. Detailed designations are made such as whether a triangular space is to be left as is or should be painted the color of another character's clothes.

The coloring work is all outsourced, so the instructions must be accurate and clear. Doing this for each frame is the work of the color designer. When the colored cels come back, they are checked for mistakes in coloring and for dirt or scratches. This is the work of the finish inspector. And looking through all the

cels is an enormous task. The finish inspector's role is to be the chief of tracing and coloring. In most cases this work is done by experienced women. Men could do it, but for some reason all finish inspectors seem to be women.

My talk today is about a woman who is a finish inspector. I won't give her name, but she is a very wonderful woman. In fact, I am a fan of hers. I may be misunderstood for saying this, though I might hope to invite such misconceptions [*laughter*]—well, she was lovely once. [*burst of laughter*]

I first met her during preparations for *Heidi.* Three of us—Paku-san, Yōichi Kotabe-san, and I—went to the studio where she worked. When I say studio, it was not as impressive as you might imagine. It was a prefab building in a parking lot, and before it became a studio it had been a wig shop. When the wig shop owner ran off leaving a pile of debts, the studio rented the space. [*laughter*]

Along the perimeter of the studio, the roof came down as low as my chest. We first went there in the heat of summer when the air conditioner happened to be broken, so it was about 104ºF (40ºC) inside. And in the winter, no matter how strong the heater, it was freezing cold due to all the gaps in the walls. It was truly a horrific place.

The studio had only recently been set up, and *Heidi* was our first series. I think it was the second series since the company had been founded. Even though it was a company, there weren't many people working there. We were somehow managing to put out a series with the bare minimum of staff. Their struggles were immense and I remember that the atmosphere was far busier than the maddeningly hectic pace of our work when we made *Lupin III.* It was a temporary studio location while they built a new building, but we had no way of knowing that.

The three of us entered the studio at about 11 AM, with the idea of setting up some desks in a clean-up animation room—a small area about ten feet by ten feet—where we could do the

planning for *Heidi.* A woman was asleep under a blanket on a couch in the room, but she sat up abruptly when we entered. She was the finish inspector. Her eyes were bloodshot. I could tell right off that she had stayed up all night and had only gotten to sleep earlier that morning.

Feeling bad that we had disturbed her, we tried to leave in a hurry, but she smiled warmly and insisted on making tea for us. After she drank some tea and chatted with us for a short while, she said, "Excuse me," and immediately started working at her desk.

She had begun her finish inspecting work for the day.

Working every day on two hours of sleep

She was working on a project that used six to seven thousand cels each week, which meant that she had to make color designations for that many pages. She was the only one doing color design and clean-up supervising. She checked each cel that came back from outsourced coloring. On the last day of the final check, she telephoned here and there to call in many women to work on clean-up animation. All of these women were her colleagues. Being able to gather them was part of her expertise. With all of them working together, they filled in the clean-up colors. Nibbling on sweets and sipping tea, they worked away. That was the kind of work she was doing each day. Whenever I entered the room in the morning, she would jump up from the couch where she had been sleeping.

"Please go ahead and sleep some more. What time did you get to sleep?" I would ask.

"Nine o'clock," she replied.

"Whew, you're only sleeping for two hours?"

But she would get up and start to work again. And that happened every day.

Thinking this was outrageous, I approached the studio head, but his response was, “There’s no one else I can trust to do this work.”

For her part, as well, she was an avid worker, who always said, “I’d rather do it myself than team up with someone who doesn’t know about the project.” So she continued on in this way.

As the year’s end approached I began to create *Heidi*’s story line, and the studio where the finish inspector worked started to work on *Heidi.* This meant the studio was working on two television series at once. And yet she was still the only one doing clean-up supervision. She was doing color designation and farming out the coloring for both series at once.

When we started *Heidi*, we had a three-episode buffer, so it was possible for one person to supervise two series. But soon, this reserve was gone. And the pace then immediately increased to one episode per week. Initially we were able to do the voiceovers and dubbing after the colors had been painted in, but soon we turned to using line drawings. I’ll explain why this happens.

If you want a production process where there are no delays, and where individual sections aren’t overburdened, you’re better off never giving authority to a single director or key animation director. The reason for this is that when multiple directors are in charge they invariably only glance at the storyboards, then leave the key animation up to the production group, slap on the backgrounds, and send the show out for sound recording without even showing up for the sessions. I don’t know if it was intentional or not, but several works have actually been made this way.

To my way of thinking, real production work should not be done this way. It is essential, I believe, that we do our utmost to look at all the frames and give our full attention to each of them. We do, however, have to make many compromises. This is especially true in our battle against time. Even if we stayed

up twenty-four hours a day for an entire week, we still wouldn't have enough time. The Babylonians created the seven-day week, and sometimes I curse them, wishing they had made it ten days instead. [*laughter*] But even working that much, we still wouldn't be able catch up.

To go back to my original thread …

So where does all this work finally land? In the finish inspector's lap. This is because the printing laboratories, the next step in the process, will never wait for late work. When the number of days scheduled for clean-up work has been whittled away, the last night turns truly hectic. All the completed work has to be delivered to the printing lab the next morning.

First the production coordinator drives around all over Tokyo to gather up the in-between animation that was outsourced. This comes to about three thousand pages. The in-between checker checks all of these pages. This checker was also a woman. When things were really behind, she would work thirty-six hours straight.

"I was so tired, I couldn't even stand up," a checker once told me. What made her work so hard was her determination to make the work as perfect as possible.

These drawings then come to the finish inspector. Making the color designations, she sends them out to be colored in; then they are once again gathered and the colors checked. The professionals who receive the outsourced jobs work during the day, so the checking is done late into the night.

The clean-up work entails taking out the thin sheets of paper that are placed between the cels as each drawing is checked. By the end of the last day, the finish inspector is practically buried in these thin sheets of paper.

During that process, she checks for mistakes and puts in the correct colors. If she can't manage it on her own, the staff

involved in editing, accounting, and producing all work side-by-side coloring. I help out as well.

At those times, we all have to put aside our own work. But in the end, the one who has to work the hardest is the finish inspector herself. It would be natural for her to grouse, but she never does. She is always cheerful and upbeat. Her character is straight up, like a split stalk of bamboo.

When I ask her, “Are you still alive?” after her final check is done, she responds with her usual smile. And she makes me some tea and even gives me some sweets.

I wish I had the energy and dedication she has for her work!

Even with her vitality, we felt that staying up night after night would surely lead to her developing health problems, so we negotiated with the company and had a soaking bath put in for her. After all, she was a woman, and with so many all-nighters, she had no time to do her normal beauty routines.

She stayed at the company, eating box lunches, instant noodles, and sweets delivered to the office. The only time she went home to her apartment was to do her laundry and come back with a change of clothes. Even while thinking that we should let her have more free time, I found myself asking her to do more and more work because she was someone I could utterly depend on.

For instance, if a thousand cels had to be colored overnight, the production coordinator would at first call everyone on her list to farm the work out. But if three hundred pages still needed to be worked on, the finish inspector herself would call her old friends at home and beg them to color them in.

During these crunch times, she was far more effective than the young production coordinator. She also knew the ins and outs of the production outfits that took on the outsourcing work, and their circumstances. She knew which ones couldn’t be trusted with detail work and which ones had very careful tracers.

At times she would scold the young production coordinator. She was quite scary then. But I wasn't afraid of her because she was always nice to me. [*laughter*]

During these two years, both before and during the production of our series, this woman ended up doing the finishing inspection all by herself. When we finished *Heidi*, we thanked everyone on the staff with a boisterous all-night wrap party with a lot of drinking. Then we all went home to bed. But she had already begun doing the finishing inspection for new series scheduled to start in three months. Just as before, she was working all night, sleeping for two hours, and always at work the next day.

Frankly, this was in violation of the Labor Standards Law and the regulations against women working late at night. And it wasn't good for her health either. But still, she continued to work. In effect, she was a workaholic.

Part of me that feels that no one should work that hard. But part of me also wants to have the energy and dedication she has for her work. It would be easy if we were merely trying to produce a quality of work that corresponded to our limited budgets and schedules. But to move forward a single centimeter or even five millimeters beyond that, we need to have the support of people like her. It's not a case where one person's job can be shared by two. I need to have someone who understands my intentions and will dedicate himself or herself to the job. And I know this is very egotistical thinking on my part.

For example, let's say some shots come back with the wrong color. We might be able to get by filming the cels as is, but sometimes I really want them corrected. And we're short on time. We have so much work to do. The only way to redo the work would be to give up on sleep altogether. In the finish inspector's case, that would mean giving up her only two hours of sleep. But I would nonetheless ask her to use those precious two hours to redo the coloring. Normally cheerful,

she wouldn't answer, "Yes!" in her usual, positive way. And we would both then fall silent.

At times like this the person who speaks first loses. She would finally utter, "I suppose it can't be helped; I'll do it …"

Our work has been built over the years through a repetition of this sort of thing. Takahata-san is a typical example of someone who works this way. And I also tend to direct in the same way.

The reason we always pushed so hard with *Heidi* is that, even in a medium as commonplace as television, we wanted to provide the children watching our series something that would inspire joy, not just be cute, beautiful, or fun. We wanted to go beyond the limitations of normal television.

To do this, I sometimes slept on the floor of the studio, consoling myself with the idea that when we overcame this extraordinary situation, I would be able to sleep in my own bed the next time around.

Of course, when we eventually finished producing the series I realized that what had seemed an extraordinary situation wasn't unique. I realized that it would continue on and on. When one series ends, another is waiting. And that becomes the normal pattern. For the finish inspector, that meant that an extraordinary situation essentially became a normal condition. And she adapted to it.

I haven't worked with her since then. When I drop by, though, she is, as always, working in a pile of thin sheets of paper. I call out hello, and she turns around and smiles at me. [*laughter*] And she offers me tea and sweets. I only realized later that, at times of such stress, sweets were probably the only thing her body could digest.

This finish inspector eventually did collapse and was taken to the hospital by ambulance. And when I went to visit her there, she was cheerful as usual, telling me, "I'll be better very soon."

Since being released from the hospital she has continued her work as finish inspector. I would like to work with her again, but I unfortunately haven't been able to fulfill that wish.

It takes a hungry heart to achieve one's goal!

There are currently some forty animation programs broadcast each week, but I wonder how many people working in animation production have the same kind of commitment as the finish inspector of whom I've been speaking. How many are making the effort to produce work that contains something that goes beyond the bounds of television?

Producing an animation series merely to fill time slots in the broadcast schedule is like generating cultural pollution. Given that there are forty programs on television, we can't be complacent. Yet currently it is rather easy to work up a budget for animation programs and find sponsors, with the result that more and more animation series are being produced.

Of course, children don't necessarily like all forty of the anime programs that are broadcast each week, so I feel that we owe it to them to make anime with some meaning. As long as someone shares this feeling, I don't think it matters if that person is a workaholic. In fact, without workaholics, Japan's animation could never be sustained.

The problem is whether this animation created by workaholics has content worthy of being supported. We continue to work with a knife at our backs. Our staff say, "We'll endure any difficulty or condition, but you had better be taking us somewhere worthy of our endurance." To be honest, current circumstances don't make it easy to make anime worthy of their efforts.

The reason I have spoken of these things today is that I think some of you in the audience plan to engage in animation work. Sometimes budding animators write to me or visit me at home. They usually bring along some drawings. Uncertain of their own talent but full of hope for their future, they come

with a lot of anguish. Whenever I see this, I am reminded that there is a certain shamelessness in such uncertainty and impatience, but that is what youth is all about. Youth isn't just about running pell-mell at the sun yelling, "Damn it all to hell!" [*laughter*] Youth is about asking yourself who you are, what you can accomplish. It is about fervently drawing pictures every day, on the one hand thinking, "They're all right, I've got something here," and on the other hand wondering if your work will be accepted by others, and worrying that it may all be an illusion and that you really don't have any talent at all. This anguish in the midst of uncertainty and impatience is what youth is all about.

I would like all of you to fully experience your youth and have a lot of ambition.

I, too, have a lot of ambition, so much that I still haven't been able to satisfy it. But when producing animation you need ambition, and the bigger the ambition the better. Without it, your determination to get one centimeter, or even one millimeter, closer to creating a work commensurate with your ambition will weaken.

Whether or not you realize your ambition depends on effort, talent, endurance—these might all be the same thing—and you may even need some luck, too. The people you meet by chance may also be important. But for the rest, you just have to believe in your hopes and carve out your own path. All I can say is, "Go do your best."

Mao Zedong has said: "There are three conditions to doing creative work. They are: 1) to be young, 2) to be poor, and 3) to be unknown."

To my mind these are very insightful words. Being young, poor, and unknown … I think by poverty he meant spiritual rather than material poverty. I don't think he meant wanting to eat your fill of delicious food, buy a Walkman, or have enough money to buy animation cels. Being young, poor, and

unknown are three conditions that could apply to anyone. In other words, anyone should be able to do creative work.

I hope that all of you gathered here today live with great ambition. And if with your ambition, you want to plunge into the world of animation, I welcome you.

A “Slanderous” Portrait

Sakuga asemamire (Sweating Key Animation), by Yasuo Ōtsuka, Animage Library Series, December 31, 1982

The statute of limitations must have run out by now. As I recall, it was the fall of 1964 when we had a boisterous party at art director T-san’s new house. We all had families by then, so we took turns hosting get-togethers at one another’s homes. We drank and ate and the party broke up close to the time of the last train. Some people started leaving the house, while the rest of us stayed to talk all night. From T-san’s house to the station was quite a distance. On top of that, it was drizzling, as it often is in autumn, making it unpleasant to walk drunkenly along the muddy road on the outskirts of town. Despite this, when Ōtsuka-san came after those who had left, in his undershirt, to offer them a ride to the station, they all scattered. He was completely drunk, hardly able to stand up straight. I was one of those who had stayed behind and tried to stop him, but he was the kind who insisted, “I’ll drive when I drink. I’ll drive but I’ll drink.” Of those on their way home, one hid behind a telephone pole and another around the corner of a house, but the always unlucky H-san got caught.

Ōtsuka-san’s Fiat 500 roared off, its squealing tires kicking up gravel. H-san’s fearful screams and frightened expression only served to embolden the driver. Even by car the station was some ways off. They should have passed through the shopping district, but somehow they were suddenly driving through a cabbage field. In short, as often happens with those who drive cars, Ōtsuka-san had no real idea how to get to the station from T-san’s house. And if that weren’t bad enough, T-san’s home was part of a sprawling new housing development. Ōtsuka-san drove round and round and became completely lost. Telling H-san to walk the rest of the way, he let him out of the car and drove off into the darkness. It turned out that he had let H-san off close to T-san’s house, where the party had been held.

Since Ōtsuka-san had rushed out without his shirt or jacket, we figured he would soon return, but we waited and waited and he didn't come back. At first we warily listened for an ambulance siren, but then we became convinced that he had made it home. So we talked until morning. When the first trains started running and we had talked ourselves out, we were about to set off for home ourselves when suddenly the front door opened. Ōtsuka-san stood there in the dawn light. His pants were rolled up to his knees, his shoes were all muddy, and his face was splattered with mud. In the morning chill of the end of October, he still wore only his undershirt on top.

We couldn't decide whether to laugh or take pity on him. His car had gotten stuck and so he had stayed out all night. But even with the engine running, a Fiat 500 class air-cooled engine still needs to be driven or it will overheat. Ōtsuka-san had quickly sobered up in the chilly night, and toward dawn he had crawled out of his car and wandered around the fields until he finally found a familiar row of houses and made his way back to T-san's place.

Thinking that the four of us could manage to extricate such a lightweight car, we borrowed a shovel and some equipment from T-san's house and headed off. The first problem was to find the car. Following Ōtsuka-san's unreliable mutterings —"Maybe the car was this way, maybe that way"—we went through the remaining thickets of the Musashino plain and searched through wide-open fields until we came upon the Fiat 500's tire marks on a narrow path. We followed these straight toward the edge of a plateau. It might have been possible to go further in a farmer's light four-wheel drive, but it wasn't a place where a normal car could go. What's more, there was an UNDER CONSTRUCTION sign on a fence at the end of the path. The tire tracks swerved around the fence and continued toward a steep slope.

The car was right below us. Its white body was buried in the middle of a partially constructed road being carved out of the

hill at the edge of the plateau. The fresh-dug red dirt of the Kantō loam was so soft and muddy from the rain that our feet, in rain boots, sank in up to our ankles. The tire marks were deep ruts that snaked down the slope, and the Fiat 500, buried up to its belly, couldn't move. Scattered about the field were branches of Japanese cedar and bits of planks from what looked like old shelves, attesting to Ōtsuka-san's lonely struggle to free his car during the night. It looked impossible to pull the car up, so we decided to push it down to the bottom of the slope, but it wouldn't budge. The planks sank into the mud, and there was no hard surface to brace the jack against. One of us went down to the bottom of the slope to take a look and shouted, "We can't push it down; there's no road down here."

Having caught a glimpse of a large power shovel, we had high hopes, but on the other side of the shovel the road ended with a three-meter drop. In fact, a construction crew had still been carving out the road. If it hadn't rained and the ground had been hard, Ōtsuka-san could have had a truly terrible accident. We decided to rejoice in the fact that he had been lucky and was unharmed. But those who have had this experience know how painful it is for a car fanatic to abandon his beloved vehicle and go home. It feels like leaving your lover at a brothel.

It was after this that Ōtsuka-san's lonely battle to retrieve his car began. Later that afternoon a guy with a cowboy hat on his head and a rope slung over his shoulder came to help, saying, "It's only a layer of Kantō loam. I'll show you, you loam layer, I'll show you the power of a Jeep!" But in the end, yet another Jeep with a winch had to be brought in to rescue the first Jeep. The next day, Ōtsuka-san, a Jeep fanatic, told me in great detail how powerful the Jeep's winch was. The only problem, unfortunately, had been that the cable on the winch was apparently too short to reach Ōtsuka-san's Fiat.

It continued to rain, interrupting the rescue operation. During lunchtime at the studio, I took my own car to the scene

of the accident. Looking up from below, the slope seemed much steeper than it had from above. It was a muddy cliff. Halfway up this cliff, a small, lonely white car was caught in the rain.

I felt sad for the car. Yeah … I returned, my spirits low. But how could I keep such a juicy story quiet? I blabbed about it all over the studio, and the members of our painting section rushed to put out a special illustrated news bulletin. The story sprouted wings, and leaving aside our work, we all enthusiastically drew slanderous pictures of the Fiat 500 driving through the fields, rolling over cabbages; of H-san calling out his bride's name; Ōtsuka-san climbing the cliff in the dark to collect small branches of Japanese cedar; Ōtsuka-san sleeping alone in his car, wallowing in the loneliness of life. And all the while, Ōtsuka-san commuted daily to the scene, carrying a shovel and a straw mat. The workers at the road construction site warmly welcomed the Fiat 500 into their midst, using it to store their lunches. When Ōtsuka-san came back, shoulders slumped in discouragement, to announce that someone had put a tea kettle inside his car, we rushed to draw the imagined scene and publicize it. When he returned, furious at being told the car couldn't be salvaged and at having been asked for its parts, the self-styled Crap Corner—the main members of the slanderous drawing group—had a good time for the rest of the day. ("Crap Corner" is what we named our group during the making of *The Little Norse Prince Valiant* [*Taiyō no ōji Horusu*]. We were inefficient and the opposite of role models for animators. We took a "Who cares?" attitude that we were nothing more than crap.)

I could go on and on; the Fiat 500 was ultimately rescued by deploying a bulldozer. Unable to wait until the road was completed, Ōtsuka-san spent his pocket money to hire one. He drew detailed pictures to explain to us how the bulldozer used its own scoop to lower itself from the truck. Thanks to this, we'll never have any trouble drawing a scene of a bulldozer

jumping off the back of a truck—not that we've come across a need for a scene like that.

To reinstate Ōtsuka-san's reputation, I will say that he doesn't behave so recklessly anymore. He's turned into an ultra-safe driver (although just recently he plowed into a garbage can with his motorcycle).

It has been nearly twenty years since I first met Ōtsuka-san. For me he is an excellent mentor. We did some foolish things together, but we've also talked passionately about the future of animation. It was Ōtsuka-san who taught me the fun of working. He was always willing to exchange opinions on an equal basis with those younger than he. He also showed me how important it is to choose your work and select people carefully—by himself engaging in heated arguments with the studio for three years, refusing to be the animation director unless Paku-san directed, and finally realizing this with *The Little Norse Prince Valiant.* When you associate with someone for twenty years, you get to know his strengths and weaknesses. Ōtsuka-san and I sometimes lose all restraint, and sometimes we clash. But, even now, I recall with great fondness those days when, preparing for *Little Norse Prince Valiant*, we used to gather at Paku-san's house and talk through the night. We were all young and overflowing with ambition and hope. Those days were truly our time of youth, when we set out on this path.

I Parted Ways with Osamu Tezuka When I Saw the "Hand of God" in Him

Fusion Product's *Comic Box*, May 1989

Tezuka-san was a rival against whom I struggled

This article is supposed to be for a special issue devoted to Osamu Tezuka, so I'm assuming there will be a loud chorus of other people mourning his passing, and I do not intend to add my voice to it.

I think I have probably been far more deeply involved with *Mr.* Tezuka than with the gang who go about calling him *God.* He was a rival against whom I competed, and not someone I put on a pedestal to worship. Of course, to Tezuka-san, I may not have been a rival at all. In this business, however, I would never have been able to do my work had I always referred to the man as God and relegated him to a sacred space.

There is, first of all, the reality that I've been powerfully influenced by Tezuka. When I was in elementary and middle school, I loved his manga more than those of anyone else. Around 1945–1955, during Tezuka's paperback manga period when he was first creating *Tetsuwan Atom*, or *Astro Boy*, my childhood mind found the tragic quality in his work frighteningly appealing. As readers may know, characters like Rock and Atom always had an underlying sense of tragedy about them. Of course, in later years, Atom would change …

Then, after I turned eighteen and decided that I'd better start drawing my own manga, I discovered that I had to struggle to rid myself of Tezuka's influence, it had seeped so deeply into me. This became a big problem.

I have absolutely no recollection of ever imitating Tezuka, and I have never thought that there was any resemblance between our styles, but people kept telling me that my drawings looked like his. That was terribly humiliating. Now, I know that some people say that you should start drawing

manga by imitating others, but I always believed this to be the wrong approach. Perhaps it's because I was the second-born son in my family instead of the first, but I have always believed that I should never try to imitate my older brother or my predecessors. So when I was finally forced to admit that my drawings actually *did* look like Tezuka's, I took out the sketches I had stored in the drawer of our dresser and burned them all. I burned them and resolved to start over from scratch, and in the belief that I needed to study the basics first, I went back to practicing drawing and draftsmanship. Yet it still wasn't easy to rid myself of Tezuka's influence.

What finally did make it possible was entering Toei Animation studios. I was twenty-three or twenty-four at the time. There was a new trend in effect, and I realized that I could create a different direction for myself as an animator. When I say "as an animator," I don't mean creating my own characters, but simply figuring out how to make them move and how to express types of acting; for me, the problem became one of figuring out how to create movement, so as a result the issue of whether my drawings resembled someone else's or not suddenly became irrelevant.

On top of that, if we're talking about influences, in my case they are practically innumerable. I was influenced by the tradition that flowed from firms such as Nihon Dōgasha and Toei Animation, as well as by the ideas in Sanpei Shirato's manga of the time. In fact, when I was an elementary school student, I was at one point even more smitten with Tetsuji Fukushima, who drew *Sabaku no maō* (Devil of the Desert) than I was with Tezuka.

A creator's tricks

When did I undergo the rite of passage that enabled me to part ways with Tezuka? Well, it was when I watched some of his early anime works.

I found myself disgusted by the cheap pessimism of works like *Ningyo* (*Mermaid*), or *Shizuku* (*The Drop*), which showed

a drop of water falling on a thirsty man adrift at sea. I felt that this pessimism was qualitatively different from the pessimism Tezuka used to have in the old days, as in the early days of *Atom*, for example—but it also could have been that in the early days I felt great tragedy and trembled with excitement at Tezuka's cheap pessimism precisely because I was so young. This is something I have no way of confirming at this point. Nonetheless, I later sensed a type of wreckage in his work. I felt that it was almost as if Tezuka had a few little drawers, which he opened, pulled out some things that he had used long ago, and thought, *Wow, look at this!* before reassembling them into some sort of work.

Even before watching *Ningyo* and *Shizuku*, I felt the same thing with Tezuka's *Takes of a Street Corner*—the animated film which Mushi Pro poured nearly everything into making. There's a scene in the film where posters of a ballerina and a violinist or some such things are trampled and scattered by soldiers' boots during an air raid and then waft into the flames like moths. I remember that when I saw this, I was so disgusted that chills ran down my spine.

I felt Tezuka's "hand of God" in these scenes, in the sense that he was consciously and deliberately trying to depict some apocalyptic beauty and impress everyone. It was the same thing that I felt with *Shizuku* and *Ningyo.* What had once been imaginative for the creator between 1945 and 1955 had simply become another trick in his toolbox.

From a senior of mine in the industry, I once heard that when Tezuka was working on the production of the *Saiyūki* (*Alakazam the Great*) animation feature, he reportedly advocated inserting an episode showing the hero monkey, Songokū, coming back and finding his girlfriend (also a monkey) dead. But there was never any reason for the girl monkey to be dead. When I learned from other people that Tezuka had advocated this simply because "it would be more moving," I fully realized that I could part ways with him.

That sums up my opinion of Osamu Tezuka.

After that, he never did anything related to animation that I liked. And I didn't like the work that was done by his old studio, Mushi Productions, either. It wasn't just that I didn't like it; frankly, I found it weird. Now, I'll refrain from going into too much detail because I don't want to belabor the point, but when I saw *Tenrankai no e* (*Pictures at an Exhibition*), I really wondered what the heck the film was all about. And in the last scene in *Cleopatra*, at the line, "Go home, Rome," I felt disgust. They had spent so much effort trying to develop so many sexy love scenes that the final "Go home, Rome," line was just too much for me to take. That was around the time I really sensed the bankruptcy of Tezuka's vanity.

At one point Tezuka used to go around saying "Limited animation's the way to go now. Three frames—just use three frames!" But limited animation doesn't mean three frames, and anyway after that he turned what he had been saying on its head and started yakking all over the place about how great "full animation" is, but it seemed to me that he didn't have any idea what that meant, either. Similarly, when he went out and bought a rotoscope, we all wound up laughing at him.

There is a well-known *rakugo* comedy routine in which the owner of a tenement is learning *gidayū* ballads and gets all his tenants together and forces them to listen to him. Well, Tezuka's animation was just like that.

In 1963, Tezuka created Japan's first TV anime series, *Tetsuwan Atom*, or *Astro Boy*, at the very low price of 500,000 yen per episode. Because he established this precedent, animation productions ever after have unfortunately suffered from low budgets.

This was the beginning of a problem, but I also think that TV animation was destined to have started in Japan, anyway, even without Tezuka, because of the nation's rapid economic growth. Tezuka just happened to be the person who triggered it. Without Tezuka, the industry might have started two or

three years later. And then I probably could have relaxed a bit and spent a little longer working in the field of feature animation, using more traditional techniques.

But that's all irrelevant now.

The end of the Shōwa period[35]

Overall, my opinion of Tezuka is as follows: I appreciate him for being the person to pioneer story manga, and for having created the current of the times in which we work today. So when writing or speaking about him in public, I have always referred to him with respect as "Osamu Tezuka." And this is because he was not just my rival, but also my predecessor. I have written about him exactly the same way I would write about some other famous historical figure from the past, like Hirobumi Itō.[36] And I think I am correct to appreciate him in this way.

In terms of animation, however, I think I have the right and responsibility to say the following—everything that Mr. Tezuka talked about or emphasized was wrong.

Why did such an unfortunate state of affairs arise? I think, as can be seen from Tezuka's early manga works, it is because his starting point was Disney. Because in Japan at the time there was no one who could be his teacher, no one he could emulate, Tezuka's early works are almost all just imitations of Disney. To them he merely added his own narrative element. I say added, but his worlds continued to be created under huge influence from Disney. As a result, he always had an inferiority complex, a fear that he would never be able to surpass "the grand old man." That's why he always thought that he had to outdo Disney's *Fantasia*, or *Pinocchio*, and why he was never able to overcome his compulsion to do so. At least that is my interpretation. It becomes understandable if you think of his work in animation as a hobby—something a rich man might do for a diversion.

When I heard that Tezuka had passed away, I truly felt that it was the end of the Shōwa era, even more so than when I heard that the Shōwa Emperor himself had passed away. Tezuka was a ferociously active person, and in his life he probably accomplished three times more than most people do. So given that he died at sixty, he really lived a hundred and eighty years' worth.

I think that he truly lived a full life.

About Futaki-san

Introduction, *Sekai no mannaka no ki* (The Tree at the Center of the Earth), by Makiko Futaki, Animage Library, November 30, 1989

Makiko Futaki-san is an important member of our animation staff.

For *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*'s scene on the sandbar of the acid lake, in which the wounded Nausicaä meets the baby *ohmu*, Futaki-san drew the scene as if she herself shared Nausicaä's pain.

As the director, I was amazed when—for *Castle in the Sky*'s scene of the rooftop meeting between Pazu and Sheeta—she did so many wonderful key animation drawings of a smiling Sheeta, gradually opening her heart while white pigeons flocked to the breadcrumbs in her hand. It was just a three-second scene. But even if it is an important scene, if it sticks out too much from the surrounding scenes there is always the danger that it will mar the flow of the entire film, making the director think twice. In this case the scene of Sheeta and the pigeons was imbued with a tactile reality that could only have been drawn by someone who has actually let pigeons feed from her hand. The result was a scene that symbolized the personality of the heroine Sheeta while unmistakably enriching the entire sequence of her meeting with Pazu, the boy hero.

For *My Neighbor Totoro*, Futaki-san happily depicted the meeting of four-year-old Mei and Totoro as well as the trees that stretched toward the sky. Once again her drawing of an abundance of leaves and tadpoles made those around her relieved that they weren't doing the in-between animation. Their heads reeled just thinking about the effort needed to turn her key animation drawings into movement. But strangely enough, it wasn't that hard to find people willing to work on those scenes. I couldn't help but laugh when we heard that the filming staff said it was almost like working from actual photographs.

In *Kiki's Delivery Service*, she drew with even more precision the swaying grasses in the film's initial scene on the windy hill. There was no need to tell her anything more than "I leave it up to you." Combined with the power of the background art, in that scene we managed to express the feeling of a slightly chilly wind, creating a memorable lead-in, symbolic of the excitement of a girl about to depart on her first big trip.

Futaki-san is a strange person who often picks up wounded birds and lost chicks. Each time she throws aside her work to try to revive them, mostly to no avail. In *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, I'm sure her pain from these experiences allowed her to render the baby *ohmu*'s expression not just visually, but emotionally. She must have been able to feel the tough shell of the baby *ohmu* against Nausicaä's body, even its temperature. I think the excellence of Futaki-san's animation lies in her effort to express not only the visual but also the tactile effect. The imbalance of her sensibility—her strong caring and keen observation powers for creatures other than human—can be seen as both her strength and her weakness. But there is no mistaking that for our films these qualities make her a valuable asset.

Unfortunately, there are not many avenues for Futaki-san to express her talents in Japan's present animation world. Depictions of plants are easy to avoid. Also, the piecework payment structure that is set at so much per second makes it difficult for her to be fairly compensated for her efforts.

I must admit that I have not yet taken a look at this book she illustrated. She is the type who cannot take on multiple projects at once, and with interruptions for film work, I hear it took her a year to complete these illustrations. Normally, I'm not in favor of animators taking on other work, but in the case of Futaki-san I am eager to encourage her. This is because I don't think her sweeping and deep interest in the world and in living beings can be expressed fully through animation.

My heartfelt hope is that many people will accept Futaki-san's new world, one carefully created, sparing no time or effort.

My Teacher and I

Asahi Shimbun, March 24, 1990

My middle school years took place after the war, when Japan's new education system was still freshly minted. The teachers were individualistic and fun.

Then I entered high school and I couldn't understand why I had to study. The only thing I wanted to do was draw manga. I couldn't draw as much as I wanted, but I wasn't assertive enough to become a delinquent, either. Looking back on those days I think I must have slept through most of them.

I went to university to give myself a moratorium, to give myself some time off so that I could draw manga. To get some training I started going to Satō-sensei's atelier nearby. He had been my art teacher in middle school, but had resigned from the school and was then working on oil paintings while employed as the director of a kindergarten. He was an easygoing, somewhat eccentric person. His small atelier, with oil paintings in progress and two or three plaster statues, became my refuge.

I joined the children's literature study group at university. There I once again had to confront my own childhood, which I had summarized as shamefully pathetic and locked away from myself. My father's family had run a military equipment company before the war. My father would say things like, "Even Stalin said the people have no sin." But these older men who were part of "the people" occasionally talked about having killed people in China. Weren't Japanese perpetrators in the war? Weren't my father and others mistaken? Having been raised by such parents, wasn't I a product of their mistakes? Those were days when I couldn't help but indulge in such self-negation.

I couldn't even draw any decent manga. Was I making even one millimeter of progress per day? I was full of impatience

and uncertainty, overcome by the feeling that what I was doing was entirely in vain.

Every Saturday I went to the atelier and sketched things like plaster statues. In the evening, my teacher would arrive and, looking at me dejectedly sketching, say, “Let’s have a drink.” So we would have drinks and talk about politics, life, all sorts of things.

My teacher would say things like, “There are people who cross the ocean safely and pleasantly on a luxury liner, while others cross rowing a raft. But if you’re going to cross the ocean anyway, rowing a raft will really let you experience the act of crossing.” And, “Living isn’t interesting; life is boring. That’s why I draw paintings and tell lies. Inside the painting is my reality, my soul. And I assume it’s the same for you with manga …”

At night, I plodded home, walking the distance of three stations on the Inokashira Line. It wasn’t as if my problems could be resolved just by drinking and talking. I never disclosed my distress to my teacher because I thought that no one would understand my feelings. What is more, I didn’t even like my teacher much in those days. When we’re young, we like people to be intense and open with their feelings, don’t we?

And yet, when I am asked, “Who was your teacher?” the face of Satō-sensei is the one that comes to mind.

When I had no place to go, when I couldn’t figure things out, I would go visit Satō-sensei and he would always be there. For me as an eighteen-year-old, a person in his fifties—who had no direct relation to me as a parent or school teacher, and whose values and political beliefs were different from mine—was just there. And I know that this simple fact meant something to me.

Descendant of a Giant Sloth

From press conference materials related to *Omoide poro poro* (*Only Yesterday*), November 21, 1990

My old friends and I all refer to Isao Takahata, the director, by the nickname "Paku-san." Paku-san's hobbies are music and studying. He possesses rarely seen and highly sensitive compositional skills, but by nature he is also a real slugabed sloth. People say that humans are descended from apes, but when we look around the studio, we sometimes wonder if there might also be some descendants of the pig character Cho Hakkai, or Zhū Bājiè as the Chinese call him, in *Saiyūki*,[37] or aliens from Ganymede. And if that's the case, then when all is said and done Paku-san must be the descendant of some giant sloth that once crawled the plains of earth in the Pliocene era.

The first feature animation that he worked on was Toei Animation's *Little Norse Prince Valiant.* I was on the production staff too, so it does indeed seem ridiculous for me to praise him too much, but I've always believed that you should have a different view of a work after the production than you did before. With *Little Norse Prince Valiant*, Paku-san really proved that animation has the power to depict the inner mind of humans in depth. However, he also showed how risky and scary it was for a corporation to make him the director of a feature-length film. A production that was supposed to take one year was delayed once, then delayed again—by the time it was finally completed I had gotten married, had my first son, and my son had already celebrated his first birthday.

The producers at the time—I use the plural here because there was quite a turnover—are still unable to hide their anger at Paku-san. But at the same time they also speak of him with an odd nostalgia, which all goes to show how mysterious the world of filmmaking can be.

I've worked with Paku-san on many productions since then. Of course, since he's the descendant of a giant sloth, I tend to become like the raccoon character in the manga and animation *Bonobono*. But sloths actually have very sharp claws, and they're hardly peace-loving animals. Sometimes they will suddenly stage ferocious attacks and slash their opponents, so it's important not to get on their bad side. Of course, I myself do not have a sufficiently sterling character to find fault with others for their ferocity. I'm sure that Paku-san cuts his foes more deeply than I do.

With Paku-san, you can be guaranteed that at several points in the production he will begin yelling, "I can't possibly make this film!" He wants to be logical and coherent, so he will begin discussing at great length why something is impossible (and this includes projects that he himself has proposed), boring the producers or colleagues who must listen to him to the point of stupefaction. But those of us who are old friends of his will ignore him and consider it all merely an unavoidable part of the process. Of course, we do this with an enormous amount of sympathy for those who have been subjected to what he has to say …

I have had Paku-san work as a producer on several of my own films. Conversely, *Only Yesterday* is by no means the first film where he is the director and I the producer. I worked with him on a feature-length documentary film called *Yanagawa horiwari monogatari* (*The Story of the Yanagawa Waterways*). It was supposed to take one year and wound up taking three, but since it was an indie film with no fixed release date there was no big problem with that.

The moment I ran across the story of *Only Yesterday* I knew instinctively that Paku-san was the only person who could properly turn it into a film. The original story had something wonderful about it, but I also knew that the nature of its composition would make it a very difficult project. If we were to make the film too faithful to the original story, the result would probably have only a fraction of the original's power.

Nevertheless, something about the story wouldn't let us give up.

The original story had highly abbreviated, manga-esque characters, so it occurred to me at the time that—even if Paku-san were to bring his typically complicated approach to the project—we still might be able to adhere to some sort of schedule. Of course, this supposition on my part would later be proved to be wildly off target, for a twenty-seven-year-old adult protagonist (not in the original story) soon appeared, and began pontificating about farming problems in Japan and helping out with work in the field—and the film quickly started spiraling out of control.

So I wound up experiencing the same sort of fear that many other producers have when working with Paku-san. In advance of a summer release, we had planned spring screenings. We had to cancel them; the production was proceeding so slowly that the entire studio seemed to have been transformed into a giant sloth.

In view of this, Suzuki-san the producer and others realized that they had to somehow corral the sloths and drive them toward the finish line. So, in conjunction with the very happy release of this most moving film, I hope that you will all keep in mind the highly intense internal struggles that went on in the background and made it all possible.

I Left Raising Our Children to My Wife

Chūnichi Shimbun, January 31, 1992

You want me to talk about my family? That's a problem for me. I'm hardly ever at home. Last night I got home at 1:30 AM, the night before it was 1 AM. It's not as if I go out on the town. I'm a father who works too hard and returns home late at night six days a week. Usually I repeat, "I've got to go now," several times as I eat breakfast; when I have the rare day off all I do is sleep.

It wasn't so bad when I was employed at a company. But twenty years ago, when I began to produce my own films, this schedule turned into a lifestyle. Animation work isn't something that is over when a certain amount is done. One has to pursue it until one is satisfied.

That is why I have left family affairs and raising our children to my wife. She was a colleague when we were at Toei Animation, so she understands my work and how much labor is needed to complete a project. She had wanted to continue to work on her drawings. When we got married, I promised her that we would both have careers. Until our second son was born, I used to take the older one to preschool and meet him there at the end of the day. But when I saw our older son walking home half asleep, I decided that it was impossible for both of us to work.

I still feel contrite about breaking my promise. But since then I have been able to focus on my work. With me not at home very much, my wife would finish up the housework and often do the things that fathers normally do, such as teach our boys kite-flying and top-spinning. On holidays, mother and sons would sometimes go hiking in the hills around Okumusashi in the western outskirts of Tokyo.

Perhaps due to my wife's efforts, today both of our children are able to do things for themselves. At the risk of sounding overblown, they can live on their own without needing help

from others. I tried to be a good father, but in the end I wasn't a very good parent. I thought I hadn't demanded that they study or insisted on what path they should take, leaving it up to them. But from my children I hear, "Father didn't scold us with words, he scolded us by showing us his back."

Our older son likes mountains. In high school he joined the mountain-climbing club and later chose to go to university in mountainous Nagano Prefecture. He is now working for a landscape design firm. He constantly says that he wants to go back to the Nagano mountains in the future. He may move away some day. Our younger son is studying design at a college in Tokyo, and he rents a room away from home.

When I reflect on my family, for me the form that it takes differs according to the situation at the time. When the children were young, they made me want to make movies for them, to show them certain kinds of work. My children were both my motivation for work and my best audience.

Now that they are grown up, these same children no long engender such thoughts in me. And it makes me wonder where the young children of those days went, and whether that same kind of energy will be rekindled when I have grandchildren.

When our children were small, my wife and I had a common agenda to cooperate as a married couple for the sake of our children. Now we are entering the stage of life where we must face each other as simply husband and wife, but I am still consumed by my work and continuing my moratorium on participating in raising my children. My wife goes two or three times a week to help her parents, as they are not well. We do talk about our need to start thinking about the future for the two of us.

Pithy Comments

Mori Yasuji no Sekai ("The World of Yasuji Mori"), Nibariki, February 28, 1992

You could hardly call me one of Yasuji Mori-san's stellar apprentices. Even as a newcomer, I was confrontational, impudent, and insolent. I could only see his work as out of date. Despite this, strangely enough, Mori-san always seemed to understand us young animators the best, and when we attempted something new we were convinced that he would be supportive. What an embarrassingly selfish attitude I had.

Mori-san always indulged me, even in the state I was in. He approved of almost everything, telling me to do as I wanted. And he assessed my abilities with pithy comments. It was only much later that I fully realized the weight, no, the fearfulness, of Mori-san's comments. And it was only during the screening of the final cut of *Little Norse Prince Valiant* that I realized his real strength. Amid the turmoil of finalizing the film, I had no idea what kind of work Mori-san had been doing. Tears streamed from my eyes. It was not because the three-year project was over. It was because I couldn't stop crying over the figure of Hilda that Mori-san had drawn. I had thought that I had put all my efforts into the film project, but I realized then that my work had simply been to create a container. It was Mori-san who had put the soul into it. I had never so clearly confronted my own work's immaturity and my own tawdry concept of heroism, but it was only later that I realized this. During that viewing of the final cut in the Toei screening room, I discovered for the first time the substance and sadness of Hilda's presence and I cried, not as one of the production staff, but as a member of the audience.

Even after this, it took time to understand Mori-san's real greatness. After all, I was not a good apprentice. When I worked on *Puss 'n Boots* and *Animal Treasure Island* all I thought about was how I might leave my own mark on these works. The mere fact that Mori-san was there as key animation

director gave us on the staff a strong sense of security. And that was why I was able to spread my wings and do as I pleased. And this, too, is something that I realized much later.

I can't exactly say when I was first able to understand what Mori-san gave me. There wasn't any single event, so I can only say that I gradually became aware of having been handed something very important. It seems impossible to convey this properly in words, so I probably should keep silent about it. After all, Mori-san himself never put it into words. And here I am, wandering around in a place far removed from that something. But we did receive something from Mori-san. I hope I can pass the baton he has handed us on to the next people in this relay race …

Assuming that Mori-san will read these comments, let me conclude with the following:

Mori-san came to the screening of *My Neighbor Totoro* and told me, "It's good." As usual, it was a pithy comment. But it was also the first time I felt that Mori-san had really praised me. Those two words meant more to me than anything. They made me extremely happy.

The Sound of the Winds of These Times

Afterword: *Jidai no kazaoto* (The Sound of the Winds of These Times, three-way discussion transcription), Yoshie Hotta, Ryōtarō Shiba, Hayao Miyazaki, U.P.U., November 10, 1992

I am an avid reader of what both of you have written, but I'm one of those readers who soon forgets what he's read so I never become any wiser. I have long dreamed of having you both discuss the times we live in and the current state of Japan.

The convulsions of the world have reached even my small workplace, and if I'm not careful, I'm afraid that I will be passively swept along by them, too. I therefore implore you both to indicate the road to take—I know I may be scolded by both of you for even asking such a thing—but it is my honest feeling in these times of chaos.

Having traditionally been a leftist in terms of emotional affinity, in the face of unprecedented economic prosperity and the recent demise of socialist nations, I've been adamant about not automatically converting to one of those ordinary realists with no ideals. I therefore thought the two of you could teach me where I am and what path I should follow in this world. I frankly never thought this dream of mine—of having both of you speaking, with me as the interviewer—would ever be realized, but I was determined to do my best to bring it about.

I wasn't afraid of being humiliated in these discussions; I only regret my lack of ability. It is retribution for my always having used such imprecise language. On so many occasions I failed to take the chance to go deeper into the discussion. While I was still mulling things over, the conversation moved on to the next topic.

I'll never forget the instant Shiba-san said, "People are irredeemable."

To that, Hotta-san straightened and responded, "That's true. People *are* irredeemable." He spoke in a firm, energetic tone.

Hotta-san was like Kamo no Chōmei[38] who put a folding hut onto an ox cart and, leaving the capital behind, went into the mountains to become a hermit.

Shiba-san was like a white-haired nomad on a horse on the green slopes of the northern Tien-shan Mountains in Mongolia.

I was like a print-seller in a back alley, left behind.

This might not be the place to bring up personal matters, but my mother who passed away a while ago used to say, “People can’t help what they do.” When I was young, we had many intense arguments. When she spoke of the defection of cultured people after the war, I found something unbearable about her thorny distrust.

I am still in awe, and your words have made my spirits light. I may be misunderstood if I call it a clear nihilism. Cheap nihilism makes people corrupt. But nihilism based on realism is an entirely different thing from simply negating people. I would love to extend my own viewpoint, and have a much longer perspective on things.

The two discussions we had have also made me feel much more ener-getic. In fact, I feel as though an electric current has started flowing through the dormant circuits in my brain. Although serving as the interviewer in these discussions has been extremely satisfying for me, I must apologize to the readers for not having been able to do a better job.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who made this opportunity possible.

My Old Man's Back

Asahi Shimbun, September 4, 1995

A man who professed that he didn't want to go to war, yet profited from the war. A man who had no compunction about harboring these contradictions within himself. My old man was that kind of man.

According to my old man, around 1940, just after my older brother was born, he was in the army. Around the time he was to be sent to the Asian mainland, his commanding officer announced, "Anyone who doesn't want to go, declare yourself."

No doubt he said this to rouse the morale of his squadron. But my old man took this statement at face value and announced to the officer, "I have a wife and baby, so I can't possibly go to the front lines." In those days, saying something like that was unthinkable. A sergeant who had taken him under his wing harangued him for disloyalty for two hours.

As a result, my old man ended up being left behind in Japan. And then I was born, so I am grateful on that score.

During the Pacific War, he headed the Miyazaki Airplane factory, making parts for military planes. He had unskilled workers mass-produce parts, many of which were defective. But he told us that if he bribed the people in charge, the parts were usually accepted. And after the war, he had no sense of guilt about having been involved in the military arms industry or having produced defective parts. In effect, for him war was something that only idiots engaged in. If we were going to war anyway, he was going to make money off of it. He had absolutely no interest in just causes or the fate of the state. For him the only concern was how his family would survive.

In his way he was dissolute. He told me while I was still in high school, "Have you started smoking yet? When I was your age, I was already paying for geisha girls." After my mother died, he often told us of his exploits. "The trick to playing

around with women is to make sure they get tired of you," he said. He was still going to nightclubs after he'd turned seventy.

When he died two years ago, those of us who gathered together agreed that he had never once said anything particularly lofty or inspiring. If I have one regret, it is that I never discussed things seriously with my old man. From the time I was young, I always looked at him as a negative example. But it seems, after all, that I am like him. I have inherited my old man's anarchistic feelings and his lack of concern about embracing contradictions.

Recently I have come to think that there must have been quite a few people who, like my old man, behaved irresponsibly during the war. There may have been quite a bit of realism among the lower strata of society—a type of realism that couldn't be fully summarized by the words "militarism" and "nationalism." The solid, somber, and hysterical times that we associate with the war may have only come toward the very end.

A Requiem for Ryōtarō Shiba-san

Asahi Shimbun, February 14, 1996

I loved Shiba-san. Five years ago, he, Yoshie Hotta-san, and I held a three-way discussion which was turned into a book. I also participated in a discussion with him for the New Year's edition of *Shūkan Asahi* (*Asahi Weekly*).

Shiba-san tried to live out the best aspects of the Japanese people. He valued having a sense of shame and behaving with civility. He had a greatness in his character that didn't make it into his writings. In his effort to maintain a certain dignity, in his discussions he edited out parts that might cause misunderstandings.

During our three-way discussion, he revealed, "I am writing a novel as a letter to myself to answer the question I posed at the age of twenty: Why I was born in a country that engaged in such a foolish war?" I actually think Shiba-san spent his entire life investigating how the foolish Shōwa era came to be. He touched upon the authority of the military's supreme command. But beyond that, he was restrained, choosing not to delve into many issues while those who had directly experienced the events were still alive.

I think Shiba-san was actually very fond of the pragmatic commanders on the front lines. But I suspect he hated the foolish and unpragmatic military higher-ups. His position was that the most important thing is to have human beings who are moral, and that without such principled people one cannot properly discuss history.

Shiba-san's gaze was piercing and skeptical, but it was softened by his shock of white hair. He always made an effort to live a life of harmonious civility, even in the midst of life's inevitable conflicts.

I am forced to watch as we Japanese find ourselves in a truly pathetic era of near ruin. I am relieved that Shiba-san passed away before he had to witness this deplorable state.

About Ryōtarō Shiba-san

Shūkan Playboy (*Weekly Playboy*), Shūeisha, March 26, 1996 issue

Shiba-san was someone who continually wrote about what it means to be "an appealing Japanese." As a result, to many people, his countenance, way of speaking, and other mannerisms came to represent an appealing Japanese personality.

During the Meiji period, and the Bakumatsu[39] years at the end of the Tokugawa period—indeed, at any period in history—foolish people were in the majority. Because Shiba-san fully understood that they were foolish, I think he also always searched hard for those who weren't.

This may have resulted at times in some people having the illusion that Japanese in the past were noble—an illusion that certainly would be a problem.

Shiba-san stated on various occasions that there were definitely such appealing Japanese in history. His thought was that by comparison present-day Japanese are not appealing, they are disgruntled. At the end of last year, when I saw him for the last time, he said, "Japan has become a good country." And I wonder what he really meant.

Reading Shiba-san's harsh comments on our current real-estate and housing-loan fiascos, and seeing how foolishly we Japanese are still acting, I wonder if he felt that this country was hopeless. But he never denigrated the living. He always made an effort never to overtly insult or degrade us.

I'm a careless sort of person, so I am often quick to say bad things about people. Shiba-san, however, always made every effort to be fully conscious of and ready for the consequences of any negative statements he made about a person. He would collect all the material he could—to such an extent that he would deplete the books at the used bookstores. Only then would he write something negative. That is why when he

wrote about General Nogi in *Junshi*[40] (Following the Emperor in Death) he made sure it was not on the level of gossip or defamation.

Shiba-san would, moreover, always attempt to find in people of the present generation the same appealing qualities that he wrote about in his histories. This he did even for unknown people. He was particularly proper in the way he approached them, to try to find their good qualities.

For example, Shiba-san liked craftsmen. When I had the chance to speak with him about Japan, he gave as his reason for liking Japan that it was a country that had not lost respect for people who made things. Our top leaders may be no good, he said, but in terms of the military, these craftsmen would be the noncommissioned officers, or in civilian terms, the nameless commoners—not the sort of people who seek fame or honors or wealth. He considered the best part of Japan to be the people who, knowing that they could just get by, are nonetheless motivated on their own to pour their minds and bodies into being the best in something. He thought that someone who could sit with his legs folded under him in a small room and sharpen fountain pens all his life was possessed by the gods.

This was the kind of person he was. History can be greatly changed by the appearance of the occasional genius. But when no genius leader appeared to lead in Japan, the country was supported by these unknown, always diligent people.

In the context of being Japanese, "decency" is a term that has been sullied. But the people Shiba-san wrote about were full of decency.

And it is this quality of decency that I find so attractive.

The "civility" I learned from Shiba-san

Hearing Shiba-san speak was much better than reading his books. He spoke of history. But it wasn't the usual historical descriptions of people who lived in the past and what they

accomplished. He spoke in his distinctive Shiba-style about the historical period when the person was born, the atmosphere and the scenery of the area, the person's family. Shiba-san always conveyed, in an appealing way, what he saw as the positive qualities of his subjects. It was irresistible. Shiba-san excavated many such role models.

I think Shiba-san himself agonized when he wrote. But he was always cheerful whenever he met with people. When I saw him recently, I told him, "You looked so dapper when you received the Cultural Merit Award." He was bashful about it, but I really do think he looked terribly dashing.

He said, "I'll go back to being a student tomorrow." This wasn't posturing for him; it was the very way the people he wrote about lived.

* * * *

As I watch my sons' ways of life, I wonder how they will live in the future and grumble to myself about how difficult the times are.

In my last discussion with Shiba-san, we delved quite frankly into environmental issues. When I asked what would become of the world when its population rose to ten billion, Shiba-san, while questioning how such arrogance should even be allowed to happen, put it this way: "Even in the Kamakura period when there were only eight million Japanese, people had a hard time living. If you had been alive then, you wouldn't have been able to imagine Japan with a hundred million people. If the world becomes ten billion people, even though we can't imagine that now, there will still be a way for them to live." While thinking, "Ten billion, you've got to be kidding!" he nonetheless stopped to remember his basic belief that he should always regard Japan and the rest of the world with compassion.

His thorough research into history meant that he always had ample proof of the foolishness of human beings. Yet he still

attempted to discover an appealing way to live. That, I think, was Shiba-san's "civility."

It occurs to me that this "civility" is an important way to deal with our current problems. There is definitely a fissure in humanity's karma. When we consider the relationship between nature and humans, although humans are part of nature and nature gives us life, there is a definite break between us and nature. We try to conserve nature because it yields a nature useful to us as a species. But nature is essentially savage. It negates culture and civilization. Despite humans' efforts to improve things for themselves, nature contains elements flatly opposed to our efforts. And in certain cases these lead to rifts between societies and ethnic groups.

I am a person who thinks we should consider environmental issues from the point of view of the civility I learned from Shiba-san. We need to show civility not only to other living things but also, I think, to the water, the mountains, and the air. At a minimum, to be civil means to initiate civility, but not to demand it of others.

A person who understood what is troubling us

We human beings think that if children are right in front of our eyes, the only way to feed them is to cut down the trees around us to cultivate fields. This is the unstoppable dynamic of human civilization. When we do so, those children have children whom they want to feed, leading to ever-increasing numbers. This is how we will wind up with a population of ten billion.

In our own era, human selfishness is leading to the extinctions of other species. I personally don't believe this earth can support ten billion people. So when we consider how to bridge this reality and our own daily lives, it might seem that the easiest thing would be to join a movement and declare, "You're bad, they're bad, he's bad, and I'm right." But this would not resolve anything. The solution is not some vague notion that nature benefits people or that without nature Japan

will disintegrate. Civility has to be the foundation of everything: If we have troubles let us share them. Let us share what we humans have with other living beings, and share what we as individuals have with others.

It is in this sense that I said environmental problems are also a matter of civility. And Shiba-san agreed with me on this point. Events that cannot easily be resolved have a special meaning. The housing loan problem is only one aspect of a major crisis affecting Northeast Asia. This problem and its resolution will affect the entire world. We need to face the fact, without becoming too pessimistic, that we have entered this crisis stage.

I mourn Shiba-san's death. I shouldn't say this, but when my old man and my mother died, I was prepared for their deaths. I wish Shiba-san had lived longer.

It is not that I want to keep asking him about Japan's future. But it is tough for me not being able to always complain to him, as I used to, that "We're in dire straits." Shiba-san would have replied, "Yes, things are really difficult," and his simple response alone would probably have made me feel relieved.

When times were tough, Shiba-san always seemed to be the one who could best comprehend the nature of our difficulties. It's not that I wanted him to teach me something. I'm sure you know what I mean. It must have been a burden to Shiba-san to have had so many expectations of him.

---

35 December 25, 1926–January 7, 1989; the "period of enlightened peace" representing the reign of Emperor Hirohito. This tumultuous period saw the rise of an authoritarian government, and conflicts with Western powers, culminating in the the Second World War. Japan's economy rebounded after the war, making Japan a world power. The democratic state became a close ally of the United States after a period of occupation.

36 The first prime minister of Japan, Itō (October 16, 1841–October 26, 1909) established the cabinet system and held the office of prime minister a total of four times. He negotiated better trade terms with Western powers and supported the First Sino-JapaneseWar (August 1, 1894–April 17, 1895). At the conclusion of the war, Japan held influence over the Korean peninsula. Itō was named the first resident-

general of Japan on December 21, 1905. He was assassinated by a Korean nationalist who objected to the annexation of Korea.

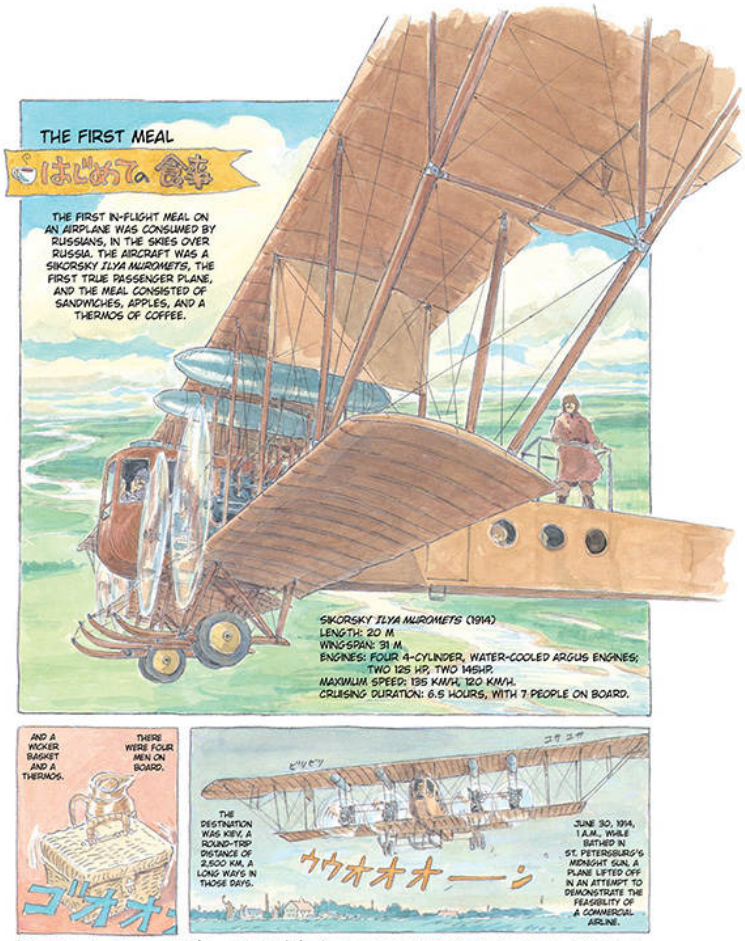
37 *Journey to the West* (circa 1590s); one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature. An epic detailing the journey of the Monkey King—a trickster figure—and several other mythic creatures from China to India in order to achieve enlightenment. The 1960 Japanese animated film released as *Alakazam the Great* (see p. 195) is also based on this classic.

38 1155–1216; a poet and essayist in the Imperial Court. Disappointed after not being promoted, he became a hermit living in a hut outside the capital.

39 1853–1867. After being forcibly opened to trade by the "black ships" of Admiral Perry in 1853, Japan ended its isolationist stance. Japan quickly modernized its naval forces, but was unprepared for untrammeled free trade, leading to economic upheaval. Political conflict between *daimyo* allowed the emperor to speak directly on affairs of state. However, Emperor Komei's orders to "expel the barbarians" led to open conflict with Western powers. Realizing that direct warfare was futile given the technological gap between it and the West, Japan fully embraced a program of modernization.

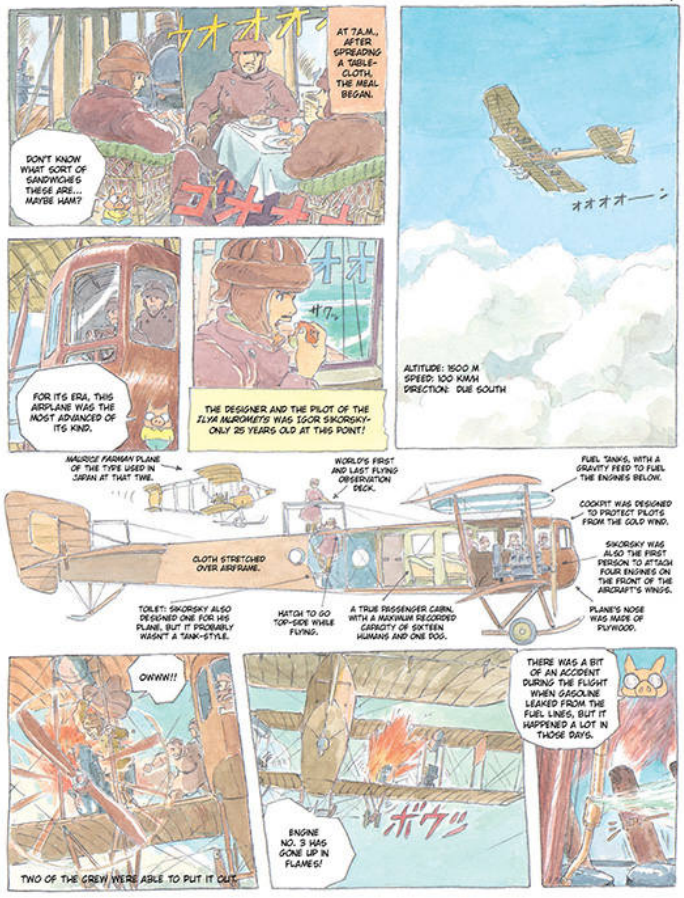
40 A highly critical fictionalized account of General Maresuke Nogi, a military leader in the Russo-Japanese War who followed Emperor Meiji in death.

Winds (Japan Airlines in-flight magazine), June 1994



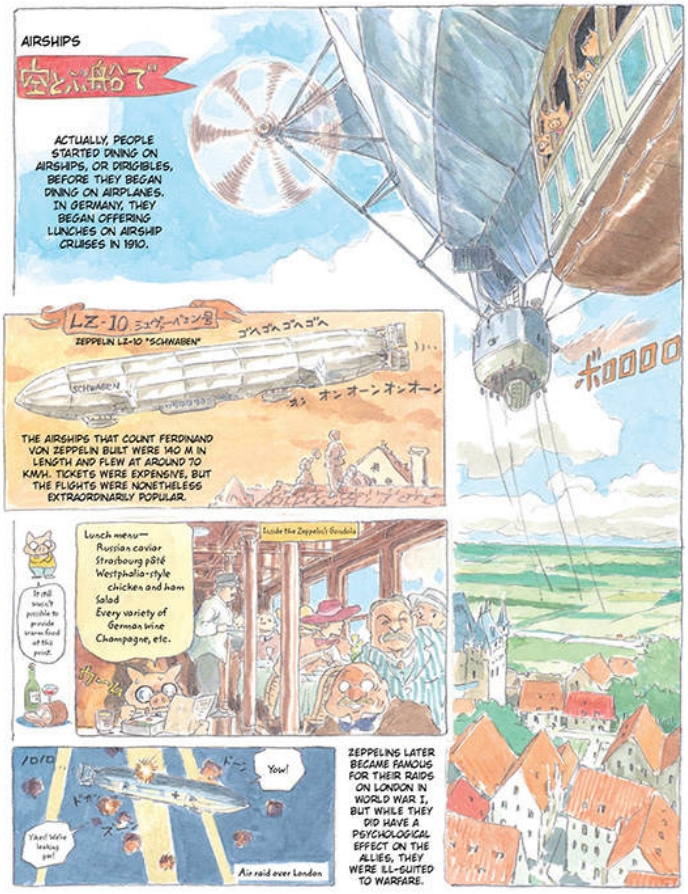
*Japanese comics are read from right to left. Read each page starting in the upper right corner.

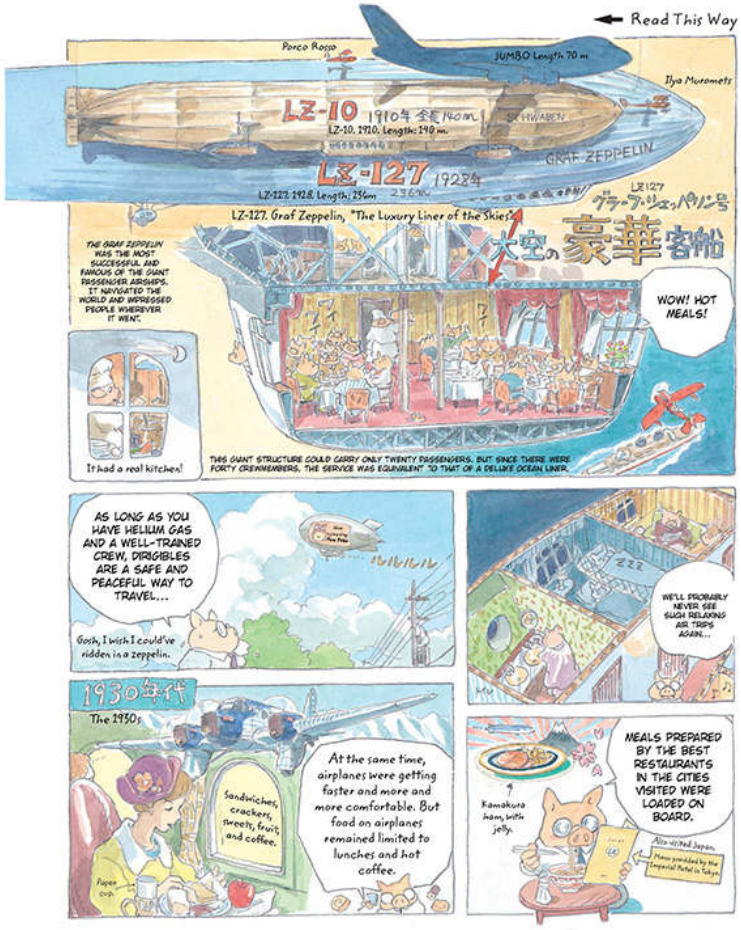
← Read This Way



← Read This Way

← Read This Way



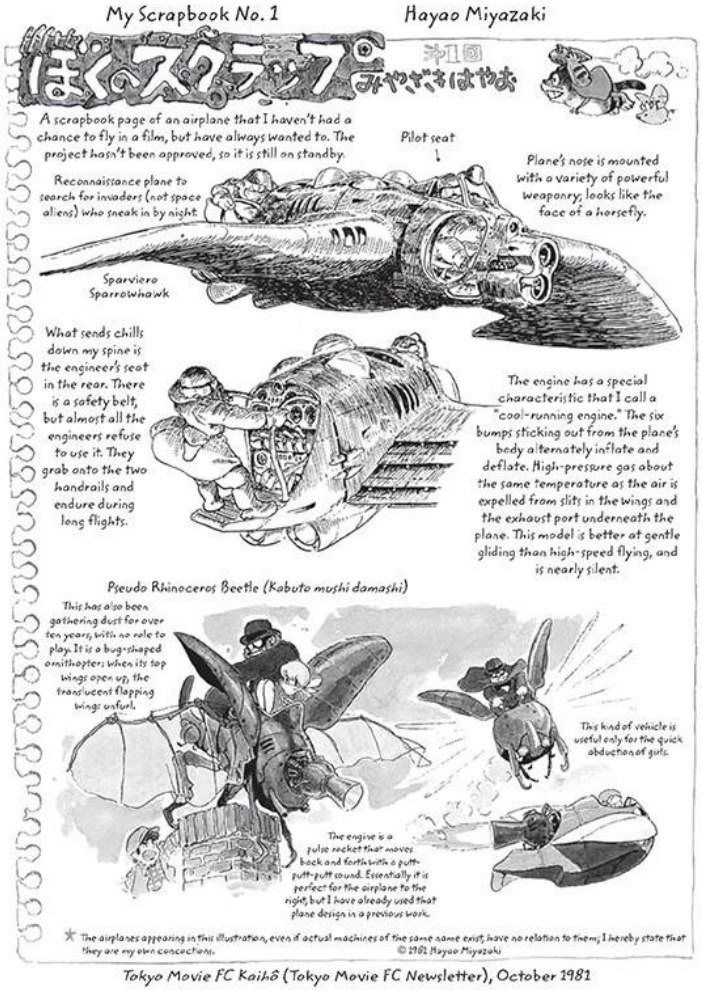

Read This Way
Porco Rosso
JUMBO Length: 70 m
Ilya Muromets
LZ-10 1910年 全長140m
LZ-10, 1910, Length: 140 m.
SCHWABEN
GRAF ZEPPELIN
LZ-127 1928年
LZ-127, 1928, Length: 236m
LZ127 グラーフ・ツェッペリン号
LZ-127, Graf Zeppelin, "The Luxury Liner of the Skies"
大空の豪華客船
THE GRAF ZEPPELIN WAS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL AND FAMOUS OF THE GIANT PASSENGER AIRSHIPS. IT NAVIGATED THE WORLD AND IMPRESSED PEOPLE WHEREVER IT WENT.
WOW! HOT MEALS!
It had a real kitchen!
THIS GIANT STRUCTURE COULD CARRY ONLY TWENTY PASSENGERS, BUT SINCE THERE WERE FORTY CREWMEMBERS, THE SERVICE WAS EQUIVALENT TO THAT OF A DELUXE OCEAN LINER.
AS LONG AS YOU HAVE HELIUM GAS AND A WELL-TRAINED CREW, DIRIGIBLES ARE A SAFE AND PEACEFUL WAY TO TRAVEL...
Gosh, I wish I could've ridden in a zeppelin.
ZZZ
WE'LL PROBABLY NEVER SEE SUCH RELAXING AIR TRIPS AGAIN...
1930年代
The 1930s
Sandwiches, crackers, sweets, fruit and coffee.
Paper cup
At the same time, airplanes were getting faster and more and more comfortable. But food on airplanes remained limited to lunches and hot coffee.
Kamakura ham, with jelly.
MEALS PREPARED BY THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN THE CITIES VISITED WERE LOADED ON BOARD.
Also visited Japan.
Menu provided by the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo.

Read This Way
1937(昭12)
1937
The Nakajima AT-2 passenger plane. Japan's first true civil aircraft, partly modeled after the Douglas DC-2.
IZUMO
Not drawn accurately, but you get the idea...
Used between Tokyo and Dalian, China. Carried eight passengers, at an average speed of 250 km/h.
An "Air Girl"
Lukewarm black or green tea.
Paper cups still attracted curiosity.
In-Flight Lunch
Meals on the planes were snacks, but inferior to those on Western airliners.
Appeared around 1958
Lots of people took the paper cups and ear plugs home as souvenirs.
"Your father's so impressive..."
Ehem...
Flights were usually at low altitude, so there was a lot of turbulence. Tea was kept lukewarm to avoid accidents.
Japanese sweets.
Candies to make ears pop.
Cotton ear plugs.
★ – Drawn partly from imagination.
This is the famous four-engine flying boat that appeared in the film Nankai no hanatabo (Bouquet in the Southern Seas) and connected Japan with various Pacific Islands.
1940(昭15)
1940. The Kawanishi Flying Boat. Carried 25 passengers at an average speed of 220 km/h.
In Japan the thinking was that box lunches available at train stations would do as airplane meals.
Should be a kitchen, but there's no sign of one having been used.
It took approximately 8 hours from Yokohama to Saipan.
Lunch (In summer whites)
Breakfast (In winter uniform)
The radio operator handed out box lunches and tea. Most passengers were military men.
Service was provided in flight suits.
Who—? Sushi rice with soybeans?
Aughh
As wartime losses mounted, the content of the double-tiered lunch boxes became more and more meager.
Pork cutlet, pork chop, meat and veggies in soy and sweet sauce.
Tuna teriyaki, boiled veggies, fried egg, radish condiments.
A real glass, some old lukewarm tea.

Read This Way
Hmph. What a lot of nerve for someone who always tries to get the cheapest tickets to use.
It would be nice to have a little more space on planes, even if it's not Zeppelin-level luxury...
Jumbo Jet Japanese-style Dining Room
You're not getting enough exercise! It's your fault for being a glutton!
Another meal? I'm eating too much! I'm being fed like a broiler chicken! This service is too good!
In-flight meals became commonplace.
Really, the Modern Era
Lounge area.
BAR
Lounge and dining room. Individual passenger compartments.
Hey, we're being served! Time to drink up! It's all free!
We're lucky!
Well, since this scenario never came true, we can afford to fly...
70 passengers in a jumbo jet!
Sounds good, but I bet the tickets are expensive...
When jumbo jets first appeared, some commentators forecasted the emergence of deluxe service airlines.
I don't like this...
No go?
Hold tight to the edge of the tatami mats!
We're about to take off, sir!
How about tatami-mat rooms?
SAFETY
Wow! This is great!
Hmph...
Stop complaining. Just take good care of the house while I'm gone, dear...
I'll take care of it!
Now we're talking! This is the way to go!
Or how about this?
Rattle Rattle
よい旅を!
Have a Good Trip!
1994.9.13
April 15, 1999

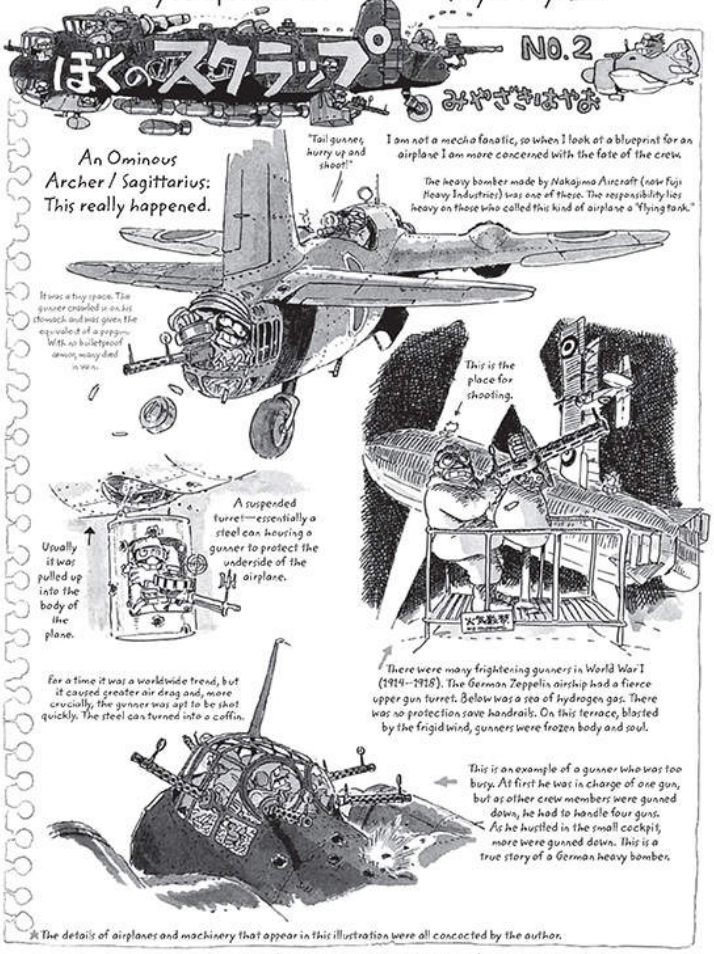
MY FAVORITE THINGS

My Scrapbook No. 1 Hayao Miyazaki



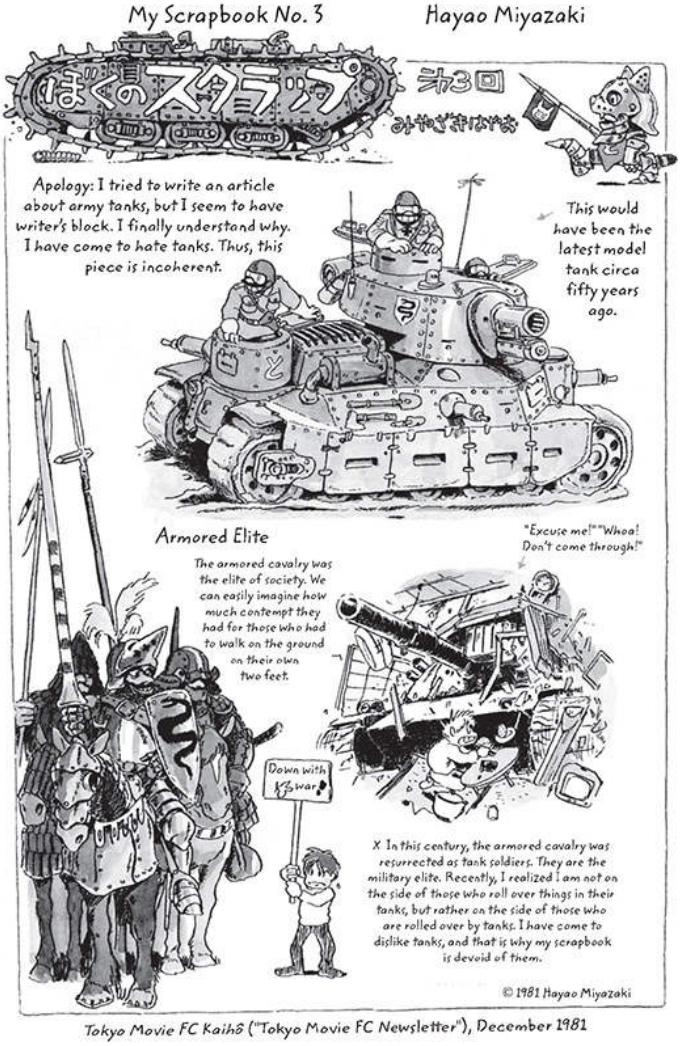
Tokyo Movie FC Kaihô (Tokyo Movie FC Newsletter), October 1981

My Scrapbook No. 2 Hayao Miyazaki



Tokyo Movie FC Kaihô (Tokyo Movie FC Newsletter), November 1981

My Scrapbook No. 3 Hayao Miyazaki



Tokyo Movie FC Kaihō ("Tokyo Movie FC Newsletter"), December 1981

There is no material value to this article. It is all founded on jumping to conclusions, arbitrary interpretations, and false perceptions based on faint memories.

The Citroen 2CV is the descendant of French aircraft of the 1930s!

Hayao Miyazaki

Look at this cockpit!

Bloch MB-200 →

The 2CV debuted in 1948, but its prototype was produced in 1938, before the Second World War. It was to be an economical car for the masses, a car for the people.

The 2CV and the cockpit of the MB-200, designed in the same era, are incredibly similar!

Canvas top

The 1959 model—the one I first rode in; 578 cc; a new car that got 75 km/h.

Looked inexpensive, so poor people felt they could afford it.

The structure of the chassis and metal outer body are about the same. Don't treat the MB-200 as old scrap. At the same time Japan was making the model 95 heavy bomber.

I bought a 15-year-old used car with a joke in the floor for 150,000 yen.

I was shocked when I saw a photo of the seats of the Soviet, the master piece civil aircraft of the 1930s; they were exactly like the 2CV seats. The seats were slung on a metal frame.

In order to make an inexpensive car with a small engine, the 2CV was made light—the same approach as airplane design.

Near the same time, Germany made the Volkswagen. The difference between the 2CV and the Volkswagen was exactly the same as the difference between the Morane-Saulnier M.S.406 and the Messerschmitt Me 109!

"Merde!"

"It's a MS 406!"

Rip!

Once my seat ripped while I was driving. Ever since, I carry—no load—needle, thread, and bicycle bands with me.

The seats were hung with this type of elastic band. By the way, the current Citroen 2CVs have been improved and have become boring. Citroen should go back to the old model.

I drew a crum my shape.

Lightweight and low horsepower.

"Oh, no."

"OUT OF MY WAY"

I can sense the hardships of the Japanese pilots.

Even sometimes I see a VW, my 2CV goes crazy and wants to pass it—a real problem for me.

Rip, rip

Rattle, rattle

Reading the catalogue performance specs isn't like experiencing an aircraft's capabilities. You realize the problems of having low horsepower as soon as you drive the Tōmei highway in a 2CV. Even with the accelerator floored, the car still slows down when going up the slightest hill. Drivers feel the same humiliation as that suffered by French and Japanese pilots in their underpowered planes. Though I complain, I am on my fifth 2CV now. It's not that I'm in love with the 2CV, it's because I'm a curmudgeon who dislikes trendiness.

It's a 2CV revised, it's fast

I'd like to call it the 2CV Bis.

Its speed has improved, but the original's charm is gone.

The 2CV I drive now has increased power at 600cc and can go up to 120 km/h. Its high performance is like a dream! As if it were the return of the Kinsei Zero Fighter or Type 5 Fighter! This might be unfair to those fighter plane maniacs, but they suffered the same fate as the 2CV revised.

★ Conclusion: The designs of passenger cars reflect the design concepts of the aircraft of the time! (This is what I wanted to say.)

Extraneous comment: The VW Beetle stopped production a while ago, while the 2CV is still being made. It has won. →

P.S. Video production about Miyazaki's work in progress. Its title is "Tottoyogi! Ikon Force" (Attack! Iron Force). Production is due to begin next year. It is the story of a cancer ray-gun ship.

"Model Graphics" Artbox (monthly), October 1985

I Want a Garden Like This

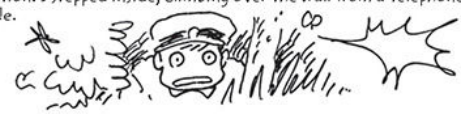
The gate was always closed. All I could see through the rusted wrought iron was a gravel road disappearing into the trees. I wondered who on earth lived on such a large estate.

A large space inside a long wall; it seemed like a primeval forest.

One day I made a major discovery from the train window. I saw a strange shadow through a break of the trees in the estate's forest. It looked exactly like a brontosaurus.

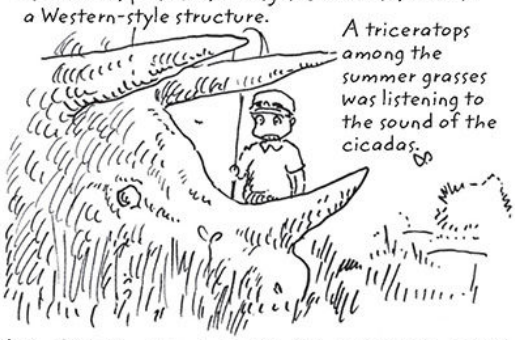
My head was full of thoughts about that estate. It must have a huge secret hidden inside....

Finally, one Sunday during the summer I put my ideas into action. I stepped inside, climbing over the wall from a telephone pole.



There were many stone dinosaurs strewn about the untended garden.

In the lotus pond was a long necked dinosaur and a Western-style structure.



A triceratops among the summer grasses was listening to the sound of the cicadas.

Aah, if I had more money than I knew what to do with, I would be able to make a garden like this....

Hayao Miyazaki November 20, 1985

"TAMIYA NEWS" Tamiya Models Editorial Section, Vol. 175, January 1986

Here are a few untranslated pages to show off Miyazaki-san's scrapbook penmanship.

この記事に
資料的価値はいっさいありません。すべてウロ覚えに基づく一人のみこみと独断と妄想で構成されています。

シトロエン2CVは30年代フランス機の末裔なのである!!

みやざきはるお

このコクピットを見よ!!

ブロッシュ MB-200→

2CVのデビューは1948年だがプロトタイプはすでに太平洋戦の1938年に製作されていたのである。大衆化と経済性つまり国民車をめざしたのであった。

同じ時代につくられた2CVとMB200のコクピットはおそろしい程よく似ているのである!!

1959年は ほとんど変わらなかったやつ。33馬力。新車で最高価格でした。

「鋼管フレーム」に金属外皮 張ったり 同じなのである。MB-200は ボロ あっちいくとはいけない。日本は同時期に93式軽爆を作っていたのである

30年代のケッサク国産ミシーンのシートの写真を見てビックリしてしまった 2CVのシートとそっくりなのだ 金属パイプにシートカバーをかけるのである。

同じ頃ドイツはフォルクスワーゲンを作ったのである。2CVとワーゲンの差はモランソルニエMS406とMe109の差とそっくりなのだ!!!!

そのせいか

小さなエンジンの余り車を作るために2CVは軽量化を徹底的に発想で行ったのである

バッ!

屋敷中に穴が抜けたことがあった。以来 糸と針と自転車ゴムひもを ほぞぼぞ 持って多いた イイ歳でこそ走ったのである

こんな簡単なもので乗っているのである。ちなみに現在のシトロエン2CVのシートは ゴム製でもっとクタクタとちゃんとしていた。シトロエンチェは 当の解説にもどすのである。

ワーッ

ビリビリ

ガタガタ

今どき ワーゲンを見ると ほぼ2CVは 反対側で 抜きたがって困るのである。

車輪さんほど低馬力

日本のパイロットの苦情がこのぼやくなあ…

ドドーン

2CVはじゃあ!!

今ほどが乗っている2CVは 600cc に パワーアップされ なんと 120km/時は出るようになった。嘘のような事実である! 正に金属疲労や五試戦の再来!! ということは 原材料でこうなるは 良いが はやく 2CV改と同じ 運命をたどったはずだ。

速くはなったが オリジナルの持っていた魅力はなくなってきた。

クラウチ性能の和洋を行くでは ヒコーキの性能は 理解できない。低馬力のつらさは 2CVと 乗ると 走ってみれば すぐ体験できる。アクセルを床まで踏みこんでいるのに わずかな のぼり坂でもジワジワと減速していく あのつらさを。フランスや日本のパイロットが あげわった低馬力だったのだ。ということは すでに五宮回の2CVたのいっている。ほんたのこうはない 実行ギリギリのハンワンのせいである。

★結論：乗用車の設計思想は同時期の航空機のそれと瓦解する!!（こんがいけたかな）

ワーゲンはとっくに生産中止した。2CVはまだ作っている。嬉しい……

1985 8-15

PS 夏休み恒例主役のオリジナルバンデオ化企画 着々進行中。題名決定「愛車！アドラン・ポーク」

創作余談は来年にゆずろう・・・乞御・・・アタの物語です。

その門はいつもしまっていて　錆びた門扉ごしに
太立ちに消えていく砂利道が見えるだけ。いった
い誰がこんな大きな屋敷に住んでいるのだろう

町の中の大
きな空白
長い長い塀
中はまるで
原始林のよ
うだ

ある日電車の窓
から大発見す
る
その屋敷の木の
すき間に不思議
なカゲ!!
まるでプロントザ
ウルスにそっくりだ

もう塀の中は　あの屋敷
でいっぱいだ。きっとす
ごい秘密があそこには
かくされている……

そして ついに ある夏の日曜日の朝 決行する
電柱づたいに 塀をこえて 中に踏みこんだ

荒れはてた庭に 石の恐竜達が
ふいふいと 横たわっている

水蓮の池には 首長竜. 無人の西洋館

しげり放題の夏草
の中で. トリケラトプス
がセミの声をきいてい
る…

ああ ぼくに ありあまる程のお金が
あれば こんな庭を造るのに……

宮崎駿 1981 11.20

▶ MY FAVORITE THINGS

My Car

Shūkan Shinchō (Weekly Shinchō), February 18, 1988

One room of three tatami mats, no bath, toilet, heater, or air conditioner—my beloved car, the Citroen 2CV, was like a classified ad for such a tiny apartment in an old wooden building.

Its piston displacement volume was a mere 2CV, two horsepower, and its maximum speed was 75 kilometers per hour. As I drove full bore, determined not to be left behind by other cars on the highway, a huge plume of smoke spewed from the exhaust pipe, the body shook, and, through walls thin as one layer of plywood, I felt an incredible sense of speed. My passengers would shriek, "We're going to die, we're going to die!"

I wanted a car to take my sons to nursery school. Just about then, I saw *Les Amants* (*The Lovers*) starring Jeanne Moreau. In this film about adultery what caught my attention more than Jeanne Moreau was a weird, cheap-looking, small car—a Citroen. This was about thirteen years ago.

If I'm going to own a car, first off I want to drive an unusual model. The Citroen 2CV was a perfect match for my wishes at the time. I noticed an advertisement for a used car in a magazine.

Contrary to what I expected, the car I was shown had a dented bumper and a metal plate that looked like a smashed oil drum covering its roof. When I drove it and sped up, the door suddenly flew open. When I stopped at an intersection, the engine quit on me. When we drove up a hill, my family would shout "Let's go, let's go!" to encourage the car along.

I told my wife that this tin box on wheels was the world's most economical car, but actually it was always in the repair shop—totally uneconomical. It was a clunker in every respect.

My next car will be a decent one, I thought. I finally bought a new automatic model. But I could never forget the uproar surrounding the first car, so I still drive a Citroen. Even the brand-new model had neither ashtray nor climate control. The wind came in through the cracks; in winter, unless I wore a coat and gloves to protect myself against the frigid air, I would catch my death of cold. When it rained, it leaked, and the wind forced it to lean to the side. I was thankful, though, for the car's simplicity and high ceiling. I hear that they may stop production, but I am glad that they are still available. This model, which stirs up a love-hate response from its drivers, makes an appearance in *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro.*

What Takei Sanseidō[41] Means to Me

From *Edo Tokyo Tatemono En monogatari* (The Story of the Edo-Tokyo Open-Air Architectural Museum). The Edo-Tokyo Museum, May 31, 1995

Since the 1964 Tokyo Olympics I've been fascinated by somewhat older architecture. I normally roam the western suburbs of Tokyo, and there I find myself attracted to structures that are neither too grand nor too impoverished—buildings that were built after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, that survived the air raids of World War II, or that were built soon enough after the war to reveal their prewar heritage. In what presumably reflected the fashions of the time, buildings from this era have something about them that is a bit modern, as well as individualistic window frames and—from our perspective today—fancy ornamentation in ridiculous places. I don't find myself particularly interested in the true *sukiya* style of traditional architecture, but I am attracted to second-rate, or even second-and-a-half-rate versions of it, and I often used to get off at nearby train stations to walk by buildings of that style.

It's a very nostalgic thing for me. It's true that there's something odd about this, because I was born in 1941, which means that my first memories are of bombed-out cities, but, as they say, people are nostalgic for the houses they once lived in. So when I look through the windows of these structures I find it heartwarming to imagine what sorts of memories they might contain. Perhaps there are scenes that I once saw as a baby boy, before I was even capable of forming firm memories. In fact, when I was in first grade, I recall feeling powerfully, almost painfully, nostalgic at the sight of an illustration in a book—an illustration of a boy walking through an ordinary street scene. It has made me indulge in the wild speculation that a sense of nostalgia is not simply something we acquire as adults, that it indeed may be a fundamental part of our existence from the very beginning.

I've walked around looking for nostalgic buildings—nameless structures never mentioned in histories of architecture—and I've fantasized about recording them with my camera, but I'm a natural sloth and never do anything about it. Nonetheless, this is probably what Terunobu Fujimori and others have so correctly referred to as the charms of "street exploration," because the idea of shedding light on slightly old buildings, and properly evaluating them, has given me great pleasure. This has been especially true of old shops with decorative fronts: when I learned that this was called *kanban* or "billboard" style of architecture, I was really impressed. It's a convenient and appropriate name.

This has been a long preamble, but when I first visited the Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum, I found it particularly moving. It was just before closing time, there were few people about, and in the fading light of the day I stood in front of the Takei Sanseidō building and looked down the street. There I realized, for the first time, that there are reminiscences that can literally be touched and felt. It was such a nostalgic sensation for me. I felt as though I had encountered my own forgotten childhood. I recalled how, when I was a child and gradually expanding the range I dared travel from my home, I once suddenly found myself standing in an unknown part of town, overcome simultaneously by forlornness and homesickness. I felt acutely humbled, I felt seized by the impulse to call out to each and every passerby. Since then, I've visited the same spot at the museum several times, but I've never been able to experience that sensation again. And I think this is natural. At the museum my interests soon broadened. While looking at the structure of the buildings and pondering what improvements the museum might make, I found myself wishing I could get a drink, or use a public bath, or even find a place selling popsicles. But for that moment of nostalgic ecstasy that I first felt, I would like to thank all those who came up with and executed the idea of the Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum.

Of all the buildings in the museum, I still like Takei Sanseidō the best. It's a shop that feels good. It's quite small and long and narrow, like a den for eels, but the structure is surprisingly harmonious. Of course, when it was alive as a store, Takei Sanseidō would have been filled with goods and bustling with people. It probably looked quite different than it does now, but you can still sense the essential elegance of the building from its totality. In our progressive—or aggressive—way of living today, where we are ever busy building new structures and tearing down old ones, or buying and selling them, I find myself amazed that this one has survived.

Looking at Takei Sanseidō, one thing you immediately realize is that it was built by craftsmen. The glass doors, the walls, the merchandise racks—everything was handmade by craftsmen. You immediately sense a profound difference from current construction methods, where structures are assembled using labor-saving industrial components. When this building was made, craftsmen were inexpensive to hire, and there were probably very good ones available, too. If you were to build the same structure the same way today it would surely cost a small fortune, though the materials wouldn't be as good. It's an ironic aspect of the world then, that the craftsmen were, unfortunately, paid so little yet did such good work.

Unlike today, stores with tatami mat floors were not regarded as inefficient then. I experienced the difference that tatami mats can create when I felt compelled to leave Tokyo and live in a town in Saitama Prefecture. I visited an old hardware store to buy a hatchet to split bamboo, and when I entered the store and was about to ask what shelf to look on, the shopkeeper proffered a *zabuton* cushion and said, "Here, relax …" Feeling I had no choice in the matter, I plopped down on the cushion, whereupon I was offered a cup of tea. And then I was asked, most politely, what I was looking for. In the old days the town had been a place where local farmers came to shop on market day. It had changed its appearance completely by the time I was there, of course, but the

experience in the hardware shop made it possible for me imagine how relaxed shopping must have been then.

Still, I'm sure the Sanseidō shop in the Edo-Tokyo museum didn't have tatami mat floors just so that shopkeepers could sell things in such a relaxed fashion. Entire families, and employees, had to live in such places in the old days and in order to do so they probably rolled out futons to sleep on the mats. When they held celebratory banquets, they must have arranged rows of special *zataku*—low, formal tables—on the mats as well. At peak times, there would have been around sixteen people living there, but if you look at the living room and the kitchen, you can clearly see that it would have been impossible for everyone to eat together. In other words, they had to take turns, with the workers who had a spare moment coming in, quickly eating, then going back to work.

In that context, I remember hearing how shocked my mother said she was when she first saw my father's family dining together. My father came from a family that owned a fairly large factory in town, but it was every man or woman for himself at mealtime, and they ate mostly poor-quality side dishes from the local shops. My mother came from a not-well-off farm family and even from her perspective, the meals at her husband's home seemed terribly ill-mannered and rushed.

The local shops around the factory of my father's family would supply croquettes with finely chopped cabbage and sauce, and people would come around selling boiled beans so they didn't take much time to prepare meals. People would give their kids some pocket money and shoo them outside. My mother's family, on the other hand, raised silk worms, so despite the fact that everyone was busy every day, they were still apparently much more refined and delicate in nature. Until his death, my father loved to eat boiled beans, horse mackerel dipped in salt water and dried in the sun, and sheets of toasted dried sardines.

I imagine there were similarly rushed scenes in the Takei Sanseidō shop. I once heard from a friend who lived in the *shitamachi*—the crowded old town area—that he had become quite disgusted as a child because he had to eat the same side dishes every day. He would play outside until dark and then the instant he entered his house, opening the sliding front door with a rattle, he would smell eggplant and horse mackerel boiled in soy sauce. He disliked blueish fish, so he would reportedly think, "Oh, not again this evening." At the Sanseidō shop, too, I'm sure that after some boy apprentices finished their chores outside, they probably came back to the shop starving and then, the moment they opened the door, felt similarly disappointed by the smell of eggplant and horse mackerel. But buying inexpensive side dishes was an important part of the old downtown culture. Ordering food from established restaurants, on the other hand, was a real luxury. My grandmother lived in the old downtown area, and when we kids went to play at her place she would always ask us, "Well, what'll it be? Sushi or *tendon* rice bowl with prawns in a fried batter?" I wonder what it was like in the Sanseidō shop.

There is a small *furo*[42] bath in the shop, and I wonder if everyone bathed there. If you took off your clothes in the kitchen others would be able to see, but I suspect that they didn't worry much about such things in those days. At my relatives' home in the old downtown area, they used to bathe outdoors in a backyard tub during the summers, where people could easily see. There wasn't much street lighting downtown in those days, and until recently people didn't feel very embarrassed about being seen naked, anyway. You don't see it anymore now, but it used to be completely normal for young mothers to breastfeed their babies on trains; even my aunt would quickly strip down to her slip when she traveled by the old steam trains.

At some point in time, our lives changed so completely that we can't even understand what it was like to live in buildings

like Takei Sanseidō. It was hot in the summer and incredibly cold in the winter. The more stubborn the shop owner, the more obstinate he'd be about his lifestyle. And the other members of the family would suffer for it. But even so, I feel a great deal of respect for those who built Sanseidō, who lived in it, and who died in it.

It was once an important virtue to be satisfied with what you have … and although when Takei Sanseidō was built, that virtue may already have been disappearing, the structure remains proof to me that Tokyo once had a little bit of that culture and feeling.

“My Random Thoughts Notebook[43] Is My Hobby”

Animage, December 1995

Respectable Japanese do not involve themselves in war and military affairs. But I’ve been interested in these topics since childhood, a fact that I dare not declare in public. If I declared this in public, I would be considered pro-war.

Politically, I was against rearming Japan, and even now I oppose sending peacekeeping troops abroad. Despite this I have been curious about military affairs all along. We can say that there are many strange things in this world, things that make me wonder about the foolishness that has been done. Absorbing trivia for decades does mount up; and when it mounts up I want to divulge it, so I draw these fantasies … [*laughs*]

Since these are fantasies, I insist that there is no value in them as reference material. It is too much trouble to research history just to draw airplanes and battleships exactly as they were. My mind would go dizzy doing that, so I am drawing them only as an approximation of reality. I mix in a lot of false information as well. If those who are very familiar with history are taken in, I am extremely happy. [*laughs*]

This serialization is the ultimate in irregularity. When I finish a film, the editors at *Model Graphics* call me up and say, “Shall we begin soon?” I respond, “Can you wait a little longer?” [*laughs*]

Actually, I was able to draw best when I was serializing the *Nausicaä* manga. Drawing those kinds of pictures, they add up. After staying up till dawn drawing the last manga pages to meet the printer’s deadline, I would draw these models the next day; each would take about a week. While drawing *Nausicaä* my mind kept straying to what kinds of models I would draw. I wanted to draw this and that. When I finished the drawings, I would start on my next manga series. Under

these conditions I could keep up my pace. But it is impossible to keep it up while making movies.

After all, it is hard work to bring a film inside my head to life. Each drawing is just one frame, and within that one frame is a lot of fantasy. Sometimes I begin to think that these drawings could become a sequence. There are several stories that I would like to turn into films if the opportunity arose. But when I think it over I wonder whether the story is deserving of so much labor, whether there is enough there. It seems to me that even when the finances are in place, there are some projects I just shouldn't do. In essence, it is my hobby to draw seemingly real vehicles. It works as my psychological release valve.

For this radio drama I am not facing any challenges. [*laughs*] After all, this is just my hobby. Someone told me he wanted to make a radio drama out of the drawings I had done as a hobby, and I said go ahead and do as you like. I don't feel like I am making a big effort. [*laughs*]

I think radio dramas deserve more acknowledgement than they get. To me they are the best. When I am reading books and considering whether they would make good films, I find many that would make great radio dramas.

But the images and imagination stimulated by the radio dramas turn flat when projected as film images. The images are restricted to the specific pictures one draws. But if we say "a woman of celestial beauty" in a radio drama, she will be "a woman of celestial beauty" for each of us! After all, we are calling her a woman of celestial beauty. Hearing this, the listener imagines a combination of all the women of celestial beauty that he can think of to create his own "woman of celestial beauty." This is quite breathtaking. For this reason, too, it would be a shame if radio dramas were to disappear from the air.

I love the blank space that radio dramas provide. In a case like Rampo Edogawa,[44] his world becomes very banal when it

is depicted in film. Just think, his detective Kogorō Akechi seems an idiot, as does the Boy Detective Club. They drop a badge at the side of the road. I wonder what would happen if an unintended person picks it up. Of course, that's neither here nor there. [*laughs*]

Rampo Edogawa's brilliance is in the psychological darkness he portrays. It is not a physical darkness in actual space. He has captured the psychological darkness that lies within. For example, *The Strange Tale of Panorama Island* (*Panoramatō kitan*) becomes tacky when made into a film, as it comes off as a cheap theme park ride. But when the story is told in an evocative manner, something very deep comes through. This depth can only be revealed in a radio drama. When you listen to it alone … As a child I felt chills hearing the voice on the radio talk about the rasping sound of the clothing worn by a woman of celestial beauty.

But they didn't provide that sound effect. The narrator Musei Tokugawa said "the rasping sound of her clothing." [*laughs*] What is the rasping sound of clothing? As a boy, I would wonder and feel shivers of anticipation. And now, when I am working late with the radio on and come across a radio drama, I feel lucky. I think these dramas are fun to listen to. But a while ago they became overly artistic. Those were uninteresting. Unless there's some narration, I don't think radio dramas are interesting.

"Random Thoughts Notebook" might also be sufficient with a single narrator. After all, it's not as though I'd drawn different characters. And just because various people are lined up at the microphone doesn't mean that the expression is more fully realized. I think that when one person narrates, the stories tend to find a fuller expression. This is especially true with the kind of material I created. They did tell me, "Do as you please." And this was done as a hobby … I realize I have talked a lot, especially about my hobby. *Ha ha ha ha!*

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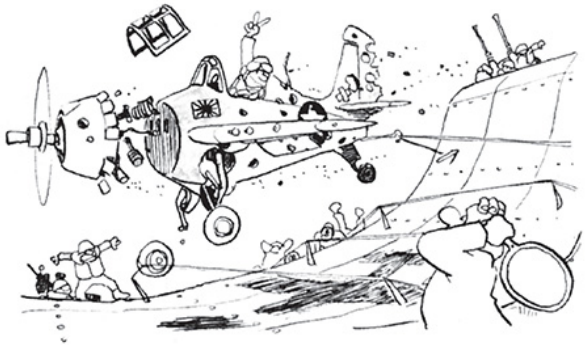
41 Takei Sanseidō is a stationery store established at the beginning of the Meiji period (1868–1912). In 1927, Ryūkichi Takei (second generation) had a shop built at 1-Chome, Kandasudachō, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo. In the beginning it mainly sold calligraphy items, such as brushes, *sumi*-ink, and inkstones, but later it sold a full line of items including paint brushes and stationery goods. It was eventually dismantled and rebuilt at the Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum in Koganei, Tokyo, where it remains today.

42 A small bath with steep sides, traditionally made of wood. They are generally used for warmth and relaxation, not bathing proper.

43 This interview was given when "*Miyazaki Hayao no zassō nōto*" (Hayao Miyazaki's Random Thoughts Notebook [irregularly serialized in *Model Graphics*, 1984–1990; published as one volume by Dai Nippon Kaiga in 1992]) was set to be broadcast as a radio drama by Nippon Broadcasting System (Nippon Hōsō).

44 Rampo Edogawa (October 21, 1894–July 28, 1965); Japanese author of detective fiction. His pen name is a Nipponization of Edgar Allan Poe.

PLANNING NOTES; DIRECTORIAL MEMORANDA



▶ PLANNING NOTES; DIRECTORIAL MEMORANDA

A Proposal to Acquire Film Rights

November, 1980

Richard Corben's *Rowlf*

1971 Richard V. Corben

Published by Rip Off Press

I think that *Rowlf* would be ideal for a theatrical feature film targeting the American market. It definitely is not for little children (i.e., not for a TV audience) but if handled properly it could potentially appeal to all classes of young Americans and far surpass the appeal of Bakshi's *Wizards.* The images in *Rowlf* may seem unfamiliar and grotesque to Japanese audiences, but by massaging them and making them more digestible, I believe the film could also attract young Japanese audiences.

About the Original

Rick (Richard) Corben is currently one of the leading comic book artists in America. *Rowlf*, which he created and self-published in 1971, was one of his first works, but it is also, without a doubt, one of his most famous. With *Rowlf*, Corben has created a true modern fairy tale.

In *Rowlf*, a world that appears at first to be grotesque and ironic is actually filled with faith in a healthy life. The story possesses the power of old fairy tales—the ability to encourage people, to reassure us and give us hope. It's no exaggeration to say that it is rare to see such a work today.

Outline

Maryara, daughter of Canis—the old ruler of the impoverished but peaceful kingdom, Canisland—is kidnapped by invading demon soldiers. Maryara's dog, Rowlf, runs to inform Maryara's betrothed, Ramon, and a sorcerer of what has happened, but the two of them dislike Rowlf and fail to understand what he is howling about. While the two of them thus squander precious time, the tanks of the demonic forces smash through the fields of the peaceful kingdom, attack Maryara's father's castle, and slaughter the inhabitants.

Afraid for his mistress, Rowlf takes off after the demon tanks but eventually loses sight of them and collapses, exhausted. Rowlf is tormented by his failure and grief. In fact, human emotions are beginning to surface in him.

Thus begins Rowlf's lonely battle to save his mistress.

While the war of annihilation continues, Rowlf infiltrates the demon tank units and gradually begins to use his hands, to think, to learn, to handle tools. Soon, he is able to operate one of the tanks.

Rowlf infiltrates the demon castle, destroys their leader, blows up the castle, and frees Maryara. As he faces these many challenges, Rowlf begins to transform into a self-aware human being.

Highlights

1) Canisland, which resembles medieval Europe.

2) The tanks and ray guns used by the demons.

3) Dramatic staging, including the desert (upon which Rowlf's tank casts long shadows), the pill-boxes and

bunkers in the demon castle, etc.

4) The powerfully muscled demon leader, who fights with his bare hands and is so loathsomely evil he seems impossible to kill.

5) Rowlf's fabulous transformation from dog to human.

6) The heroine, Maryara. She has the appeal of a healthy young woman from the countryside.

7) Rowlf is unconditionally devoted to his mistress, Maryara, but audiences will be particularly inspired and impressed by his courage as he becomes more self-aware, starts to learn, and eventually matures to the point where he can take on the demons.

For today's young people—who feel over-managed, overprotected, and suffocated by society, or who find their choices increasingly limited and thus are increasingly neurotic—this story would be the ideal present.

A Film That Can Be Enjoyed by People Who Have Never Read the Original Story

Press release material, June 20, 1983

For the past few years, I have put forth ideas for film projects with the following ethos: "To offer a sense of liberation to present-day young people who, in this suffocating, overprotective, and managed society, find their path to self-reliant independence blocked and have become neurotic." It has been difficult for these films to be realized, so I started to draw a manga incorporating these feelings for *Animage.*

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind is set on Earth during humanity's twilight era. The story features a girl who, while being drawn into battles between human beings, comes to look far beyond the human state. I do not depict the battles themselves. A major theme of this work is the manner in which people engage with the nature surrounding them and upon which they are dependent.

Can hope exist even during this twilight era? If I am to find hope, what perspective is needed? I thought I would reveal these issues gradually as I drew the series—which I assumed would go on for years to come.

I began drawing the original manga without thinking of making it into an animated film, and as a result I didn't know how to respond when the possibility first came up. But I knew that if a film could express the themes I was exploring in the comic, then I had to make it.

Along with expressing my gratitude to Tokuma Shoten and Hakuhōdō for affording me the chance to make this film, I am determined to assess my original story with humility and create a film that can be enjoyed by those who have not read any part of the original manga.

Original Proposal for *Castle in the Sky*

December 7, 1984

- Possible titles:

  Young Pazu and the Mystery of the Levitation Crystal, or

  Prisoner of the Castle in the Sky, or

  Flying Treasure Island, or

  The Flying Empire

- A ninety-minute, full color, theatrical-release animated feature, in Vistavision

- Stereo sound

Goal of Project

If *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* is a film for an older audience, then *Pazu* is targeted mainly at elementary school–age children. If *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* was designed to be cool, clear, and vivid, then *Pazu* will aim to be a fun, intensely thrilling classic action film.

Pazu will be a film that young audiences can truly enjoy. *Pazu* will have laughter and tears and a sentimentally honest spirit, and will also depict themes of emotional bonding and self-sacrifice—things that modern audiences are skeptical of but, without realizing it, really crave. It will tell the story of a young boy's earnest pursuit of his dreams in an unpretentious way, in a language that modern audiences can understand.

With the exception of *Doraemon*, most current animation is based on more serious, dramatic *gekiga* comics; *Pazu* will instead aim to help resurrect traditionally entertaining manga- or cartoon-style films. By focusing mainly on an audience of fourth graders (the year when the number of cells in a child's brain reaches that of an adult), it will reach an audience of even younger children, and expand even further in its age appeal. I am certain that hundreds of thousands of older anime fans will come to see this film no matter what, so there is no

need to overtly cater to their tastes. There is also a large, latent audience of older viewers who yearn for a film to enjoy with a more naïve, childlike spirit. The future of animation is threatened by the fact that for most films being planned today the target age is gradually creeping upward. More and more animated films are being made to cater to niche interests, and there is ever more subcategorization and diversification taking place. In the midst of this, it is important for us not to lose sight of the fact that animation should above all belong to children, and that truly honest works for children will also succeed with adults.

Pazu is a project to bring animation back to its roots.

Outline

Laputa is a floating island in the sky, depicted in the third part of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Formerly part of the Laputa Empire—which ruled over the nations of the earth—after the destruction of the empire, the island continued to drift through the sky. However, Laputa can also be moved at will.

Inside the island's magnificent but deserted palace, countless treasures are said to be stored—treasures stolen from the countries below.

Far off, beyond the ridges of the clouds, a fragment of a levitation crystal lands on earth, alerting people to the existence of this palace in the sky. The levitation crystal is what supported the empire of Laputa in the air, and it generates a potent force that once powered flying ships.

A man schemes to get hold of the levitation crystal, become the head of an empire in the sky, and thus lord it over the world. A girl, a descendant of ancient Laputa royalty, finds herself pursued by the man. And a boy, an apprentice mechanic who dreams of becoming an inventor, becomes entangled in the struggle over the mysterious levitation crystal.

The boy and the girl meet in the midst of great difficulties, bond with each other, and decide to help each other. But what is the true treasure that they discover hidden deep in the palace of Laputa? The story unfolds like a roller-coaster ride, with love and friendship between the boy and girl developing on one level, and an action adventure focusing on the levitation crystal and a trip to the castle in the sky taking place on another.

Story Setting

The story is set in an era when machines are still exciting and enjoyable, and science does not necessarily make people unhappy. The setting is vaguely European, but we can't tell exactly what race or nationality its people are. Humans are still masters of the world, and it still seems believable that they might change their own fates and carve their own ways in life. Peace reigns in the bountiful land; farmers take joy in their harvests, craftsmen take pride in their work, and merchants take good care of the goods they sell. There is no conflict between the townspeople and the farmers, and a gentle equilibrium reigns. People are responsible for their own styles of living. There are some poor people, but they help each other. Sometimes the harvests are rich, sometimes there are droughts and famines. It is a world where bad people coexist with good people, but bad people are easily identifiable from the way they look.

In terms of visuals, we will fully use our imaginations and create a world that, while fictional, has a real sense of presence. The machines in this world are not the products of mass production, rather they still possess the inherent warmth of handcrafted things. There are no electric lights; illumination is provided by either candles or gaslights. Instead of pipes with running water, people use abundant wells or springs. The vehicles in this world are a diverse collection of hand-built, eccentric inventions. One example of this is the ornithopter, a flying machine with flapping wings that the hero Pazu rides

around on. It functions similarly to the *mehve* in *Nausicaä* and becomes an important character in its own right. The vehicles, weapons, and hideouts used by the bad guys in this story are also a collection of eccentric inventions, and the harmonious atmosphere they create, along with the setting itself, will make the world of this film even more enjoyable.

Project Plan for *My Neighbor Totoro*

December 1, 1986

Project aim

My Neighbor Totoro aims to be a happy and heartwarming film, a film that lets the audience go home with pleasant, glad feelings. Lovers will feel each other to be more precious, parents will fondly recall their childhoods, and children will start exploring the thickets behind shrines and climbing trees to try to find a totoro. This is the kind of film I want to make.

Until a short time ago, when asked "What can Japan proudly show to the world?" grown-ups and children alike would answer, "The beauty in nature and the four seasons." No one says this anymore. Though we live in Japan, and are without a doubt Japanese, we continue to create animation films that avoid depicting Japan.

Has our nation become such a miserable place, devoid of dreams?

In this age of internationalization, we know that the essentially national is what can become most international. Why, then, don't we make fun, wonderful films actually set in Japan?

In order to respond to this quandary, we need a new approach. This new sort of film needs to be a lively and fresh piece of entertainment, not full of reminiscence and nostalgia.

What we have forgotten

What we don't notice

What we are convinced we have lost

Believing that we still have these things, I am proposing to make *My Neighbor Totoro.*

■ Mid-length animation film (60 minutes)

■ Color, Vista, Dolby Sound

What is a totoro?

"Totoro" is what five-year-old Mei, one of the main characters in the film, named these creatures. No one knows their real name.

They have inhabited our country's forests for eons, since the time hardly any humans lived here. Apparently they live for over a thousand years. Larger *totoro* are over two meters tall. Covered in fluffy fur, they look like giant owls or badgers or bears. You could say they are goblins, but they don't frighten people as they live in an easygoing, carefree manner. They inhabit caves and hollows of old trees in the forest and cannot be seen by humans. But for some reason they are spied by the young sisters, Satsuki and Mei, the main characters of this film.

Totoro abhor uproar and have never associated with humans; nonetheless they open their hearts to Satsuki and Mei.

Story

Satsuki, a third grader, and Mei, five years old, move to the outskirts of town. They are awaiting their mother's release from the hospital in a house where the air is clear.

Kanta, a boy from the neighboring farmer's house, tries to frighten Satsuki by claiming that the house is haunted. And he is right. While playing in the yard, Mei is surprised to find a pair of strange creatures about her height, walking in front of her.

Goblins ...

Mei follows them. The two creatures seem to panic. After all, they thought they couldn't be seen by humans!

The pair disappears into the thicket behind the house. Peeking in, Mei sees that there is a tunnel within the thicket. She goes inside. And then, inside the hollow of a large tree, she discovers a ghostly creature, much larger than the two she had seen before, asleep.

With her eyes open wide in wonder, Mei crawls up onto the stomach of the large creature and pulls on its whiskers. The creature opens one of its sleepy eyes, yawns with its enormous mouth and lets out a sound: "*buha, buha.*" Unfazed, Mei imitates the voice.

"*Ta, ta, ra …*" She can't get it right.

The creature blinks its eyes and lets out the sound again —"*buha, buha.*"

Mei shouts, "*To, to, ro!*"

With this, Mei becomes convinced that the creature is called a *totoro.*

The creature blinks its eyes again, and then, heavy lidded, falls back asleep. No matter what Mei does, it won't wake up. This is how Mei meets Totoro.

Satsuki and their father run around searching for Mei. Kanta, having caught Satsuki's attention, teases her that Mei has been spirited away by goblins, but ends up helping them search for her. Finding Mei's trowel at the entrance to the thicket, Satsuki goes in, leaving the frightened Kanta behind.

She finds Mei alone, sound asleep in the leaves of the tree hollow.

Satsuki scolds Mei, but stops when Mei explains that she saw the large Totoro. Satsuki is glad to have found her little sister.

After the family becomes adjusted to their new house, Satsuki meets Totoro.

It's a gusty day with a howling wind; in the evening rain begins to fall. As Father is to return by the evening bus, Satsuki goes to the far-off bus stop to meet him with his umbrella.

The bus doesn't arrive. After a while, as it grows dark, one lonely street lamp lights up.

Then Satsuki notices someone else is waiting for the bus next to her—a large creature with unkempt fur.

Her heart pounding, Satsuki stands perfectly still. The creature also stands still. Rain falls. Satsuki notices that the creature has only a large butterbur leaf on its head and is drenched.

Satsuki gingerly reaches out her father's umbrella. The creature doesn't seem to know about umbrellas, so Satsuki opens it for him.

"Totoro?" Satsuki asks gently.

Totoro opens his large mouth and says, "Totoro!"

This is how Satsuki gets to know Totoro. Eventually the bus's headlights approach. But it is a large mountain-lion bus. Two small totoro get off the bus.

Totoro returns the umbrella to Satsuki, hands her five or six acorns, and disappears.

Once again a bus's headlights approach. This time it is a bus for humans, bringing her father home.

Satsuki plants the acorns in the yard with her little sister. This is how the girls come to know the totoro creatures.

When their mother's hospitalization is extended, the two girls are a bit sad, but cheered by their secret association with the totoro. The totoro teach the girls how to climb the tall tree and play the ocarina—which people hear as the hooting of owls—and how to listen to the sound of acorns growing.

When school starts and Satsuki is gone during the day, Mei is unbearably lonely, her only company being the old lady who helps the family. One day she makes an important decision and sets out to visit her mother in the sanatorium in the far-off mountains. No one can find Mei.

Tension builds up slightly in the story. But with Totoro's help and everyone's cooperation, Mei is safely found, and the

story flows to its ending when the mother is discharged from the hospital.

For more details, look forward to watching the film …

Addendum: About the music

Two songs are needed for this film: a simple, cheerful song suitable for the opening, and a moving song that people can sing along with. Animation theme songs are frequently used to promote pop idols. This may be trendy, but these singers lack vocal ability, and the current narrow range of song stylings does not capture the hearts of children.

What children long for are songs that they can sing by opening their mouths wide and raising their voices. This film needs a song that can be sung energetically by a chorus.

The other song is to be inserted in the midst of the story. It is a song to enhance the simply told tale. I would like it to be a song that the children in the story can sing—the sort of song found in a children's songbook.

My Neighbor Totoro—
Directorial Memo: Characters

1987

Satsuki: main character; fourth grader

A girl bursting with vitality, seemingly growing up basking in sunshine. Limber and flexible body, stretching to its fullest. Vivacious and distinct expressions with eyes that dart about, unflinchingly looking at reality. Strong and reliable. In a family whose mother is absent, she is fulfilling the role of homemaker. Of course she is not just full of cheer. She does have some sadness inside, but for now she is full of life, her legs wanting to run, and she is eagerly impressionable.

She doesn't like the typical girlish things. She loves to run, jump, laugh. She doesn't shy away from fighting boys. The normal boys her age are staggered by her vitality.

She has no trouble changing schools and makes friends right away. But because she has to look after her father—who is deficient in his ability to master the realities of daily life—and her little sister, she has been forced to exercise forbearance. This necessitates her having to be mature. Yet this girl has a talent for enjoyment even in hard times.

As she grows up, Satsuki will encounter several turning points, no doubt becoming a woman of depth. In this film, however, she must be depicted as a charming girl full of vitality.

▶ Relationship with her father

Satsuki loves her father. She is convinced her father is the best in the world, despite his shortcomings. Rather than worry about her father as he pulls at his hair when he has writer's block, she watches over him, believing that it is the way he overcomes his difficulties. She can laugh with him about his mistakes: burning the rice, forgetting to put water in the bathtub before heating it, oversleeping, forgetting his promises

to his children, etc. She also loves her father's occasional childish jokes and tumultuous pranks: suddenly, respectfully taking his daughter's hand and starting to dance, or playing the villain and chasing after his daughters.

▶ Relationship with her mother

For Satsuki, her mother is a somewhat dazzling presence. This may be due to her mother's lengthy stay in the hospital. (For children a year is a long time.) She feels some inhibition about nestling up to and clinging to her mother, which her little sister Mei can still do. But she does like to have her mother stroke her unruly hair, and it is clear that her mother's gratitude and affection are sources of support for Satsuki.

She secretly wishes that she might become beautiful like her mother.

▶ Relationship with Mei

Satsuki looks after her little sister Mei, but doesn't always want to play with her. Yet it is Satsuki who must be concerned about her reckless little sister. She must run after Mei when the little girl goes off somewhere on a whim. And Satsuki must scold Mei, which is a pain, but after all she is a good older sister.

Mei: Satsuki's younger sister; four years old

In contrast to Satsuki, who is reliable and quick-witted, Mei is a single-minded, persevering child. Stubborn yet cheerful, she is like her older sister in that she is persistent and not timid. But with her initial shyness and tendency to few words, she seems to be even more observant than Satsuki.

For some reason she doesn't fear goblins, and the goblins open up to her because her child's world has not yet been tainted by the common sense of adults—but this may also be due to her loneliness. Even Satsuki must bear up, but not having her mother around is an even greater hardship for a four-year-old.

Yet Mei is a bold happy girl, without any dark shadows in her personality. She runs after her older sister and imitates her. But if she comes across something interesting she becomes obsessed with it and forgets the way home or the time, upsetting her older sister.

Father: Tatsuo Kusakabe

Tatsuo is a writer by occupation. With his first book a success, he became a full-fledged writer and is now working on his second novel. In order to welcome home his ill wife and concentrate on his work, he moves his family to a house on the outskirts of town without giving it much thought.

He lacks some of the abilities needed to balance the requirements of day-to-day living, and he pushes this responsibility onto his daughters. He doesn't even realize he is doing this because he is engrossed in his writing. While he doesn't have the settled maturity of people used to always functioning within society, he retains a childish spontaneity. What is important is that he dearly loves his two daughters.

Mother: Yasuko Kusakabe

In the hospital being treated for tuberculosis, Yasuko is fighting her illness so that she can return home to her husband and daughters as soon as possible. She is a smart, intellectual woman. An appealing person, her smallest gestures and conversations indicate her love of her children.

Kanta

The farmer's boy next door. He is in the same class as Satsuki; a bit shorter with a head big for his body. He is not good at talking, nor is he good at fighting, but he is good at drawing pictures. He has felt a strange attraction to Satsuki since first seeing her smile, but is unable to fully understand what he is feeling. Whenever he sees Satsuki, he inadvertently says something negative, but that is the flip side of his liking for her. At his core, he is an earnest and simple boy.

Kanta's Grandmother

A stern old woman. Perhaps because she once worked in a mansion in town, she tends to speak too sharply. An unyielding old woman. She has been tasked by the landlord with looking after Satsuki's family and the house they rent. Her eeriness is due to her chronic illness; later it becomes clear that she is a kind old woman at heart.

Kiki—The Spirit and the Hopes of Contemporary Girls

April, 1988

Eiko Kakuno's *Majo no takkyūbin* (*Kiki's Delivery Service*), published by Fukuinkan Shoten, is a wonderful work of children's literature—one that sensitively depicts the spirit and hopes of contemporary girls, especially those straddling the line between dependence and independence. In the past, after overcoming many obstacles, protagonists in such stories often achieved spiritual independence by achieving economic independence. Today, however, as buzzwords such as *furî arubaitā* (job-hopping part-timers), *moratoriamu* (moratorium from work or school), and *torabāyu* ("travail," and the title of a popular magazine about job-hopping for females) indicate, economic independence does not necessarily signify spiritual independence. We are, in fact, in an age where poverty should be discussed in spiritual rather than material terms.

It is no longer appropriate to refer to leaving one's parents as a rite of passage, because all it takes today to live on one's own in society is the ability to shop at the local convenience store. The true "independence" girls must now confront involves the far more difficult task of discovering and expressing their own talents.

Kiki, the thirteen-year-old protagonist of this story, is a witch with only one particular strength: her ability to fly through the air. In her world, witches are not unusual at all. The real challenge Kiki faces is that, as part of her training, she must live for a year in an unfamiliar town and get its inhabitants to recognize her as a full-fledged witch.

There is a similarity here with young women who come to big cities all alone, dreaming of making it as manga artists. It has been said that up to 300,000 young Japanese want to become manga artists, so these days manga artist is hardly regarded as a particularly unusual occupation. It is fairly easy

to make one's debut and initially eke out a living. But in the process of working day in and day out, most people soon run smack into the wall of their own limitations. In *Kiki's Delivery Service*, Kiki is protected by her mother's cherished broom, cheered by the transistor radio her father bought her, and always accompanied by her faithful black cat sidekick, but she is nonetheless seized by loneliness and homesickness. There is a similarity here with young women who dream of the bright lights of the big city and hope to make it there on their own, while still depending on the emotional (and often economic) support of their loving parents. Kiki's naïve resolve and lack of awareness thus reflects the state of our world today.

In the original story, Kiki overcame obstacles through the strength of her own goodness. And at the same time, she made friends with the people around her. When making this story into a movie, however, we believe we will have to make some slight changes. It is heartwarming to see Kiki develop her talents in such a wonderful way, but many of our modern city girls have developed a more complicated psychology. For too many, the struggle to break through the barriers to independence has become extremely difficult, precisely because they feel they have never been blessed with anything in the first place. We therefore believe that we will need to examine the problem of achieving independence even more than in the original story. Film is intrinsically a more realistic medium, and we will therefore show Kiki experiencing even more loneliness and frustration.

When we initially encountered Kiki in Eiko Kadono's story, the image that first came to mind was that of a young girl flying through the night sky over a city. There would be lots of sparkling lights below, but these lights would not warmly welcome her … The scene would therefore symbolize the solitude of flying alone. To be able to fly through the air means to be liberated from the ground, but liberation can also create insecurity and loneliness. By flying through the air, the young girl has decided what she wants to be, and she thus

becomes our heroine. There have been many stories of "magical girls" created before, especially for TV anime, but the "witches" in such shows have usually just been devices for girls to actualize their dreams. Witches, in other words, have just been a means for the girls to become stars, without any struggle at all. The magic employed in *Kiki's Delivery Service* isn't so simple or easy.

In our film version, Kiki's magic is something that all real girls possess—limited abilities that merely hint at some sort of talent.

We intend to provide a happy ending to our film—when Kiki flies over a city again, she feels a strong bond with the people living below, and relishes her newfound sense of self. We are fully aware that this ending must be more than a mere expression of hope, and that we must also create a realistic and convincing film.

We have no wish to negate the natural and youthful gaiety of girls living in today's world, or to be distracted by it; our goal in completing this film is to send an expression of solidarity to young viewers who find themselves torn between dependence and independence. We, too, after all, were once boys and girls, and Kiki's problems are also the problems of our younger staff members. At the same time, we are convinced that this story provides the foundation for a moving film that many can relate to, and that it will make for fabulous entertainment.

Searching for One's Own Starting Point: Proposal for *Dai Tokyo Monogatari* (A Story of Greater Tokyo)

May 11, 1990. From a proposal to create an animated work for TV based on Keiko Fukuyama's manga *Tokyo Monogatari* (A Story of Tokyo), published by Tokuma Shoten.

We certainly cannot say that the early years of the Shōwa era were "the good old days." It was the time of the Great Depression and of World War II, both of which cast shadows over everything, but in the cities many people still believed in the power of stories.

The experience of war may have created the foundation of our postwar economy and politics, but it is surely the prewar days that most strongly connect to our inner spirits. Even if we do not remember them now, there were definitely heroes then that people idolized.

This is a story about adventure, about friendship, and about an encounter: the meeting of a boy—relaxed yet unassuming and talented—who believes in justice and goodness and tries to live properly, and a girl who embodies love and vitality.

It is *Dai Tokyo Monogatari* (The Story of Greater Tokyo).

At a time when no one can see the way forward, it behooves us to search for our own starting point, to embark on a trip to a world that existed for a fleeting moment between the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 and the devastation of World War II.

Bokkō (*A Battle of Wits*; *Mo gong*, Chinese) Memo: As an Animated Film

Novel by Ken'ichi Sakemi, Shinchōsha; TV Special Animation Planning Memo, 1991

Film featuring a technocrat

There are several science fiction films that take this approach

A nihilism without ideology, including disdain for the masses

These aspects make the audiences feel good. Reflection of the death of values of the age

The Fascism of Love and Fantasy[45] or *The Siege of Rhodes*[46]

If this work can be presented like the above, it could become a film

People are irredeemable, but they have the capacity for nobility

The values of all earthly matters—

Fame, riches, power, lust—all are foolish

Depend only on one's strength,

Live with more poverty, more discipline, more intensity

Raise the standards for everything within oneself

Bokkō has something that resonates with present-day people

This generation looks with suspicion upon revolution, romance, love, great ideologies

But because they know the foolishness of people, they can, along with resignation, feel compassion for the poor and weak

They can give love—a person who appears at first glance to be kind

This project will fail as a film if we change the original story just to fit it into a normal film structure

While relying on the original story as much as possible, we must compensate for its weak points

In order to do this, we must do the following:

1) Reject cheap humanism

2) Reject a happy ending

3) Overcome the cinematic weakness of the original

   Above all we must be able to feel the realism—the main character must be a genuine realist

   The siege machinery and new weapons that take up much of the story are impossible to draw

   Effort and talent will be needed to turn them into more realistic items. Ignorance about military technology and military history will not be tolerated

4) Draw the characters as follows:

   Use abilities and an approach like that of Daijirō Morohoshi[47]

   No need to love

   People's kindness and foolishness

   Egoism and praiseworthiness

   Their shamefulness and their weakness

   A largesse that acknowledges all those aspects as parts of humanity is needed

   Disdain for and disbelief in the masses make a film seem overly crafty

5) A strong ability to turn this into cinematic work is required in terms of both artwork and drawing

6) Requires realism, as in the story of a hired commander of the Iraqi forces who gives his all in a stand in the Kuwait desert

Alteration of the story

To help explain the Bokkō Group, include a recruit from the poor stratum of society.

No good to have him be like the young samurai in *Seven Samurai.*

This recruit should be a young boy who is poor, cursed with a wretched background—if we can, perhaps it would be better to make this recruit a girl? It may be effective to show the dastardly qualities of the main character as he teaches the recruit by taking the poor kid under his wing.

Conclusion

Worth doing if we can secure good people for the production staff. It may take a large budget.

The *Porco Rosso* Memos: Directorial Memoranda

April 18, 1991

Resurrecting the Spirit of Early Cartoon Movies

Porco Rosso is designed to be a work that businessmen exhausted from international flights can enjoy even if their minds have been dulled from lack of oxygen. It must also be a work that boys and girls, as well as aunties, can enjoy, but we must never forget that first of all it is a cartoon movie for tired, middle-aged men whose brain cells have turned to tofu.

Porco Rosso is fun and upbeat, but not an over-the-top party.

It is dynamic, but not destructive.

It abounds with love, but needs no lust.

The story is filled with freedom and pride, is simple and stripped of artifice, and the motivations of its characters are depicted with the utmost clarity.

In the film we will make, the male characters are always upbeat and lively, the women are always charming, and everyone enjoys life; the world they inhabit is always cheery and beautiful.

When depicting characters, remember we are only showing the tip of the iceberg

All the main characters—including Porco, Fio, Donald Curtis, Piccolo, the hotel madam, the members of the Mamma Aiuto gang, and the various other air pirates—must have a seasoned realism about them. They engage in foolish antics because they also must endure hardships, and the simplemindedness they exhibit is a result of their lifestyles. We must treat every character respectfully. We must love their foolishness. Depicting any crowds or groups of people in a shoddy way is absolutely forbidden. One common mistake—the belief that to draw a cartoon is to draw someone sillier than oneself—must be avoided at all costs. Otherwise, we won't be

able to attract the oxygen-deprived middle-aged men we are targeting.

Rather than details, go for dynamism with numerous drawings

Rather than increase the number of lines used to depict the ocean, the breaking waves, the flying boats, and the characters in detail, depict all these things with movement. Forms should be simplified, and the drawings should be done easily, with the effort saved applied instead to creating movement. Let's discover the pleasure of movement, and of being upbeat.

On coloring

Coloring should be vivid and elegant, not garish.

We should aim for an upbeat and busy look, making sure to achieve a proper balance so that the result is not visually exhausting!

On art work

A town that people would like to visit. A sky through which people would like to fly. A secret hideaway we ourselves would want. And a worry-free, stirring, uplifting world. Once upon a time, earth was a beautiful place.

Let us make a film like this.

Why *Shōjo* Manga Now?

October 12, 1993

As the twenty-first century gradually begins to reveal its chaotic form, the structure of Japanese society has started to creak and groan. We have clearly entered an era of volatility. Yesterday's common sense and accepted theories are rapidly losing their appeal. And even if—thanks to the accumulation of material goods—today's young people have not yet felt these waves of change, there are obvious signs everywhere of what is to come.

In this new era, what sort of film should we make? Let me suggest that we must return to the essence of what being alive means.

We must reconfirm our starting points.

We must ignore ever-changing fashions, even as they continue to accelerate.

We must dare to create films that boldly and loudly proclaim the need now more than ever for a long-term perspective.

The film I am proposing will not try to sympathize or curry favor with young audiences and their current tastes. Nor will it question or deliberately try to raise awareness regarding the problems young people face or the circumstances in which they find themselves.

This film will represent a type of challenge, issued by a bunch of middle-aged men who have lots of regrets about their own youth, to today's young people. It will attempt to stimulate a spiritual thirst, and convey the importance of yearning and aspiration to an audience that—just as we middle-aged men once did—tends to give up too easily on the idea of being the stars of their own stories. As Charlie Chaplin's films always demonstrated, simply meeting a member of the opposite sex can be an uplifting experience.

Like his films, this work therefore aims to resurrect the miracle of such encounters.

The film I propose is based on Aoi Hiiragi's *Mimi wo sumaseba* (*Whisper of the Heart*). It is a commonplace story, a love story of the type one might find in an ordinary *shōjo* manga. In this world, nothing comes between our two main humans. There are no unsympathetic adults or bothersome rules and regulations, and the days of frustration and twisted reactions are still far off, for the protagonist is a young girl who dreams of her own story, which she knows has yet to actually begin. Like most of today's *shōjo* manga, in this story nothing particularly dramatic or pretentious occurs, for the two main characters' feelings are the only things that count. They confirm their love for one another, but nothing happens beyond this. *Shōjo* manga always end right at this point, and that's exactly why they have always been so popular.

The object of affection of the story's heroine is a boy who dreams of becoming an artist and loves to draw illustrations. This, too, fits into the typical *shōjo* manga pattern, and the boy is certainly not burning to create great and dramatic art. The girl dreams of writing stories, and she sets them in a pleasant fairy-tale world of unclear nationality; like the boy, she lives in an environment that is safe and unlikely to wound her.

So, why am I proposing that we make a film out of *Whisper of the Heart*? It is because, no matter how hard middle-aged men try to point out the naïveté and fragility of such dreaming, we can never deny that the longing for an encounter with the opposite sex (so wholesomely and honestly depicted in the original story) and the pure emotion that surrounds such yearning are central aspects of what it means to be young.

It's easy to cynically declare that wholesomeness is a fragile concept, only possible if protected by others, or that true love can never occur in this era without serious challenges. Even if so, it seems to me that it also ought to be possible to express—

in an even stronger, overwhelmingly powerful way—how wonderful the quality of wholesomeness is.

Wholesomeness so powerful it could blow away reality. Might not *Whisper of the Heart* be a film that accomplishes this?

Imagine, for example, that the boy in the story dreams of becoming a craftsman. What would happen to the story if, after graduating from middle school, we have him go to Cremona in Italy, where he decides to enter and train at a violin-making school? In reality, the entire concept of making a film out of *Whisper of the Heart* came out of this idea.

In our story there is a boy who loves working with wood. He also plays the violin himself. In the original story his grandfather dealt in antique art, but in the film we transform his attic room into a basement studio and make the grandfather someone whose hobby happens to be repairing old furniture and artwork, and who also occasionally likes to play music. And in the basement studio, the boy's dream of making violins starts to take shape. At a time when most children his age are avoiding the future (most don't find anything particularly appealing about grown-up life), our young boy is living purposefully, focusing far into the future. So when our young heroine encounters such a boy, what happens?

By posing such a question, what might have started out in its raw form as a very ordinary *shōjo* manga story can, if properly cut and polished, be transformed into something with a very contemporary quality.

By carefully preserving the purity of the world of the manga, we will be able to pose the question of what it means to live a full life today.

By imparting a sense of ordinary reality to a single, idealized encounter, our film will boldly attempt to sing the praises of life's beauty.

Princess Mononoke Planning Memo

April 19, 1995

- Title: *Mononoke Hime* (*Princess Mononoke*) or *Ashitaka Sekki* (Ashitaka Story)
- Color Vista, Dolby Digital, 110 minutes.
- Target audience: Upper elementary school and above, general public
- Period setting: Frontier area of Japan in the Muromachi period[48]

Project Plan

To depict the unchanging nature of humans by overlapping the turmoil of the Muromachi period—just the medieval framework collapsed—with the upheavals of our era as we head into the twenty-first century.

This is a vivid period action-adventure drama woven from two threads—a vertical thread of the struggle between humans and spirits over a beast god (boar god), and a horizontal thread of the meeting between a girl (raised by wolves, a fierce fighter who despises humans), and a boy (who has a death curse placed upon him). This meeting is the key to their liberation.

Commentary

In this film the usual characters in period dramas—samurai warriors, lords, peasants—hardly make an appearance. When they do, they have only bit parts.

The main characters are humans who normally don't show themselves on history's center stage and rampaging mountain gods.

The Tatara clan of iron workers: artisans, laborers, smiths, iron sand diggers, charcoal makers. Horse and oxen drivers—

the transporters. They are armed and operate their own guild association to control their industries.

The rampaging gods antagonistic to the humans appear as a wolf god, boar god, and bear god. The pivotal figure of the story, the Great Forest Spirit, is an entirely imaginary creature with the face of a human, the body of a beast, and horns made of trees.

The boy protagonist is a descendant of the Emishi, who disappeared in ancient times after being decimated by the Yamoto regime; the girl looks not unlike a type of clay figure of the Jōmon period.

The main settings are deep in the forest of the gods—where humans are kept away—and the fortress-like ironworks.

The usual backdrop of period dramas—the castles, towns, and farm villages with rice paddies—is merely distant landscape in this film. Instead we will attempt to recreate the setting of Japan before it had so many dams, when it had thick forests, few people, and a purity of nature, with distant mountains and deep valleys, abundant and clear flowing streams, narrow dirt paths unpaved with gravel, and a multitude of birds, beasts, and insects.

By using this setting, we intend to break out of our conventional knowledge, preconceptions, and biases regarding period dramas, and to create characters free from clichés. Recent research in history, ethnography, and archaeology shows that our country has a far richer and more diverse past than is generally portrayed. Most of the poverty of imagination in period dramas is due to theatrical clichés used in movies. The Muromachi period, when this film is set, was a world in which disorder and social fluidity were the norm. It was the crucible in which Japan was forged, and it emerged from the chaos of lower strata rulers supplanting their superiors begun in the Southern and Northern Dynasties,[49] from the daring spirit of villains swaggering about brazenly, and from the flowering of new forms of art. The Muromachi period was

intrinsically different from the Warring States period, when organized battles were fought by regular standing armies; and it was also different from the Kamakura period, when warriors fiercely protected their allotted land holdings.

It was a period of mobility, when the distinction between warriors and peasants was less entrenched, and—as in the paintings that show women as craftspersons—society was more broadminded and free. In a period like this, the outlines of life and death were more distinct. People lived, loved, hated, worked, and died. Life was not ambiguous.

That is precisely why it is important to make this film as we enter the chaotic times of the twenty-first century.

Princess Mononoke does not purport to solve the problems of the entire world. The battle between rampaging forest gods and humanity cannot end well; there can be no happy ending. Yet, even amid the hatred and slaughter, there are things worthy of life. It is possible for wonderful encounters to occur and for beautiful things to exist.

I will depict hatred, but only to show that there is something more valuable.

I will depict a curse to show the joy of liberation from it.

I will depict the boy's understanding of the girl and the process by which the girl opens her heart to the boy.

In the end, the girl will likely say to the boy: "I love you, Ashitaka. But I cannot forgive humanity."

Smiling, the boy will probably say: "That's all right. Let's live together in peace."

This is the kind of film I want to make.

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45 A novel by Ryu Murakami.

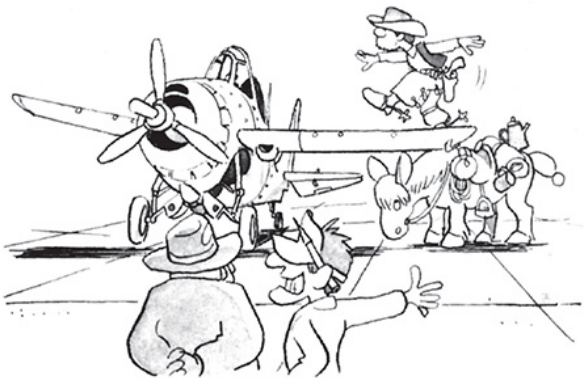
46 A novel by Nanami Shiono.

47 A manga and animation artist.

48 1336–1573, a period characterized by renewed contact with Chinese culture, a resurgence of Shinto, the spread of Zen Buddhism, cultural contact with Christian Jesuits, and a flourishing of the arts.

49 Nanbokucho period (1336–1392)—during the greater Muromachi period there were two competing imperial centers. Ashikaga Takauji established a northern court in Kyoto, and Emperor Go-Daigo established a southern court in Yoshino. Today, the legitimate line of succession is considered to have come from emperors of the southern court.

WORKS



▶ WORKS

Lupin Was Truly a Creature of His Era

Animage, October, 1980 issue

Someone once said that characters in a story are "creatures of their era," and this is indeed true. The staff working on a film may not be fully aware of it, but both the film's characters and its plot acutely reflect the era in which they are created. And this is for better or worse.

When Lupin felt most active and alive as a character, it was a very different era with which he resonated, and that made him seem so real. In fact, Lupin was born in anticipation of a new age, just when we moved from the 1960s into the 1970s.

Around the end of the 1960s, mini-car races were very popular in Japan. If you had gone to the race circuit at Mt. Fuji then, you would have seen colorfully decked-out Subaru 360s, their rear-engine hoods wide open to look like wings, and low-slung Mazda Carols looking like groveling drone beetles, roaring loudly around the track. A pink Carol would spin out wildly on a hairpin curve. A beat-up, lemon-colored Subaru with the roof off would plow into the hedges and heave up onto an embankment … Reckless drivers, beside themselves with anger, would gun their cars back onto the track and take off with a roar. Until the high-performance—and rather boring—Honda cars became popular and ruined everything, these mini-car races were loads of fun. In those days—really only

ten or so years ago—even young people without much money were able to afford an old junker.

Up until the 1950s, ramen noodles were a real treat to eat, but in the 1960s they were overtaken by *tanmen* noodles, then fried chicken, then ginger-fried pork dishes. As the economy improved, as the yen soared in value, even ordinary people starting taking more trips overseas, and we started being flooded with all sorts of information. Even animators like us, who had traditionally boasted of having some of the lowest incomes in society, were suddenly able to drive cars. We started spending all of our time talking about them. We didn't intend to get so carried away by it all, but we did.

Just when that energized era—of putting on a bold front, of saying "Yo, Daddy-o, watch me do this!" of catching up and overtaking others, of becoming a corporate star—ended, Lupin made his appearance. *Lupin III* was a new type of TV program and ahead of its time; it received a record number of orders from the broadcast industry, and its main sales point—its positivism—revealed a desire to exploit the new information then flooding into society before others could. There was therefore a lot of attention paid to details in the show—to things like Lupin's Mercedes Benz SSK, to his expensive wristwatches and famous brand-name cigarette lighters, to the Walther P38 pistol or Combat Magnum revolver he always carried—items that had only been depicted in a most approximate sense in the manga version. People in those days could then go around bragging to their friends about some type of whiskey that was even more deluxe than Johnny Walker Black, and say, "What, you've never heard of it?"

The desire to get the jump on trends was incorporated into the design of Lupin's character. The old *Lupin* TV series flamed out before two *cours*[50] but there was a big change in Lupin's character between the first third and the last two-thirds of the series.

When the *Lupin* series started, Japan was still in its *shirake* or "apathetic" era. Lupin was conceived as a character who had inherited a fabulous fortune from his grandfather, who lived in a mansion, who didn't participate in society's materialistic rat race, and who—to ward off boredom (or ennui, as we called it)—occasionally worked as a thief.

At the end of the 1960s, young people were still humming antiwar songs, holding open forums in the Shinjuku area of Tokyo to protest the automatic extension of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, and building barricades in universities. Around 1970, however, this once-exhilarating mood dissipated, and some people began boasting about how apathetic they were. Apathy itself became a trend of the new era. It was even intentionally incorporated into film directing styles, resulting, for example, in the unique pose that Lupin and his sidekick Jigen often assumed of lazily flopping down to have a conversation. Unlike traditional heroes, who would grin and bear whatever hardships they faced, Lupin took full advantage of a bountiful consumer society and was truly a creature of his era.

My friends and I weren't in an apathetic mood, however. In Vietnam, the National Liberation Front was still fighting, so there was still hope. But the animation industry in which we worked was in terrible shape. TV cartoon shows were all just a bunch of slapdash, amateurish, uninspired, derivative creations. We used to say among ourselves that making them was like working with still-open wounds. Of course, we were all still in the hungry stage of our careers, and we had plenty of the will and energy needed to do interesting, refreshing work.

I'm not sure where the request came from, but we were compelled from somewhere in the organization to make changes in the direction of the old Lupin series. We (Takahata and I) were in a fix, having taken over direction midstream, and wanting more than anything else to get rid of this sense of apathy that infused the story. We weren't ordered to do so.

However, even though apathy was a cutting-edge trend at the time, the high energy of mini-car races belonged to us. Lupin would be happy-go-lucky, upbeat, and the son of a poor man. All his grandfather's riches had been squandered, nothing was left. Lupin would run around in circles, always escaping, and always pursued by the drone-beetle-like Inspector Zenigata. He would have a Walther P38 that had been mass produced by the millions and he wouldn't make a big deal about it. He would rely solely on his wits and his physical abilities, and relentlessly pursue his goals. Jigen would be a friendly, cheery fellow, Goemon would be an anachronism and funny, and Fujiko wouldn't advertise her cheap eroticism.

All preferences aside, the Lupin character who rode in a Benz SSK and the Lupin character who rode in a Fiat 500 (the car of poorer Italians) were like opposites in the series; they competed with each other, influenced each other, and as a result helped enliven the series. I think, because Lupin had two different personae at the same time, he became even more of a creature of his era.

In terms of technical achievement, there isn't much to boast about in the TV show. The change in direction during broadcasts of the first series created confusion on the production side and, combined with the fact that TV animation techniques also stagnated around the same time, resulted in the visuals lacking unity. The quality of the show suffered. But this is just further evidence that the show's after-the-fact popularity probably stemmed from the duality in Lupin's persona.

When we had the production wrap party, the president of Tokyo Movie Shinsha essentially declared defeat and apologized at length to the production staff, but while we had worked our tails off, we actually had a blast doing everything we wanted to do and felt quite happy about it all. In the final episode of *Lupin* that we worked on, we had Goemon tunnel below a huge, seemingly impregnable bank vault and then

slice a hole in the floor with his sword, and we showed Inspector Zenigata reduced to tears.

After that—even though people talked about how peaceful Japan was—the times really began to change.

We had an oil shock and much pollution, but in the world of animation *Heidi* was shown running through beautiful green landscapes and—as a harbinger of loud arguments for rebuilding Japan's military—we had giant battleships (already regarded as useless in World War II) make a comeback as fantasy warships in outer space. After the shockingly well-planned and famous *san'okuen jiken* or "¥300,000,000 incident,"[51] there seemed to be a boom in the popularity of random bank holdups. We had airplane hijackings, terrorism, hunger, and wars all over the world, the price of oil went through the roof, and it was increasingly obvious that there were limits to the world and what it could bear.

The real world had become far more turbulent than the world of Lupin.

We had real idiots riding around in cars and putting on airs. The people who dreamed of Las Vegas were now yakuza-like members of the ruling Liberal Democratic party. Things like cigarette lighters that cost only one hundred yen were more than adequate for the job. And the flood of information just kept on increasing, so that you could find countless coffee table books with photos of weapons scattered about, and we were done with the world of cool Walther P38s. If you wanted to shoot guns, all you had to do was go to America, put down a little bit of money, and you could blast away to your heart's content. The era of Lupin, when people could take advantage of the country's burgeoning GNP to enjoy being lazy and become innocently infatuated with mini-car races, was over.

Lupin is a thief. And for a thief to be able to make a living, there must first be people on the straight and narrow path producing something. Thieves have to outsmart the reality that presses down upon them, and to do so they often hoodwink

people, but in truth thieves may also be the most bound by reality.

What could a fictional character like Lupin, who had been overtaken by the real world, possibly do? The only thing left for him was probably to try to steal the hearts of young girls …

There may have been a way to recycle Lupin for today's children. But it probably would have required a herculean effort and yielded few rewards. And I think that's been demonstrated by the way the original story has completely run out of steam.

The "new Lupin" continued running for three years, at times had quite high ratings, and may even have been commercially successful. But it never really functioned as a true creature of its era. Instead, I can only say that it had a tragic ending, simply expiring into the world of anachronistic, nonsensical comedy shows that hold appeal mainly for the gap between the story and the era in which they are shown.

The original story by Monkey Punch had a powerful hungry quality to it. Yasuo Yamada, the voice actor for Lupin, also had this quality. And so did we in those days. As a line from Lupin in *The Castle of Cagliostro* states, "It was a long time ago, over ten years ago. I was still a real greenhorn, doing everything I could to make it in the world."

I often think of Lupin fondly, for he was hungry in those days; he was a bit lecherous, fastidious, scattered, and headstrong, and he was crazy about mini-car races.

But there are other things that are more pressing for me to work on now. And I know that the real Lupin would understand.

Farewell, Lupin, farewell.

On *Nausicaä*

Animage Comics; wide edition *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, vol. 1.
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Nausicaä is the name of a Phaeacian princess who appears in the *Odyssey.* I first learned of her from Bernard Evslin's book *Gods, Demigods & Demons: An Encyclopedia of Greek Mythology* (published as part of Shakai Shisōsha's Modern Educational Pocketbooks series and translated by Minoru Kobayashi), and I was instantly attracted to her. After that, I read a novelization of Homer's *Odyssey* but found it lacking because, in that version, Nausicaä wasn't nearly as appealing as she is in Evslin's book. So for me, Nausicaä will always be the girl Evslin depicted in three-and-a-half pages of his paperback book. You can get an idea of the special regard Evslin had for her from the fact that he only allots a page or so for major players in Greek mythology such as Zeus and Achilles.

Nausicaä is a fleet-footed, fanciful, beautiful girl. She loves her harp and singing more than any suitor or ordinary happiness, and her extraordinary sensitivity leads her to delight in playing amid nature. When Odysseus is shipwrecked and injured, rather than being afraid of his bloodied form, Nausicaä treats his wounds. And it is Nausicaä who melts his heart with her improvised songs. Nausicaä's parents, fearing their daughter is falling in love with Odysseus, press him to set sail and leave. From the shore, Nausicaä watches Odysseus's ship sail out of sight. According to one legend, Nausicaä thereafter never married and spent the rest of her years wandering from court to court as the first traveling female minstrel, singing about Odysseus and his voyage of adventure.

As Evslin writes at the end of his section on Nausicaä, "Whatever the case, she had a special place in the heart of the weather-beaten voyager."

In learning about Nausicaä, I recalled a certain Japanese heroine. I'm quite sure that she appears in the collection of

short stories known as *Tsutsumi chū-nagon monogatari* (Tales of the Tsutsumi Middle Counselor) from the eleventh century. She was known as a princess who loved insects and apparently ran about in nature even after coming of age, delighting in watching such things as caterpillars metamorphosing into butterflies. As a result she was also viewed as quite eccentric. According to the stories, at a time when most girls like her would have shaved off their eyebrows and stained their teeth black, she kept her teeth white and her eyebrows black, and looked terribly odd.

These days, a girl like Nausicaä probably wouldn't be treated as someone particularly odd. Even if she were a little different, she'd still be able to find a place in society—as a lover of nature or as someone with an individualistic hobby. But in the age of classics like *The Tale of Genji* or *The Pillow Book*, there was no way society could tolerate a young noblewoman falling in love with bugs and going around with unshaved eyebrows. Even as a child, I was always extraordinarily curious about what happened to her later.

What life would this princess have had if she refused to allow society to hold her back and insisted on running around in the local hills and dales? Today there are those who might understand and even love someone like her, but what sort of fate would have awaited her in Japan's Heian period, with its multitude of customs and taboos? Unlike Nausicaä, unfortunately, this young woman who loved insects had no Odysseus to meet, no songs to sing, and no hope of escaping from her social constraints to wander about singing. Still, if she did ever happen to meet a great voyager like Odysseus, I'm sure that she, too, would surely have seen something wonderful in the poor, bloodstained man.

I'm not sure when it happened, but at some point Nausicaä and the princess who loved insects fused into the same person in my mind.

When the editors of *Animage* encouraged me to create a manga, I got all excited and, as fate would have it, decided to create my own version of Nausicaä. I am now forced to reflect yet again on why, years ago, I once gave up drawing manga because I felt I lacked talent. At this point, I hope that I can somehow bring this young heroine into a world of peace and freedom.

Speaking of *Conan*

Interviewer: Yōko Tomizawa
Mata aeta, ne! ("We Meet Again!") ed. Yōkō Tomizawa, *Animage bunko*, October 31, 1983

Directorial Debut with Conan

—Miyazaki-san, you made your directorial debut with Future Boy Conan*. In retrospect, how was it?*

Miyazaki: It was tough, frankly. I'd been working with Paku-san (Isao Takahata) up to then, you see. In watching him, I really thought that directing wasn't for me, because a director has to assume such a heavy individual responsibility. Seeing what directing involved made me not try it up until then.

—But you had drawn storyboards before, hadn't you? For example, in the Akadō Suzunosuke *animated TV series?*

Miyazaki: Yes, but that sort of thing's easy to do. And the easier something is, the easier it is for me to motivate myself. It was just a silly story, without anything particularly good or bad about it. Rather than focusing on something twisted, it was just a warm story, the sort of thing that evokes a bunch of chuckles and then ends. I think this is true of lots of manga, so in this case it's probably better to call *Akadō Suzunosuke* a cartoon film, rather than animation.

—I worked on the in-between animation for Conan, *and I have to say I was really happy to be able to work on the project. Everybody had really wanted to work on something that was fun and liberating, especially since before* Conan *we had worked on* From the Apennines to the Andes. *It's a really wonderful work, too, but the content is pretty serious, so I and my friends from the production team had talked about how we hoped to work on something a bit more upbeat and fun next.*

Miyazaki: I'm the same way, in the sense that I normally like to work on upbeat and fun stories. As you know, we animators have to work all day at our desks. So we don't really

have any good way to work off our stress. But when some of the drawings depict really wacky and fun stuff, it works as a type of stress reliever for us. If there's some slapstick sequence in a very introspective play, for example, or if there's a clear contrast between stillness and motion, slow and fast, or explosiveness and silence, then both aspects really come alive. If the overall tempo has already been established, those working on the film inevitably become much more passive. Of course, it's also suffocating for us if everything is done in slapstick style.

—What was it about Conan *that made the directing so difficult for you? Did it have something to do with the directions the producer gave you?*

Miyazaki: I was frankly in a dilemma after my work on *From the Apennines to the Andes* ended. I really thought I could never do any work that involved just layouts. But then I was asked if I'd like to try directing. Even today I don't like being pegged just as a "director" or as someone who just does scene designs or screen layouts. Rather than being seen solely as directing, if it's something that I like to work on, I'd actually like to be thought of as an animator.

—So you mean you'd like to create your own world ...

Miyazaki: Yes, that's right. Up till now, things have gone really well, because everything I've wanted to do has fit really well with Paku-san. Looking back on it, of course I'm sure Paku-san was at times frustrated. Even times when I thought everything was going great, he was often grumbling all over the place about what directing animation films was supposed to really mean. Up until now, when I've worked with Paku-san, we've discussed everything in detail, from the core story to what we should do and how; usually while lazily lying about, we come up with some sort of shared image of what we want to do, then talk about drawing it. That's how we work. But from around the time of the *Heidi* TV series, the screen design and layout work alone started to take up so much time

that I would never have been able maintain any sort of schedule. So for *From the Apennines to the Andes* I handed it all off to Paku-san. But in doing that, of course, I was the one who started to feel frustrated.

—So that brings us to Conan, *doesn't it? Did it move along according to schedule?*

Miyazaki: We had more than six months between when we started drawing the key animation for the first episode and when it went on air. And in that time, despite the fact that we started with a stock of eight episodes ready, we still wound up slipping behind the broadcast schedule. No matter what we did, we found that it took us from ten days to two weeks to produce a single episode. If NHK hadn't inserted a special program in there as padding, it probably would have turned into a real wreck of a series. If we hadn't been working for NHK, we never could have pulled *Conan* off. NHK let us do everything the way we wanted to; sometimes we even created the scripts after we had created the storyboards. To create sixteen episodes we ultimately took a year and three months. I think the company (Nippon Animation) probably went heavily into the red on production costs.

—Did you have a prep period for production?

Miyazaki: That's something I remember clearly; we had about three months, because on June 15 I pulled out of doing original drawings for *Araiguma rasukaru* (*Rascal Raccoon*), declaring that I was off that job starting the next day, and we started doing the key animation for *Conan* around the end of that summer.

—In the interim were you able to do the overall layout for Conan*?*

Miyazaki: Well, yes and no. To tell the truth, I had only mentally done the layout up to the part where he goes into the desert to rescue Lana. Beyond that I just figured that it would all work out somehow … We had a scenario up to the meeting

with Doctor Lao, which was a big turning point, but the world the story was set in hadn't been fully created then, so Paku-san handled the work based on the scenario for episodes nine and ten. I was at my limit then, physically speaking. Dyce and Conan were supposed to get on the *Barracuda* and escape, and while on the ship and heading for High Harbor, they would get into a silly fuss over Lana and the story would mainly be about that. But there was no way it would work. So instead we featured the Core Block.

Balancing the work with the original story

—You mean that you were pulled along by the darker quality of the original story?

Miyazaki: In the beginning I didn't want to be constrained by the original story. The theme was really too scary. I felt there was no way that I could properly take it on. But then my son was watching television, and he asked me who the underground-dwellers really were. He was concerned about the people of Plaschip Island and wondering what would happen to them. So then I got worried. I still think of this series as basically a love story between Conan and Lana, but without depicting this part of the story properly, Conan and Lana would never have amounted to anything more than two people with crushes on each other. I realized what was missing, but I really didn't know what to do about it. I had accepted the original idea of a post-Armageddon setting for an adventure story, but I did feel constrained by the burden of the heavy ending.

You probably remember the scene in episode seven with all the hands coming out of the jail—it makes you wonder who all those guys are. Sort of like solving a puzzle. The relationships are all inverted, so at that point you have to start asking the characters who they really are and what they're doing. No one on the staff, including me, knew where we were going to be led. It was a disastrous situation. It sounds pathetic to say this, but it's really true that, if you don't have the A part of the story

done, it's hard to know what the B part will be. So to tell you the truth, we just figured to hell with the directorial plan. We talked about making it an emotive type of animation, and it turned out to be moving in an emotionally unstable direction. But that was the only way we could deal with that story.

—Did NHK choose the story?

Miyazaki: NHK said that they wanted to start an animated TV series, so Nippon Animation apparently presented them with a few proposals. And among them was Alexander Key's story, *The Incredible Tide.* NHK at first apparently favored a different story, but then they came out and said that this one was more interesting. So this proposal was actually not the first that came to me.

—Alexander Key's The Incredible Tide *is actually a fairly dark story, isn't it?*

Miyazaki: I think that the dark quality of the original story comes from the author's intrinsically dark worldview. And in discussing the subject, it's probably hard to come up with a very optimistic answer. I think we may also see the story as dark because we live in Japan. That aside, I think it is still something we probably need to talk about. In a post-apocalyptic world, any human survivors would obviously have to possess a very powerful will to live. I know I'd want that for my own children. Rather than be told that the human race is going to be destroyed, I know I'd much rather have my son thrilled by the girls he sees around him and chasing after them.

—What were your thoughts on the relationship between the animated series and the original story?

Miyazaki: Well, my thoughts on the connection between the two are if you're dealing with a work with such a high level of perfection that it requires a very strict interpretation, then you're better off not trying to turn it into a cartoon series in the first place. It's probably better to think of the original story as just the trigger for the ideas in the cartoon series. I

think of the project plan as simply being a vessel; figuring out what to put into the vessel is part of my job.

—So in the case of this work, you felt it was probably all right to change the story?

Miyazaki: Yes, and it was something I decided to do on my own. At the time, NHK apparently had some concern about their relationship with the story's author, but I had only accepted the work on the condition that I would be able to make changes.

—You made some major changes, didn't you?

Miyazaki: I didn't like the original story. It's too pessimistic and too tangled up with ideas about America and the Soviet Union. The author's views of an End Times or Armageddon come from his own latent insecurities and fears, so he brought an awful lot of this pessimism with him, and I had some serious doubts about the appropriateness of this in a series for children. Even if someone's lost all hope for the future, I still think it's incredibly stupid to go around stressing this to children. Emphasize it to adults it you have to, but there's no need to do so to children. It would be better to simply not say anything at all.

It seems to me that Key wrote the story believing that modern America's basically no good, and that the Soviet Union isn't either, but he doesn't really know what to do, so he's working on an assumption that a survivor might turn into something like a King Conan. But there's not a shred of hope there, or even much vitality in the characters. Key puts all of his energy into the negative aspects, and in one sense it's easy to write about the negatives. In real life, humans are filled with weaknesses and cowardice after all. But that's not what I want to depict.

In the original story, you have what seems to me to be a world without hope. You have a weird society where people dream of riding bicycles through desolate scenes of dark

oceans, gray skies, and craggy boulders and rocks—it's a bleak mental landscape. And you have this weird society called High Harbor. I don't think a boy like Conan would ever have been born in a world like that. Nature recovers and forgives humans, and even though "forgives" is a strange way to put it, I do think that nature creates the foundation for all life to exist, so that humans (who are also animals) can go on living. Conversely, in creating the setting for a character like Conan, I think it would have been better to have had nature having already made its comeback. I have been told, however, that the idea that nature can recover by itself may be a very Japanese one … It's sort of like cutting down a tree: when you do, you later get an explosion of weeds and brush, right? But in the real world, there are lots of places where, after you cut down the trees, you wind up with nothing growing at all. And I don't think any people living in such a place could ever make the sorts of things they have in the story. After Armageddon, if the survivors were going to go on living with a lot of duds among them, unless nature itself recovered, humanity would soon go extinct.

—So that's why, in the animated TV series, you set the story twenty years after an Armageddon and assumed that blue skies and clean oceans have returned to earth, right?

Miyazaki: Yes. I incorporated my own hopes in the work. It may seem odd to say this, but those lines in the animated story—where Dr. Lao talks about taking responsibility for having killed billions of humans and exterminated tens of thousands of animal and plant species—are personally meaningful to me.

I really wanted to make all the characters Japanese and, if not Japanese, at least have them all the same nationality so we could totally forget about language barriers; to differentiate characters visually we did have some red-haired people appear, but I basically wanted to avoid having different races of people in the story. Also, even if Japan were to sink out of sight, I thought it would be good to at least have a tip of Japan's Bōsō peninsula, or some vast industrial complex,

survive. In other words, in a story like this there is a problem with distance, because if there is no means of transportation, and we have a totally unknown world, then everything seems really far away. I also think it would have been better to show people at High Harbor growing rice in paddies rather than wheat in fields, but if I had tried to do this too many other problems would have emerged.

We wound up with the world you see in the series because, if we had tried to make what I had originally wanted, there would have been too many other rules to follow. And we'd have lost any flexibility in the production. For the sake of the staff I also thought we had no choice but to create a world with a common language. I frankly feel a little frustrated by the fact that the world of *Conan* turned out looking a bit like the American West. I think it would have been perfect if instead of the *Barracuda* ship, we'd had an old Japanese fishing boat called the *Bentenmaru*, and instead of knives and forks, we'd had chopsticks and china bowls, the characters demanding food in Japanese, saying, "*Meshi!*"

In the original story the whole focus on the Soviet Union and America represents a type of arrogance, and I really hate it. And therefore it really bugs me that—despite all my efforts to eliminate this perspective from the story—some people still say that High Harbor represents America and Industria represents the Soviet Union. Thinking of the Soviet Union or of the United States in those terms is in itself a problem.

—*On the subject of* Conan, *I can't help but think about the connection to* Little Norse Prince Valiant.

Miyazaki: I can't say anything about *Little Norse Prince Valiant.* Really, I can't. I know this'll sound conceited, but you're talking about my own youth. The film's got everything I feel embarrassed about in it. Both Paku-san and I were able to work on that film then precisely because we were so young. I've already said more than I should have, things that are

unspeakably embarrassing. We wanted to depict humanity … We were burning with ambition then.

With *Conan*, at first I really didn't know what I should do. I thought of creating a healthy, traditional type of adventure story, the sort that isn't done much in animation these days, what we hadn't been able to do fully in *Little Norse Prince Valiant.* I wanted to have a young protagonist who takes over from the failed generation of older guys. There are all types of failures, of course, and what I actually like vis-à-vis the next generation is not just negating what your own generation has done but transmitting something to the future, or passing it on. Now, I'm certainly not in a position to talk in a high-minded way to my own sons about passing anything on, but, conversely, that may also be a reason that I always have this in mind.

When we started working on *Conan*, I would have quit the animation business if people had thought that what we were trying to do was boring. But to my surprise even my sons became passionate fans of the show. Now, I know their opinions alone aren't worth much, but at least they aren't the type of kids who just watch shows because their dad's working on them …

—Ratings for the show weren't very good, were they ...

Miyazaki: Right. Episode twenty-five got the highest rating, of 14 percent. But I can sort of understand why the overall series ratings weren't so good. We were creating something that went against the grain of the times. Of course, some people later said that the ratings would have been a bit better if we had shown more of the Giganto plane flying earlier in the story. As you know, Conan and Lana first come across the plane in a hangar, but then we totally forget about it until it takes off. Rather than having it fly from the beginning, however, I thought that spending two *cours* leading up to the take-off would have more impact. I have to say, though, I've

never worried about ratings as much as I did with this show. The production staff really did their best for it.

—Because there hadn't been many tightly serialized stories like Conan *before, do you suppose people had a hard time keeping up if they missed an episode?*

Miyazaki: Well, as I mentioned earlier, you can't create the B part of a show without first creating the A part. I think it's usually true of everything, but we see and hear a lot of things and store the information in our heads, right? Later, we may not be able to recall it all exactly as it occurred, but if we really wrack our brains, some of the stuff comes floating up, lots of elements collect, and sometimes they create a unified thread. But with *Conan* this was always a problem. So I pulled out all sorts of things and opened them up, but it just drove me crazier than ever. The only thing I did know is that *Conan* was the one who would ultimately return to Remnant Island. And since he was going to return, I knew that he was a really tough kid who could do all sorts of things. In the last episode, I was really happy to see Remnant Island reappear in the film. I really felt like Conan had come home. Because for a while I thought he'd never make it.

—Was the matter of the cigarettes the only restriction that NHK put on you?

Miyazaki: Actually, in the beginning NHK said they didn't mind. But then, just before we aired, they apparently had some sort of problem with cigarettes on a different program. I had intended for that smoking scene to be the only one in the movie and had planned to depict it in a good way. We had designed the character of the boy Jimsy to be someone who ran about full of energy in the midst of a post-apocalyptic wasteland, so I had of course assumed that he would smoke cigarettes. He's supposed to be someone who gets all of his own food, even if he has to barter for it, so I had assumed that he would at least want some cigarettes. I have to say, it still makes me angry to think that I didn't know they had edited

this part out until the show was actually broadcast … Still, I have to admit that I would also have been angry if I'd known in advance they were going to cut the scene out, and then had to redo it.

The first episode

—When I happened to see a screening of the first episode at NHK, I thought it was truly fantastic!

Miyazaki: The first episode? To tell you the truth, when I first saw it, I thought of hanging myself. At Cinebeam, the recording studio, there's a graveyard out back and a hanging rope … [*laughs*] I thought that Lana should be so beautiful that Conan would want to devote his life to her the instant he spied her, but the Lana that appeared on the screen was so very unbeautiful!

—The first episode was based entirely on Yasuo Ōtsuka-san's drawings, wasn't it?

Miyazaki: Yes, it was. I went nuts after that. After the first episode I insisted on checking all the key animation, and did that up until episode eight. Ōtsuka-san developed quite a complex about it. I'm an animator, see? When Conan was supposed to lift up Lana, he should have gently lifted her up, like a bird, but Ōtsuka-san is an ultra-logical person, so he had Conan heave Lana up, almost with a one-two-three. I've grumbled that this scene actually represents Ōtsuka-san lifting up his own wife.

In *Heidi*, we had started showing characters walking in different ways, with shortened steps, or with a quick pace, or in a way that seems to go on forever. But in most traditional cartoon movies, the characters reach the horizon in about three steps. For example, I love the cartoon character Farmer Alfalfa who practically comes bounding at us. It's something you can only depict in cartoons. You'd never be able to do it in live action. So I think that it's really a shame to relinquish these original attributes of animation. If the character's running at

full speed, I want him or her to be depicted running faster than any normal human could ever run. For me, this is an expression of style. Up until *Conan*, most Japanese animation had very slow timing or pacing, and in this sense I think many people found our style quite confusing. They probably found it to be maddeningly busy. This continued for a long time, even among the production staff members.

Designing *Conan*

—Is the Conan character a type of ideal boy for you, or did you design him to be a character you wished you could have been?

Miyazaki: That's a tough question to answer. But I can say that I like boy characters like Conan. They always make me think about how old children are when they start imagining themselves as the heroes in their own fantasy stories. It seems to me that most boys are about eleven when they start imagining themselves as the heroes in stories where they have traditional roles like saving princesses, etc., so that's why I made Conan eleven. Of course there's always something a bit half-baked about all this, because when my son turned twelve I always told him Conan was twelve, too. I merely wanted to give shape and form to the hopes and dreams of children. But I don't think that in this story we literally have to think of the characters' age as being the same rapidly growing eleven or twelve as in the real world. Both Conan and Lana sometimes behave as adults, and sometimes as children, but in the world of cartoons I think that's okay.

—If you watch Conan *with girls, they all say that he's an ideal type of male character. He's always very gentle and kind.*

Miyazaki: I think everyone feels that way; we'd probably all like to meet a person who would make us want to do our best for her, who would make us feel truly gentle toward her. Don't you think so? I think so. Now, I'm not talking about meeting someone with whom you would want to take oaths of loyalty and spend the rest of your life—that's something of an

entirely different dimension. Of course, we're lucky that in this world there are relatively few females who can drive men out of their minds and make them want to act so gently. That sort of thing should be limited to crushes. And infatuation. It's like the world Sōji Yamakawa depicts in his illustrated story *Shōnen Ōja* (The Boy King), isn't it? Ah, the days when you could get away with that were great.

Conan's not a superman. He's an ordinary kid who mainly thinks about having fun in his life. But humans are complex characters. And one fact about Conan is that the conditions in which he lives amplify certain aspects of his personality. He doesn't go out looking for adventure; he just does his best to stay alive in the conditions in which he finds himself. Conan sees the world through Lana, and Lana sees the world through Dr. Lao. And ultimately, Conan comes to embody what is most important in the world in which he lives. Even though he doesn't express it verbally, he comes to embody the vitality, resolute spirit, and understanding of others that his world needs. I personally like the idea that it is because of Conan's silent influence that Jimsy becomes happier, that Dyce tries to become more normal, and that Monsley is transformed.

Some people say that Conan's too much of a goodie-two-shoes, but rather than an always-innocent, happy-go-lucky Conan, I prefer to think of him as he is in episode twenty-three, when he sees the Flying Machine explode and doesn't exclaim, "Yay!" Instead, he feels the full weight of having actually killed other people. I like him because I see him as a boy who gets angry but doesn't have a murderous streak in him. I didn't want him to exclaim "Yay!" when the Gunboat sank, either. It's probably only true of this series, but I don't care if some viewers feel like saying "Yay, he did it!" or "Serves 'em right," but having him say "Banzai!" just didn't seem to fit with his personality. Of course, I'm sure that some will criticize this and still say that he's too much of a goodie-two-shoes or that he doesn't have enough vitality as a character. But I don't think he could have overcome all the

problems he faces unless he had the sort of personality he does. He's the kind of hero you typically find in cartoon movies and adventure stories. Frankly, I don't like the sort of people who say he's "too good." I'm tempted to say to them, "So you want to see bad kids, you fool?" I know that we weren't always able to adequately express Conan's various moods or properly show the qualities he embodied, but even so, I think it's all right to have a truly good guy—someone who's truly likeable—in a story like this. In looking at recent shows with a *mecha* orientation, the protagonist is often a young male between boyhood and youth who, when told something by his unit commander or a professor, replies cheekily with, "Hey, I already knew that!" like a teenage son still in his rebellious stage. When I see that sort of thing, the characters seem so obnoxious I feel like knocking them down. I frankly just can't see that sort of young male as a hero.

A special fondness for Lana

—What do you think of Lana? To me, she seems like your vision of the ideal heroine, especially in the eighth episode of the series.

Miyazaki: Well, I think I put way too much of my own feelings into episode eight. I did everything I wanted to do my own way, which I absolutely never would have been able to do had I been working with Paku-san. Some people have of course criticized me saying I went overboard. And when I put together the first scripts for the show I, too, frankly thought they were too embarrassing to produce. But by episodes five and six, I had grown fonder and fonder of Lana. And that made it possible for me to continue. I wouldn't have been able to make the show without feeling this way about her. When I thought about the underwater scenes after we had finished them, I realized that they incorporated the exact same story line of a manga that I had created back in my student days. In other words, it had been buried for fifteen years. Even the shots were arranged the same way—the only difference was

that a hydrofoil I had floating on the horizon in the original had been turned into the Gunboat.

But I eventually resolved my feelings for Lana. In the beginning, I created her thinking that she was mine, but as we went along I came to see that she belonged to Conan. My interest in her started to fade. The whole thing's a world of pretend anyway. When a ship sinks in the story, for example, there's no way that only one room in it would be unaffected, and it probably would have been blown out of the water in the subsequent explosion. But I have to say that I like that sort of thing. I like it, for example, where in episode eleven, you may remember, Conan boards the Flying Machine and hands over his effects, and Lana takes them without saying anything more than "*hai.*" And in episode twenty-three, when Conan leaps on top of the Flying Machine and says, "Open the top hatch," and Lana opens it, again with a simple "*hai.*"

In the original story, I think Lana was the kind of character who really wanted the weaving machines that Dyce had brought. She didn't want to weave anything by hand. But I don't see that sort of personality connecting well with the future.

—So that's why you had her changing clothes at High Harbor and weaving by hand?

Miyazaki: Well, I just wanted her to change clothes. Because I think the Lana who is in that wheat field is the real Lana. That episode, fourteen, may not have been very well received, but I like it. That's Lana, as far as I'm concerned. That's the Lana to whom I'm attached.

—And she wears the same clothes when she goes to Remnant Island, doesn't she?

Miyazaki: Yes, she does. And some people have said they make her look like a bit of a hick, despite the fact that I told our colorist to make them look better. The colorist also liked the look of Jimsy's baggy *mompe*[52] trousers because they'd

recently become fashionable. It was a fleeting moment of being liberated, and I wanted to emphasize that freedom … And I have to say, haven't you ever had an experience similar to that of a kid, a bundle of complexes, who finds himself staring, amazed, at the sight of a girl wearing a white hat and long skirt zipping by on a bicycle right in front of him? It's a feeling of extraordinary longing and frustration, an awareness of another world that is out of reach. I have memories like that from elementary and junior high school, and I would have loved to have run like Conan in the show, carrying a girl like that. I'm quite shameless about it.

—I suppose it was done out of your fondness for Lana, but early in the series, you had her deliberately change her clothes and come riding out on a bicycle, despite the fact that Monsley was appearing in the Industria harbor.

Miyazaki: No, not out of special fondness, not then, at least. [*laughs*] Lana originally had a somewhat darker aspect to her character, but she was always concerned about Dr. Lao. Then Conan suddenly lifts her up in his arms and starts running with her. At that point it's as if she's always been an upbeat girl, but Conan is the one who actually brings out this part of her personality. To Lana, Conan is like a kid from another dimension; she has to change because of the way he suddenly acts toward her.

Lana is basically torn between her feelings for her grandfather—Dr. Lao—and her feelings for Conan. When she's with Conan, she's clearly very upbeat and smiling, but in a corner of her mind she's also always worried about her grandfather. When she has both Dr. Lao and Conan beside her, that's when she's happiest of all. In fact, in episode eleven, Lana becomes such an upbeat kid that she probably seems like a bit of an idiot. But when Triangle Tower is liberated and all the underground residents freed, Lana is the only one who's held back. Because of her concern for Dr. Lao, her heart starts to close up and she eventually stops being able to hear Conan.

Actually, Lana herself realizes what's happening and wants to flee, but is unable.

Lao, however, realizes what's happening and that he has no choice but to tell Lana to go to Conan, that it's okay to leave him. With this he frees her. And when that happens, it seems to me that Lao has to die, and the line where Lana says to the dying Lao, "Conan would stop them," seems evidence to me that she is gradually shifting away from her grandfather. Without the death of Lao, Lana can never really be free. She would always have had a complex about her grandfather. I think Conan probably knew this, too. That's why, in scenes—as in episode eight—where he lifts Lana up on top of the tank, it seems to me apparent that Dr. Lao must have had an amazing amount of anger toward other people.

Whether we're talking about Mao Zedong or others, it's always the bad guys who try to change history dramatically, so in that sense I think Dr. Lao is essentially an evil character. He felt responsible for the destruction of the previous world, and has been living down his shame by trying to act as a bridge for the next generation. But if the people of Industria hadn't had the power to free themselves—in other words, if Luke and the others had lacked the power to rise up on their own, escape from the underground, and try to start new lives … if they had instead had to rely on Lao or Conan for their freedom—I think Lao probably would have left them to their own devices and let them sink into the sea. He has this sort of hard-heartedness to him, and under certain circumstances he might not even have been willing to let Lana go. I don't think Lao is a humanist. I didn't want any humanists in the show.

People often cave in when hostages are taken or when innocents are threatened. They cave in even before they have any idea of what's going to happen. Take the example of the film *Gamera.* Two boys are taken hostage and the entire Earth Defense Forces surrender, right? I think this is totally inexcusable. I believe you shouldn't surrender even if tens of thousands of people have been taken hostage. I prefer people

who have something they'll never surrender, who don't give in. And it could be the heroine, or anything. When Lepka turns a tattoo gun on Conan, she could lie. She could say that she'd cooperate, but if she's not as cynical about the world as we are—and if she's a particularly upright girl—then I think she probably wouldn't just try to get out of whatever temporary jam she was in, but also to defiantly defend herself. In fact, for me to use Lana as a heroine, she has to be able to defend herself.

Monsley and Dyce

—I can certainly understand your attachment to Lana, but in the second half of the series, you seem to give more attention to Monsley.

Miyazaki: We used to call it "emotional animation." I should have calculated more calmly what I wanted to express in directing the film, but I tend to proceed on an emotional basis. I can't do the work unless I have an emotional investment in it. I tend to pour myself into the characters. And when I do so, I start to empathize with the characters, to feel sorry for them. Monsley's such a sad case that she nearly brought tears to my eyes. So then I started feeling that I ought to do something to help her out. In trying to help her, I started to think that it would be great if she could fall in love with Conan, but Lana already existed, so that wouldn't work. And if that's not possible, then I thought of having her marry Dyce, but at that instant her eyes would have sparkled too much. In other words, she'd just turn into an ordinary woman.

I like women like Monsley. They look tough and defiant, but say they're waiting for someone to make them change. When I see someone like that, I always feel like saying something gentle to them. I think what happens with people like that is not that they change while being defiant, but that they get to the point where they no longer need to be defiant. And in order for them to change, I think they need someone to appear who really understands what they're being defiant

about—I don't mean understanding the details of why they're being defiant, but understanding what's beneath the surface of their existence. Maybe this makes the person able to smash a barricade of some sort on her own. And Dyce wasn't the one to do it.

—Did you always harbor that sort of schoolgirlish idea for her?

Miyazaki: Well, there's no sense in giving away all my secrets, but I do think that Monsley had forgotten everything. People tend to forget everything they don't want to recall. But in Monsley's case, seeing the greenery of High Harbor probably made her despondent, and since the Gunboat had been sunk, she probably recalled that she'd been saved by the Gunboat, and then recalled her childhood.

—What about the idea of Monsley marrying Dyce?

Miyazaki: That was first suggested as a joke, and I immediately also thought that it could be interesting. But then I realized that I would have to have Monsley start to think that Dyce might not be such a bad person at all. That's the problem with Dyce. We had to gradually reveal his good qualities, and in the end this worked quite well. When Monsley becomes a more normal woman, and when she's freed from the tension that she's always felt, and no longer has to restrain herself all the time, then she's able to view things that might have once seemed utterly idiotic to her. Dyce is a total fool, and from the beginning Monsley's always referring to him as "stupid" or "fool." But while she's using these words, the meaning of them starts to change, and Dyce starts to accept this. So both their views change.

I think the way Dyce so consistently tries to take such good care of his ship works in his favor. Monsley is probably moved by the fact that he won't give up his ship, especially the line he utters about being a "sailor who'll die in the sky," and when he stays behind she probably starts to see his good qualities. And after Dyce carries Monsley on his back and gets off the line

about her being heavier than Lana, she probably starts to think that things are going too far, but that there's no turning back. I think the fact that Monsley's able to go along with this without any big problem shows that she's capable of leaving behind the always-defiant side of her personality. And for her, becoming a normal person represents a type of liberation.

I could have had Monsley dump Dyce in the end, but I would have felt too sorry for him, especially since so many of the crew members already had new babies by that point. At the wedding, Dyce at first suspects that he might have done something totally ridiculous, then after a bit he *really* thinks he's done something ridiculous. We thought about having Dyce act like Dyce to the bitter end, but I think the way he got married was completely in character. When he looks at Monsley he suddenly gets serious, and even starts to look a bit gallant and dignified. Of course, in such a situation, I think anyone starts to look a little dignified. Still, in spite of that, I think that Dyce is definitely the kind of guy who, if a beautiful woman were standing next to him, would think how wonderful she is, and then in the next breath go off and try to make a pass at someone else without getting caught. That's the kind of man he is. That's why he assumed that serious expression.

If the show's viewers don't get this, they'll wonder why everything ended with Dyce all of a sudden appearing to have gone serious and straight. I sometimes think they don't get it. Some members of the production staff thought the very smart and capable Monsley was too good for a man like Dyce. He is, after all, the sort of insincere man that married women tend to distrust, while middle-aged men understand where he's coming from as they're often living the same half-baked lives. Dyce is a professional sailor, but he only appears capable and talented when he's actually captaining the *Barracuda* because that's when he's serious. I can really understand a man like him, who wears his emotions on his sleeve. In the beginning the idea was to make him a bad guy and to have him try to keep winning Lana over up to the end, even in High Harbor.

But there was no way that a jackass like Dyce would stay in love with and keep chasing after the same woman for so long.

Lepka

Miyazaki: As I said, I can't do this work unless I identify with and have some emotional attachment to the characters. I even found myself empathizing with Lepka.

—With Lepka?

Miyazaki: Yes. Dyce was best for us as a bad guy, but as you know he bowed out of that role. That left us with no one else. As the famous Japanese saying goes, "The grains of sand on the beach may one day all disappear, but thieves never will …" Well, it would have been one thing if we had had tons of bad guys in reserve, but if we had eliminated Lepka, we wouldn't have had anyone left. That's the way the story was designed. And poor Lepka almost seemed to go mad. He was isolated and on his own. He was struggling on all alone. The nuclear reactor was nearly out; the Gunboat had taken off and not come back. There was no food and the underground residents were up to no good. It would have been enough to drive anyone crazy. And he probably wasn't the only one going around and branding people with tattoos on their foreheads. He was, to tell the truth, probably at the point where he didn't know what was going on. I like the idea of a purifying or cathartic effect, and if he had said, "*Urotaeruna*," or "Don't panic, men!" one more time, the show would have become a total manga, a joke. Then I never would have been able to kill him off. Flying on the Giganto, Lepka wanted to conquer the whole world, because all he knew of anything was High Harbor and Plaschip Island. He wanted to control both. [*laughs*] Of course there wasn't much to do [*laughs*], because the only thing he could think was to get the combatants back to harvesting wheat, build a resort, and then go off to search for more survivors. He wasn't really thinking of conquering the world as we know it, or destroying it. He probably just wanted to find a woman who would love him, but Monsley

didn't seem to meet his standards, or maybe she had already given him the cold shoulder. There were all sorts of ridiculous things being said about him among the production staff; there was a rumor that he was gay. Some people said he had a rather nasty look about him. [*laughs*]

—Were they thinking of him with Dyce? [*laughs*]

Miyazaki: Or maybe that he might hook up with Territ. [*laughs*]

—I thought the Giganto might be used to fight in one more episode ...

Miyazaki: But if so, I would have had to clean up Lepka's character somehow. As I mentioned, if he'd said "Don't panic!" one more time, he would've become a character that I couldn't have killed off.

—I see what you mean. With one more episode, he would've become a character that people couldn't hate anymore.

Miyazaki: Exactly. And even the way things were, lots of people later made ridiculous comments, saying that Lepka was still alive, that he had arrived on Remnant Island before the others, or even that he was already living in the rocket shed there. With my personality, I couldn't go on seriously with him, and I wouldn't have been able to kill him off, either. And it would have made everything I had done in the series up to that point meaningless. It's probably not a good thing to get too carried away by your own personal inclinations in this sort of project. I'm really not good at depicting the bad guys, frankly. They always wind up to be people who are at the core basically good. I tried so hard not to let Lepka turn out this way. He's the kind of character who doesn't even look good in a Western-style suit, because it just makes him look like your ordinary, mean-spirited bureaucrat, that's all. That's why I tried so hard to make him look a little "bad" by having him wear combat clothes and showing him with a good physique, with a broad chest. Viewers will actually overlook a lot if a

character is usually desperately running around like crazy, consequences be damned.

The cathartic effect of cartoon films

—I'd like to ask you about the cathartic or purifying effect that you mentioned earlier.

Miyazaki: It's something I like. Take an evil character such as Hilda in *Little Norse Prince Valiant.* She has a change of heart and at the end she's done in by the Snow Wolves, isn't she? If that change of heart hadn't happened, I can't imagine anyone ever forgiving her. A purifying effect comes into play when an evil character transforms into a truly happy person, or when some really awful person turns good. It can happen in a variety of situations. For example, in *Conan* there is the moment when Monsley thinks of dying. When she chucks off everything and decides that she wants to live, not in a world of steel and plastic, but among greenery, she is purified. It was the same with Dyce. When he finally gave up his obsession with the *Barracuda*, he is able to obtain a real *Barracuda* for the first time. Of course, when trying to explain something like this in words, I know it starts sounding too formulaic.

In *Future Boy Conan*, the story ends with everyone becoming very innocent. I think it essentially ends by opening the door to a possible future. The characters are all rejuvenated … It ends with Jimsy being far more childlike than when he first appeared in the story; in the final episode this is true of Lana as well. Even characters like Dyce are totally changed. Monsley becomes more youthful.

In fact, I think they all become much younger. People often say that characters in stories mature, but I don't think characters in cartoon films mature to become people who, for example, make important-sounding statements. Instead, they are liberated from a variety of constraints. At least, that's what I want to them to be. Usually they all have something they're burdened by, like a weird complex, don't you think? Take the case of Lana; she finally realizes her own honest desire to be

with Conan, rather than her grandfather, Lao, and is then able to fly to Conan's side. And I think, conversely, that this increases her love and respect for Lao.

I feel that viewers should feel liberated after watching cartoon films, and that the characters should also ultimately be liberated. So I like the idea that the *Conan* characters actually became more innocent at the end.

What really makes me mad about most TV anime, to the extent that I have watched it, is that the shows don't have any sort of purifying or cathartic effect at all. I really can't stand them. I think they don't have any respect for real humanity. The only way they can imagine humans changing is by assuming that people *want* to change. It's too terrifying for the creators to deal with characters that seem incapable of changing even as they are changing. At first I considered making Monsley a middle-aged woman—around thirty-five years old, as she is in the original story. I even considered depicting her with sunken cheeks, a nervous disposition, and silver hair. But when we entered the storyboard stage of production, I realized, "Hey, wait a minute, there aren't any young female characters in this story and a beautiful woman would be good … Let's make her a beautiful woman!" I think that is why we were ultimately able to save her. If she'd been an old lady, I'm sure she would've been much harder to save. Monsley was a woman who wanted to change from the beginning—she was really just going against the grain of her basic nature. So all she needed was an opportunity to change; I think she was able to change because part of her had always wanted to be liberated.

As to the question of why Conan was such a "good kid," well, I think he was just born a healthy human. I honestly believe there are people like that. After all, Conan conceivably could have become an Orlo type of person. I don't really know why Orlo changed. People like Orlo sometimes live their whole lives in a twisted fashion. But I didn't want to leave him like that, so at the end I had him setting off fireworks with old

man Gull, suggesting that maybe Gull had spent quite a bit of energy trying to reform this young juvenile delinquent, to the point of even lobbing bombs with him. I thought this would be a somewhat more lighthearted depiction. It's all too easy to make serious scenes, so I wanted to create something less serious. I think it's okay to do this, even if it's not very realistic, even if it's just wishful thinking.

In cartoon films chase scenes only really become possible when the actions of the characters have all been simplified. When there are still mysteries or problems to be solved, or women to be freed, you can't have a real chase scene. When all the characters are free, when clear relationships have been established, bad guys have been revealed to be really bad, and we know who must be destroyed, then it's okay to go wild. In the case of *Conan*, it took an awfully long time to get to the point where we could do this in a worry-free way, because there was the whole issue of Armageddon in the background.

Leaving aside liking people or not, I do think that all men have a type of admiration for females in general. I personally don't like wanton women like the Fujiko Mine character in *Lupin.* But if I happen to see something innocently charming in someone like that, then I think I've probably also discovered the real woman in her. It all depends on how I discover this charming aspect. When I'm thinking, "*What an awful woman*," and then see something charming about her, I might even fall in love. That's the purifying effect I'm talking about.

Someday I'd love to create an animated version of *Beauty and the Beast.* I don't mean a literal interpretation of the story —I'd really prefer to depict the beast. I'd like to create a film where the character is cleansed by being devoted to something, and is transformed by being cleansed, so that at the end the character becomes what we wish had been there all along.

Among the special qualities animation originally had was the ability to not only make things move, but to transform them spiritually. Yet the instant this quality was incorporated into narrative stories, it nearly disappeared. It's exactly the sort of thing that I'd love to work on. I'd love to incorporate more of the transformational quality of characters in my animation.

In that sense, I feel as though I understand Charlie Chaplin well. People go on and on about the machine-centered civilization depicted in *Modern Times*, but I don't think Chaplin himself made the film because he was particularly interested in that subject. I think the film really depicts an earnest sort of admiration for women, and a special sort of gentleness. When the woman Chaplin admires appears in the film, he feels that he can ennoble himself by being devoted to her, and this aspiration of his, you might say, permeates the entire film. It's the reason I really love the film's ending.

In search of a cartoon movie

—What does making a "cartoon movie" mean to you?

Miyazaki: I just want to make films I want to see. I think that cartoon movies above all help our spirits relax, they make us feel happy, and they make us feel refreshed. And while doing so, they may also allow us to escape from ourselves … We live trapped in ourselves, imprisoned in the real world. But if we can free ourselves from the various complexes we have and the tangled relationships we are in to live in a freer, more open world, we might be able to become strong and heroic. I think everyone entertains thoughts of becoming more beautiful, or more gentle, or of having a more meaningful existence. Everyone, whether young or old, man or woman.

I like the expression "lost possibilities." To be born means being compelled to choose an era, a place, and a life. To exist here, now, means to lose the possibility of being countless other potential selves. For example, I might have been the captain of a pirate ship, sailing with a lovely princess by my side. It means giving up this universe, giving up other

potential selves. There are selves which are lost possibilities, and selves that could have been, and this is not limited just to us but to the people around us and even to Japan itself.

Yet once born there is no turning back. And I think that's exactly why the fantasy worlds of cartoon movies so strongly represent our hopes and yearnings. They illustrate a world of lost possibilities for us. And in this sense I think that the animation we see today often lacks the vitality of older cartoon movies. Economic constraints in production are often said to be the main reason, but it seems to me that something spiritual is also missing. It would be stupid to turn my back on the times in which we live and act arrogant about it all, but I always find myself thinking that the old cartoon movies were indeed more interesting and exciting than what we have today.

—I like cartoon movies, too, but I sometimes think they're a way of escaping from reality.

Miyazaki: It's true that they're a form of escapism. Cartoons are a fake world. Because cartoons are fake, they disarm viewers, making them think that they're "just cartoons." Liberated from reality and relaxed, viewers find themselves pulled into scenes showing the protagonists and a cartoon world and then may find that the experience evokes secret hopes and longings in themselves. They may start feeling braver and more heroic, more generous in spirit. And then they may also find that they feel a little more energized, or that their lover's face looks even prettier than it did before.

—I know many in the industry hate it when they hear people disparagingly say things like, "Hmph. *Just a bunch of cartoons ..."*

Miyazaki: I know. But I think this is what they're supposed to be. Cartoon films aren't meant to expound on complex themes or theories, and I don't think there's any need to insist on them being art, either. They start out being preposterous, so it's all right to depict absurd settings or tell bald lies—viewers accept this. But the creators still need to try hard to make their

fake worlds seem as real as possible. It's not good enough to just string together a bunch of clever ideas, for the effort required is fundamentally different. Lies must be layered upon lies to create a thoroughly believable fake world. It's an imaginary world, but it should seem to actually exist as an alternate world, and the people who live there should appear to think and act in a realistic way. This can be a truly ridiculous line of work, but when depicting a world with three suns, you have to construct a world that will seem to the viewers like it could have three suns. I think the trick here is turning the lies you create into a single, coherent world.

—So it's a trick, not an art?

Miyazaki: Yes, it's a trick. The viewers know that what they are seeing is fake, that it can't be reality, but at the same time they sense deep in their hearts that there is some sort of truth in the work. This, at least, is the sort of cartoon film I really want to make.

—And speaking of the animated works you would like to make, can you be more specific?

Miyazaki: Well, in today's world if you try to create an adventure film, you run into an awful lot of problems, at least from the storytelling aspect. Films based on children's literature have sometimes done quite well, but we're always discussing among ourselves whether we can really create a story where children discover things by themselves anymore. It's not an easy thing to do, especially in today's Japan where we have so many concrete walls and streets filled with cars and trucks. And sometimes it's hard to get an idea for an original project approved. Of course, I think that since we're creating a fake world anyway, that we ought to be able to forget about all these constraints and present a world where we're free to run riot. So then people say, "Well, do a love story." Now, I've worked all these years with Paku-san and haven't been able to become fully involved in love stories, so that actually makes me want to make them even more.

I hate the fact that in *From the Apennines to the Andes*, for example, we had Marco and Fiolina run to each other but not embrace. Marco's mother and Fiolina hug one another, so why shouldn't Marco and Fiolina? While laying out the story, I kept thinking that they should hold each other tightly, because it seemed even more suggestive to have them holding hands and staring into each other's eyes. I didn't want to stop them from moving, however, so I found myself with no choice but to make them hold hands and twirl about. Whether in cartoon movies or in a physical representation, it seems to me that when showing people truly happy it's best to show them hugging. So then why not make a real love story? I don't know why Lana washes up on Remnant Island. Only one out of tens of thousands of people comes across his or her true love by sheer accident. And if so, I thought it would be possible for Conan to have it happen to him. I thought it would be wonderful to have such a fateful meeting. Remember how Jimsy expressed his envy of Conan? Well, we're all like Jimsy.

—Some people think that having groups of people collaborate to make cartoon films is stupid.

Miyazaki: Let them say that. Works by those creating "experimental animation" or by individuals creating animation on their own are like a type of haiku that makes you marvel at how much time the poet spent in its creation all based on a single flash of inspiration. But there's also room for a different world, where large groups of people work together to create films. There's an unforgettable thrill involved in this.

To me, the most interesting thing about real cartoon films is that you create a world, you fully exploit the space in it, and then you create the *kishōtenketsu*, or logical structure of a beginning, a development, a twist, and a conclusion. This is the most fun to watch, and what I find motivates me the most. Cartoon films are fake. And because they're fake, you can tell a big fib, but I always like it when it seems like there's also a bit of truth in the fibs. I've recently come to the conclusion that I'm not very good at lying though, and that I'll have to

work on it so I can tell a great big lie someday. I've been making animated films for a long time, but when I compare what I've done with films that have really impressed me in the past, I have to ask myself if I've been able to surpass them. Then the answer is no. I've just adapted the technology and methods used by older films to our times. A lot of people around me have given up, believing that we'll never be able to do anything better, but I still believe that, given the right opportunities, we might be able to. You might only see one cartoon film a year, but the imagery in it would be so beautiful it might seem to surpass the real world. Children watching it might forget the story completely and remember only one certain scene, as if it were a beautiful, shiny treasure. Even if they were to see it again as adults and find it didn't really amount to much, they would still want it to be the way they remembered it. This is probably because it is something that has been personally experienced. But I think any works that have so much energy put into their creation should qualify for this sort of treatment. They shouldn't be something created just to sell merchandise, or be cranked-out fluff like toilet paper; they should be worthy of emotional investment, and when they have been visualized and displayed on the screen, they should seem like a work into which someone has put a lot of energy. It should be apparent that the creators tried to add something new and different.

—In conclusion, does Conan *work for you as a cartoon film?*

Miyazaki: No. I mean I've made a variety of films, but I don't think I've done any work yet where I've truly managed to create a whole world. That is, compared to the cartoon films that have impressed me so much in the past. Compared to our predecessors who pioneered cartoon films, I sometimes feel as though we're just using the technologies and techniques that they came up with to create their own worlds, adapting these to our times, and doing it in a cheap way. The economic conditions are tough, because the theater hardly functions as a

market these days, but I'm not ready to give up … I want to create the sort of film that a young boy sees in a theater and then goes home from so amazed he's temporarily rendered speechless; he doesn't say anything to anyone out of fear that he'll dilute the experience. I want to make a film that creates such a sense of yearning and admiration that it brings people to tears. That's the sort of film I'd like to make someday.

—And we'd love to have you make it.

Hayao Miyazaki on His Own Works

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind Guide Book, Tokuma Shoten, March 30, 1984

Until joining Toei Animation: A boy who liked Pacific X Point (Taiheiyō X Point)

▶ Born in Bunkyō Ward, Tokyo, in 1941

—What kind of boy were you in elementary and middle school?

Miyazaki: I don't like recalling those days when I was awkward and contrary … I was weak. My older brother was the toughest guy in school, so I grew up under his protection.

After graduating from Toyotama High School, in 1959 Miyazak entered the Political Economics Department of Gakushūin University. While there he was a member of the Children's Literature Study Group.

Miyazaki: I thought since they accepted even my older brother, they would accept me. My brother was an outrageous guy. He said he wanted to go to the Self-Defense Force University so that he could fire a machine gun. [*laughs*] He ended up going to Gakushūin.

—He was the type to blow off steam?

Miyazaki: Even now he acts young, unlike me, and enjoys his work.

—Did you draw manga from a young age?

Miyazaki: No, not really. It was in high school that I thought I would like to become a manga artist. Until then, I was just a manga reader.

—What kinds of manga did you read?

Miyazaki: In grade school I liked the works of Osamu Tezuka-san, particularly *Taiheiyō X Point* (Pacific Ocean X Point). It's a story about sinking a battleship with a small time bomb. There's no way you could sink a ship in that way. [*laughs*] But it sinks spectacularly with a booming sound. I

think with a little ingenuity, it could still be made into a television special.

—Did you ever send in or show your manga to a publisher?

Miyazaki: I did take some to publishers. They were small outfits with only one desk or with half the room filled with remaindered books.

—What kinds of manga did you draw?

Miyazaki: Most of them were very long stories, which were rejected before being read.

—Could you show me those manga?

Miyazaki: No, I won't. It is too embarrassing for me.

—Why did you choose to join Toei Animation?

Miyazaki: That was when I decided to abandon manga.

—So you went into something close to manga?

Miyazaki: Yes, though I still dragged my feelings for manga around for a while.

▶ April 1963: joined Toei Animation

From *Animage* Editorial Department:

At Toei Animation, from 1963 when he started drawing *Wanwan chūshingura* to the end of 1979 when he directed *The Castle of Cagliostro*, Miyazaki-san steadily worked on animation projects. After 1980, he was involved with very few works. The list is as follows:

- 1980: *Lupin III:* episodes 145, 155
- late 1981–summer 1982: *Sherlock Hound the Detective*
- late 1981–May 1983: serialized manga *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*
- May 1983–present: production of theatrical film *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*

It seems that he was involved in only a few projects. During this time, Miyazaki-san was at Telecom Animation Film and worked on preproduction for feature-length projects like *Little Nemo.*

This interview took place in June 1981, just as his career was moving in a new direction. Speaking to him during his "time of negation" was a good opportunity to have him reflect on his seventeen-year animation career.

In this interview, we started by asking Miyazaki-san about his roles when he was involved in certain works. (For television series lasting several years, it is unclear what his roles were just from looking at broadcast dates.) As Miyazaki-san was part of the main staff of many works, there are also credits made up for him because he was involved. For example, even in the case of layout, he is given different credits for different works: scene design, scene composition, or scene setting.

This appears to be an indication that his presence itself was what was essential to a work rather than any officially credited role on the projects. This means that it is difficult to figure out how Miyazaki-san was involved in a film or series by looking only at the credits. This is most clearly evident in *Little Norse Prince Valiant* during which he was a grade-five in-betweener, lowest ranking in terms of pay, who became "one of the most valuable of the main staff." When the works were listed all together, we realized anew that he was never credited as "animation director"; we were surprised at his unique contributions.

Two works done as side jobs

(Looking over the chronological list of works prepared by the Editorial Department:)

—*So* Kōya no shōnen Isamu (The Rough and Ready Cowboy/Isamu of the Plains) *was next after* Panda! Go Panda!

Miyazaki: Yes. It was directed by Shige-san. Shigetsugu Yoshida-san. I did the key animation for at least one of the episodes. I remember splitting the drawing in half with (Yōichi) Kotabe-san. I forgot the title; what kind of story was it? The storyboard was by Paku-san (Isao Takahata). My drawings didn't look like his at all. (Daikichirō) Kusube-san, the animation supervisor, worked hard on his own to fix it up.

For an episode of *Samurai Giants*, Kotabe-san and I drew the key animation together. Then I quit A Pro, leaving Yasuo Ōtsuka-san there. [*laughs*] Yes, I went to Zuiyō Enterprise. This is confusing. Zuiyō Films changed its name to Nippon Animation; but I went to Zuiyō Films.

—*For* Heidi *you did the storyboard and scene design?*

Miyazaki: No, that's wrong. In *Heidi* there were two different jobs: scene composition (layout artist) and scene designer. So the job of drawing the image boards was part of layout and scene design.

—*So scene composition is what is usually called layout?*

Miyazaki: Yes. In background art design you just build the structure. But when a moving person is included with the building, it becomes scene design. And layout is scene composition … That was how Paku-san seemed to think.

These jobs were named by stringing several kanji characters together. [*laughs*] It was a desperate measure. When asked, "What is your job?" it was always hard to answer … [*laughs*] For *From the Apennines to the Andes*, it was changed to scene design and layout. For *Rascal the Racoon* … no, it wasn't layout. Hmm … I did key animation work. Half a year. I also did layout because we had to do our own layout for internal key animation.

For *Future Boy Conan*, director is fine. For *Anne of Green Gables*, I just did layout … I don't think we put in a scene design credit. But that was fifteen years ago.

—*For* Panda! Go Panda!, *you were script writer, director, scene designer, layout artist ...*

Miyazaki: I didn't direct. I did key animation. It's a bit embarrassing to have all these credits strung along after my name.

—*What about for* Dokonjō gaeru (The Gutsy Frog)*?*

Miyazaki: I didn't do anything. I was asked if I wanted to direct. But since it seemed that I would take it in an entirely different direction and ignore the original, I was dropped at the storyboard stage before I did anything.

—*For* Cagliostro *you were director and storyboard artist ...*

Miyazaki: Well, just director is enough. And also script writer … It's disgraceful. This happens because we separated

out the storyboard stage. If it weren't split off, then it would be included in with the director's work.

—The television Lupin, *"The Wings of the Albatross" episode.*

Miyazaki: Director is fine.

—That's script writer and director.

Miyazaki: Yes, it is.

—And this table is a listing of works that you may have been involved in.

Miyazaki: I did help on *Tenguri.* I fudged things by doing the layout. It was just a bit of help. It was repayment of a loan to Ōtsuka-san. But it's better not to say I worked on it. I was asked to draw the key animation, but I ran away. Ōtsuka-san had helped me in deepest secret by drawing key animation for *From the Apennines to the Andes.* I got a telephone call from Ōtsuka-san saying, "I don't want to bring this up, but can you repay your debt?" So I said, "Yes, I will." [*laughs*] That's what our relationship is.

What is this *Koushi to shōnen* (The Calf and the Boy)? I don't know it. Was there such a work? This is *Sōgen no ko Tenguri* (Tenguri, the Boy of the Plains). Ōtsuka-san asked if he should put my name in the credits, and I remember asking him not to. And on *Moomin*, I did a couple of episodes between episodes one and twenty-six as side jobs. Ōtsuka-san came over in the middle of the night and asked me to do it, and left the work with me. I can't remember what all I did. I worked on a war vehicle. It went *kata kata kata.* [*laughs*] So those side jobs don't need to be listed. Both of them were done incognito, so please erase them from the list of works.

—All right, we will.

Miyazaki: For both of those, I did them because Ōtsuka-san had helped me on *Animal Treasure Island.* I owed him, so I had to help him out on *Moomin.* I haven't done any side jobs

at all other than those two. When I was making *Animal Treasure Island*, it was Yasuji Mori-san who went to seek Ōtsuka-san's help. So Mori-san is the one who should have repaid him, but somehow the debt came to me. [*laughs*]

The uncertain early years of animation

—Could you start by talking about your memories of Wanwan Chū-shingura, *the first animation film you worked on?*

Miyazaki: In our group, Kotabe-san drew the key animation for *Wanwan chūshingura.* He always came to work later that the rest of us. I imagined that it was all right to come late when one was a key animator. To me, Kotabe-san was someone above the clouds. When I drew the in-between animation, there were two women who trained their eyes on my work before it got to Kotabe-san. By the time it passed through these women and made it to Kotabe-san, there was no trace of the pictures I had drawn. [*laughs*] When Kotabe-san looked at a sequence and said something like, "It looks good," it wasn't what I had drawn at all, so how could he know whether my work was good or bad? That's the memory I have.

—Were you nervous on your first job?

Miyazaki: Sure, I was nervous … but I hadn't settled down yet. I was wondering if there was a better way to make a living.

—Had you gotten rid of your thoughts about drawing manga?

Miyazaki: No, I was still thinking about it, and was wavering, uncommitted to either. But I felt I was working hard.

—How much was your salary in those days?

Miyazaki: It was 19,000 yen.

—And your rent?

Miyazaki: Rent was … 6,000 yen. I had a four-and-a-half mat room in Nerima (Tokyo). I was a college graduate regular hire. High school graduates were nonregular hires. Compared to them, my salary was about 6,000 yen more. So, I was treated well all along.

—Of course you were single?

Miyazaki: Yes, I was. My parents lived nearby, and when I told my mother I had run out of money …

—How much was a bowl of ramen noodles?

Miyazaki: How much was it? On the west exit side of Shinjuku Station, they still had thirty-five-yen ramen, and I always went there because it was so cheap. The noodles had half a piece of pressed ham and some bean sprouts on top. At other places it would have been sixty yen or so … it's hard for me to remember.

What was great about Toei was its dining hall. It was a company cafeteria where we could run up a tab. We could borrow meal tickets in advance from the company. Even if I had no money, I could at least eat lunch.

—It probably doesn't exist anymore, does it?

Miyazaki: No, I think it's still there. It's not at Toei Animation; it's over in the film studio. So I would walk over there for lunch.

—Tatsumasa Shimizu-san (photographer, formerly at Toei Animation) said that there was quite a difference in the way people were treated at Toei Studios and Toei Animation.

Miyazaki: Shimizu-san's era was a bit before mine. By the time I joined the company, Shimizu-san was at Mushi Pro I think. So neither I nor my colleagues experienced the poorest period for animation. The union had been organized and we were pretty much assured of a certain pay increase, so we didn't experience too much hardship. I'm quite sure my salary was 19,500 yen … or it may have been 18,000 yen. No,

18,000 yen was during the probationary and training period, I think.

I didn't want for money. On payday my friends who were still in school would come over. They would eat up, and my money would be all gone.

—Did your work go late into the night?

Miyazaki: No, though I did a lot of overtime toward the end of a film project. My idea was to go home at five o'clock. I was convinced that staying on at work was no good for me as a person.

A carefree training period when we threw bread at each other

—What kinds of things did you learn at first, and from whom?

Miyazaki: We had a three-month training period. That was our probationary period. It was cheating in terms of the Labor Standards Law, but we did have a training instructor who was supposed to train for three months the ten or whatever number of animators hired that year.

—Who was your group's instructor?

Miyazaki: It was Sadao Kikuchi.

—What is he doing now?

Miyazaki: He illustrates picture books. He was from Tsugaru in Aomori Prefecture. He was very handsome. Now he lives out in Sayama.

—Do you know how to contact him?

Miyazaki: No, I don't. His picture books are published somewhere … He does cel drawing for the picture books. Oh, yes, there's a Momo-chan series by Miyoko Matsutani. He's been doing illustrations for that all along.

From *Animage* Editorial Department:

Kikuchi-san had the misfortune to pass away in 1982. As we were editing this Hayao Miyazaki feature issue, his widow contacted us asking if the tape of the interview we did with Kikuchi-san was available. A year or so had gone by, so unfortunately it was no longer around. Here is part of the interview transcript.

"When Miya-san entered Toei Animation, I was training new animators. He still retained the student-like qualities of being direct and very earnest. In those days, as now, his ideas and compositions were outstanding. I still clearly remember that his lines were free and natural in the blacksmith illustration he brought with him when he joined the company. For *Little Norse Prince Valiant* he suggested many ideas, pushing himself into the group of veteran staff members. From what I saw, the mood in his blacksmith illustration related directly to *Little Norse Prince Valiant.* There are many animators who are good at drawing, but in terms of composition and imaging, he is first and foremost in the animation film world."

—Sadao Kikuchi, picture book author, illustrator

Miyazaki: The training we had then was much more carefree than it is now. When we did plaster designs, we threw bits of bread (used as erasers) at each other in play and were scolded. [*laughs*] "Let's go to the zoo to sketch animals," someone would say and we'd go off on a weekday. Of course we weren't going to do any sketching. [*laughs*] We'd go off and play for a day. Yet we'd participate in the spring labor offensive and march at the head of the group though we were still apprentices. My fellow animators who entered the same year? Isamu Tsuchida (art work) or Nobuya Takahashi (animator) are some. Have you heard of them?

—*Takahashi-san, he worked on* Hi no tori 2772 (Space Firebird)*?*

Miyazaki: Yes, he did. Yoshiyuki Hane, he was one year ahead of me. At the time of *Gulliver's Space Travels*, Keiichirō Kimura-san, who did *Tiger Mask* sat right near me. A middle-aged man in a dirty hat would play *shōgi* (Japanese

chess) with him. That was Ōtsuka-san. [*laughs*] I wasn't aware then of Mori-san or Ōtsuka-san—I didn't know their names. The man with a beard turned out to be Mori-san. That was about my level of awareness. My group joined the company just after *Wanpaku oji no daija taiji* (*Little Prince and Eight Headed Dragon*). It was a place with a liberated atmosphere where I could attend the review meeting and feel no compunction about loudly stating my opinion when I thought something was boring.

Ōtsuka-san spent his time assembling plastic models

Miyazaki: For *Ōkami shōnen Ken* (Wolf Boy Ken), I drew only in-between animation. I have a memory of drawing in-between animation and art for Norio Hikone-san. At that time I was on the union's executive committee along with Hikone-san, who often took me to eat at sushi shops with his director's expense allowance. We were always talking about how Toei Animation was no good anymore. One day Hikone-san quit the company and went over to Mushi Pro. [*laughs*]

—Why didn't you go to Mushi Pro?

Miyazaki: It wasn't as if I were asked. [*laughs*] I didn't think I wanted to go there. They were only doing *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan Atomu*), you see. I wasn't at all attracted to it as a piece of work. I was drawing for *Shōnen Ninja Kaze no Fujimaru* (*Ninja the Wonderboy*) then, and enjoying doing things the way I wanted to. I thought I was learning things.

—What memories do you have of Gulliver*?*

Miyazaki: On *Gulliver* I worked under Ōtsuka-san. I joined Ōtsuka-san's key animation group.

—What was your impression of Ōtsuka-san then?

Miyazaki: What I remember is that he didn't sit at his desk, but was often assembling plastic models or playing with them. [*laughs*]

It is strange, but we got 40 percent more salary when we worked on television shorts in an in-house group. It was, in effect, a prepayment for overtime, but we still got 40 percent more even if we didn't work overtime. That turned out to be huge. If my salary was 20,000 yen, I would get 8,000 yen more. And if I drew more than the allotted number of pages, I would get a per-page payment in addition. I think it was 50 yen a page—now it's about 150 yen per page. So I had a real windfall. [*laughs*]

When I returned to the feature-length films group, there was no 40 percent increase or per-page rate; suddenly I was back at my base salary. No one worked. [*laughs*] We would go to our workplace and instead of working we would talk idly about surface tension and such for about half a year.

—Surface tension?

Miyazaki: That's just one of the things we talked about in those days. It was because we were going on like that, that *Gulliver* turned into a mess. It got way behind schedule …

—How do you think it turned out as a film?

Miyazaki: It's hard for me to answer that question since I know all the people who worked on it. I do think it's a terrible film. [*laughs*]

—Ōtsuka-san also said he wasn't really wild about this film.

Miyazaki: For me, it wasn't a matter of being engaged by the material as I was doing in-between animation. I had fun drawing the in-between animation and tried to work out some things.

—Which scenes did you draw?

Miyazaki: Where the robot goes wild and wrecks things … I don't remember much. We did a pencil test each time we drew in-between animation. We called it the in-between animation test. We photographed the line drawings to see how the movement looked. Watching these I would alternate

between feeling high and low. When they looked bad, I would think I might not be suited to being an animator; when it turned out well, I would think I was glad I had became an animator. [*laughs*] It was a happy time, after all. I had so much to learn.

—*You first did key animation work with* Shōnen Ninja Kaze no Fujimaru*?*

Miyazaki: Yes, the way it was is that from the career executives' point of view it didn't make sense to have company animators draw the in-between animation. So we were all made to draw key animation. It was anarchic and I did whatever I wanted. There wasn't a centralized staff system in place. The director might be an assistant director or even an actor from Toei Studios. [*laughs*] They didn't know about animation so they would nonchalantly put in a scene of a character walking straight toward the camera—what is most difficult to do in animation. It wouldn't work, so the character would walk diagonally, turning it into a mess. [*laughs*]

But we were able to do anything we wanted without fear of failure. We might put in careless timing here and there. Or once per episode put in a totally impossible running style. [*laughs*] It was payback, and we did all kinds of things.

That's the way it was back then.

The chaotic early years of TV animation

Miyazaki: For *Kaze no Fujimaru* I helped on key animation.

—*When did you get the official assignment of key animator?*

Miyazaki: It might have been for *Little Norse Prince Valiant* that I was officially made a key animator. By then assigned positions were only nominal as Toei Animation was in a shambles internally. It was unable to shift effectively from theatrical films to television. What's more, wads of money were being thrown away. Those who wanted to pursue money

did so single-mindedly, while those who didn't sneered at the others in annoyance, even as they went hungry. The situation had deteriorated to that extent. When people are paid by the amount of their output, they tend not to do careful work. No matter what kind of work they do, they get 50 yen a page—and there are those who flaunt the fact that they earn 10,000 yen or 20,000 yen.

—Speed could be considered a talent.

Miyazaki: They were shameless. You could also say they had no qualms about it. They would rent a room and take their work there to draw. In any event, the quality of the in-between artwork was a disaster. Faces looked different from episode to episode, even from scene to scene. Those were truly the early years of domestic TV animation. Something like *Big X* was even worse. In *Tetsujin 28-gō* (*Gigantor*), the police battalion was dragged along while they were standing still in a *tome*, or "holding," shot. [*laughs*]

And the sound effects—battle scenes would have faraway blasts. They either weren't able to match the sound to the picture, or more likely there weren't any pictures ready when they did the dubbing. Even in live action it was a time when accidental "special appearances" of the audience or a cedar tree falling over in the middle of a sword-fighting scene would show up in shots. During those days quality was a mess, even if the viewer ratings were high.

—Those became the "phantom masterpieces."

Miyazaki: It was just that they made a strong impression at the time. When I hear that TV animation was good in the old days, I really wonder if the person is all there. They weren't good at all. If you saw them now, you'd see how absurd they were. And yet, at that time the number of TV series on the air increased dramatically. Then the number decreased drastically, and then it rallied with shows like *Kyojin no hoshi* (*Star of the Giants*). With color, animation was revived. Somewhere in there they became color.

Ōkami shōnen Ken and *Kaze no Fujimaru* were black and white. This [indicates *Hustle Punch*] also. *Mahō tsukai Sally* (*Sally the Witch*) was the first color TV series. She wore a bright red shirt and white sweater; really bold colors. On TV the colors looked less garish than on the screen, so I realized why we used such bold colors.

—You did key animation for Rainbow Sentai Robin *(Rainbow Squadron Robin), didn't you?*

Miyazaki: Yes, *Robin* was also black and white. I drew one or two episodes. I was just helping out. Black and white is good because the color designation is easy, since there are only ten colors.

—Were you also helping on key animation for Himitsu no Akko-chan *(Akko's Secret)?*

Miyazaki: Yes, I helped on that. There was a huge staff. It wasn't like it is now when you stay as staff on one project all along. What did I do for *Akko-chan?* I've forgotten. Was it after *Sora tobu yūreisen* (*Flying Phantom Ship*)? It's true that I worked on key animation here and there as part of the company's internal group between working on feature films.

—Did you attempt anything special on those TV series?

Miyazaki: I did a scene in *Robin* where a space alien appears … but it wasn't interesting, no, not at all. Let's stop talking about this. I drew a strange rocket and amused myself, but I'm sure it's unwatchable now.

—If you were drawing between working on features, was it a side job?

Miyazaki: No, it was the company's system. But those in TV production didn't like it because it was cheaper to send the work out than it was to use feature film staff. There were often hassles.

Iwaotoko of Little Norse Prince Valiant drawn during hospital stay

—*Now comes* Little Norse Prince Valiant. *Can you tell me what led to your participation on this film?*

Miyazaki: I heard before the staff was assigned that Ōtsuka-san and Paku-san were going to work on the next feature film. Ōtsuka-san and Paku-san knew each other from the days before I entered the company. I've forgotten how I met Paku-san, but we were on the union action committee together; we would talk about films rather than the union. With that kind of relationship I assumed that if Paku-san was going to work on a film I would be involved as well. I had no awareness then whether I was in key animation or in in-between animation (grade five in-betweener). And I heard it was to be based on an original story, from a puppet play called *Chikisani no ue ni taiyō* (*Sun above Chikisani*), based on an Ainu myth. So when I heard it was in the works, I drew some pictures and showed them, wondering if they would work.

—*Did you call Isao Takahata "Paku-san" in those days?*

Miyazaki: Yes. By the time I joined the company he was already "Paku-san."

—*Why do you call him Paku-san?*

Miyazaki: The story is that every day he would arrive just barely on time, drinking tap water and wolfing down bread. He sounded like this: *paku, paku.*

I thought, finally our chance had come.

—*So you were part of the preproduction staff, of course.*

Miyazaki: Actually, I don't think I was.

I remember assiduously drawing pictures while I was still doing other work, and then leaving them in the room where Ōtsuka-san and Paku-san were first holed up. I somehow ended up sitting there with them. I really don't remember it well. I was never given orders by the company, nor was I ever acknowledged, but somehow I ended up there. There had been a demand from the workplace that staff be given the

opportunity to participate in the preproduction stage; they called this "staff participation in projects." I just carried that out. I wasn't concerned whether I was part of the main staff or not. The reality was that before anyone was aware of it, I was there. I thought that this was our place to shine.

Around that time we were badmouthing Toei Animation's work for not being with it and silly and such. It was just when Sanpei Shirato's *Kamui-den* was starting, and we were filled with an intense desire to create something new and different. The times really had an impact on us. The effect of the Vietnam War was really powerful.

—It was released in 1968.

Miyazaki: We started the production in 1965. That was when I first heard we'd do it … Then I got married and had a child.

—When did you get married?

Miyazaki: I joined Toei Animation in 1963 … then in 1964 I was secretary-general for the union action committee. After I ended my term I got married. So it was in 1965 that I got married.

—You were quite young.

Miyazaki: I was twenty-four years old.

—So there was a time when you were a working couple.

Miyazaki: Yes, the entire time I was at Toei my wife's income was higher than mine. [*laughs*]

—So, was that around the time of Gulliver*?*

Miyazaki: No, it wasn't. *Gulliver* was released in the spring of 1965. It was that fall. By that time Paku-san had said we were going to do it, so I was rummaging around, drawing pictures. That fall I was hospitalized with appendicitis. And it was while I was in the hospital that I drew the first picture of Iwaotoko: the one where he is walking on the mountain. I

drew it with him walking away into the distance, but everyone thought he was walking toward the viewer, so I kept quiet. [*laughs*]

I must have drawn quite a few pictures before this one. I think the pre-production group was formed in 1966. So I was twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six … yes. It was completed when I was twenty-seven. I wondered if it would ever be finished. Even when it was finally complete, it didn't feel like it. It was a real struggle during that time. If you ask Yoshioka-san, he will be able to tell you. He must be quite important at Toei Animation by now. His name is Osamu Yoshioka. He was in charge of production. He bore the brunt of the company's anger. Paku-san got it too.

Paku-san is a scary person. You understand, don't you? At the time I felt that justice was on our side, but when you think about it, that was extreme. We had plenty of time, but the storyboards weren't ready. So Paku-san's evaluations were severe, the worst. And when he wasn't working on his project, he was a union officer. So the company saw him as their foe.

He was trying to make a film on a different track from what had been made before. I think there was a large gap between our aspirations and our abilities in terms of drawing the pictures. Time kept passing as we struggled to bridge that gap.

—Were you carrying a lot of baggage?

Miyazaki: No, I wasn't conscious of that. We were in the middle of labor union work as well … at least in Paku-san's case he seemed to reassess the situation rationally in order to make the film. But for me, I was just intent on making something on a grand scale. I don't think it turned out to be such a grand scale project. But that was what occupied my mind.

I was charged with the role of something like scene design, and I actually learned how to do that work during the process of making the film. It wasn't a case of implementing what I

already knew; I was feeling my way as I worked on the project. So when *Little Norse Prince Valiant* was done, it was easy for me to do anything. I had to draw something that moved dramatically on a large-size Cinemascope screen. Compared to that, I could be much more carefree working on projects like *Puss 'n Boots.*

The chase in *Puss 'n Boots* and the tank in *Sora tobu yūreisen (Flying Phantom Ship)*

—*Was* Puss 'n Boots *a standard-size film?*

Miyazaki: No, it wasn't standard size, but we used far fewer large-sized frames. What we did was simple as well. It went smoothly.

—*After working so hard on* Little Norse Prince Valiant *for three years, did you feel liberated?*

Miyazaki: Yes, I felt carefree working on *Puss 'n Boots.*

—*As an animator, wouldn't it be more interesting to have chase scenes?*

Miyazaki: Yes, even though I wasn't so serious at first, I started getting excited about it as I worked on it. As I was drawing, I thought, "Hey, this is fun."

—*In the end you even ignored the storyboards.*

Miyazaki: It wasn't that. Rather, I was asked to by the director. In cases where I forced my way and dragged others along without being asked by the director, you could say that I was being aggressive. But it was more like, "Miya-chan, will you do this?" "Okay, then, I'll do it." So it was more an internal matter that was, after all, controlled by the director.

In those days, our way of working was really approximate —we didn't indicate the number of seconds in the storyboards. It was like, "this should take about three seconds." We'd say, "I can't tell until I draw it." I'd take it to the director and say, "I drew it, and it turned out longer." He'd say, "That's all right," or "It's a little long, but we'll do something about it."

Compared to how things are now, it was much freer in many respects. We'd change the dialogue, too—after drawing the key animation, we'd change the script. We'd write it and the production assistant would pick it up and write a dubbing script. We could do whatever we wanted and they'd follow through. Nowadays if someone in an outsourced production company changes the dialogue on his own, I don't think it would be so easy to follow through.

In short, the director thought, "If it turns out more interesting, so much the better," so they let me do pretty much as I pleased. That's why I don't want to claim "I did this, I did that." This was how it was done in those days. It was a time when the division of labor wasn't as systematic and mechanical as it is now.

—*What are your memories of* Sora tobu yūreisen*?*

Miyazaki: I drew the tank scene. I suggested that we insert a scene like that and it was approved. I don't think it was in the initial script that Hiroshi Ikeda-san wrote. I wanted to have the National Defense Force's tank scatter cars and create havoc on the streets. It was a way of expressing my political consciousness. When the storyboard was completed, that scene was sent to Sadao Kikuchi-san, my instructor during my training period. I insisted that I had to draw it and took it away from Kikuchi-san. He had a look on his face that expressed some complex feelings. He probably thought I was a pretty obnoxious guy.

I still like that scene, but once was enough for drawing a tank. It was such exhausting and time-consuming work to draw it. My feeling was that a tank should shoot in town rather than in a field, so that is what I drew. I don't like *Yūreisen* that much as a film. It got too carried away by its own logic. I drew the battle scenes, but they weren't very good. Younger animators today are much better at drawing explosions.

The demise of two-frame animation

Miyazaki: I was on the preproduction staff of *Animal Treasure Island.* We would talk about making it a major piece. When shot at, a character would just say "Ouch!" but not be killed—that kind of animation. That was our aim, but now I think we didn't have the capability to fulfill our intention.

—Did Ōtsuka-san leave in the middle of the production?

Miyazaki: No, not in the middle of it. Ōtsuka-san went to A Pro before that. So I took work to his house and asked him to help. In terms of amount it wasn't much.

About that time we started saying things like, "Ōtsuka-san is going to do *Lupin*," and "Yeah, that sounds interesting," and "Maybe we can do an episode here." *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* was hopeless; I changed the entire storyboard thinking that I'd make my part interesting. I made it too interesting, and it seemed the whole movie was over when my scene ended.

In those days, Toei Animation's feature-length movies were divided into A-films and B-films. The length and budget were different. *Robin* and *Cyborg 009*, if I remember correctly, were B-films. *Ali Baba* and *Flying Ghost Ship* were also B-films. A-films consisted of 50,000 pages or so, at two frames. *Puss 'n Boots*, *Animal Treasure Island*, and *Little Norse Prince Valiant* were A-films. We had high expectations for *Animal Treasure Island*, but in box office terms it lost out to *Ultraman* or some such film. [*laughs*] So A-films died off. That was the end of the era of two-frame animation.

Our era was from *Little Norse Prince Valiant* and *Puss 'n Boots* to *Animal Treasure Island.* Well, that was when we used about 50,000 drawings. Even with the movement in *The Castle of Cagliostro*, it was 43,000 drawings or so: an hour and forty minutes. But A-films used 50,000 drawings for an hour and fifteen minutes. In *Animal Treasure Island* we talked about using three frames to cut down on the number of drawings. When we watched the early rushes, Kotabe-san was the only one who had used two frames. We thought, "Hey, he's a traitor," but then we all started using two frames. There's no

question that two frames are better. So it ended up being mostly two frames. When *Animal Treasure Island* didn't do well and we realized A-films were doomed, our hopes were shattered. So I thought, "Eh, what the hell," when doing *Ali Baba.* The story was terrible. I was able to work on it without a single hour of overtime.

During that time, after *Little Norse Prince Valiant*, Paku-san was being snubbed. When I would get offers to be animation director, I would say, "Let me work with Isao Takahata," but they wouldn't listen to me. My insistence on this became a problem in the directors' department, with people grumbling that I had a lot of nerve trying to choose my own director. I started sensing that it wasn't going to work out as this atmosphere became pervasive.

Paku-san was asked if he would do *Pippi Longstocking* and I was asked to go along with him. I said, yes I'll go. We said, "Let's ask Kotabe-san to come with us." So the three of us quit. Apparently there were some people who said to Kotabe-san, "You're being tricked, don't do it." [*laughs*] Kotabe-san would say, "Yeah, I guess. I may be in trouble," but his expression didn't look that way.

Heidi, Girl of the Alps created a new era

▶ To A Pro: 1971

—Preproduction for Pippi *was between your Toei time on* Lupin, *wasn't it?*

Miyazaki: Yes, it was. Our preproduction period was short, but very meaningful for us. We wanted to tackle a new theme after *Little Norse Prince Valiant.* That dragged on actually, until *From the Apennines to the Andes.*

The old *Lupin III* was done in a carefree manner. We didn't worry about the details. Masaaki Ōsumi-san and Ōtsuka-san talked things over as they made it. When the director changes suddenly, as key animation director you are stunned. Ōtsuka-san was never able to recover from that. [*laughs*] I did as I

wanted in a carefree way, so I was relieved and happy to have it over with. Our interest wasn't in that work at all. I did *Akadō Suzunosuke* and *Kōya no shōnen Isamu* because I had to.

Panda! Go Panda! was our first work using our ideas for *Pippi.* So it's a transitional work between manga and Isao Takahata's everyday-life animation—stories with realistic settings that place importance on everyday matters. Everyday-life animation shows how the main character deals with events that occur in real life. So *Panda! Go Panda!* was really transitional.

From *Animage* Editorial Department:

For this special on Hayao Miyazaki, we received comments centering on *Pippi* from Kotabe-san; we are publishing these for readers' reference.

"My association with Miya-san began when we worked on Toei Animation's *Wanwan chūshingura*, so it is quite a long one. We worked mainly on feature-length theatrical releases. After *Ali Baba*, Miya-san, Takahata-san, and I quit Toei Animation. We'd heard that Ōtsuka-san, who had already gone to A Pro, was going to make *Pippi Longstocking*, and, attracted by that project, the three of us rushed to join up. Being responsible for the foreign location setting, Miya-san went to Sweden, but we were unable to get the original author's permission, so we finally had to give up on this project. At that stage, Takahata-san's script and even a test film had already been prepared.

"As we had been convinced that we could make the film, we were very sad. We had left Toei Animation in order to make *Pippi*, and all at once we had lost our motive. We incorporated our dreams for *Pippi* into *Panda! Go Panda!* by having a girl like Pippi appear in it, but frankly, I think the idea wasn't fully realized.

"Miya-san worked on layout and scene design for *Heidi* and made *Conan* after that. From what I heard he had an extraordinary amount of energy in those days. They called him a human dynamo. Key animation director Ōtsuka-san kept

slipping away to take breaks, but complained that he was called back in no time at all. [*laughs*] Ōtsuka-san was mature so he could withstand it; if it had been me, I would have quit for real way before."

▶ To Zuiyō Films: 1973

—So your idea to depict everyday life was realized in Heidi, Girl of the Alps*?*

Miyazaki: Yes. We'd say, "If we go that way, we'll have only a 2–3 percent viewer rate." In one way that would have been a relief as we wouldn't have to continue for all four quarters and do the series for a whole year. But it caught on.

—It had incredible ratings, didn't it?

Miyazaki: Yes, it was a major hit. I would say it created an era. It was the first of a series of animation shows based on literary works. I think this was Paku-san's achievement.

—No one believed that kind of work could be a TV series, did they?

Miyazaki: I didn't believe it either. With our transitional *Panda! Go Panda!*, it was encouraging to have children really focus on our stories, so we were glad, but I didn't think that was possible with television. I at first thought we had proved it was possible. But to keep proving it required an inhuman amount of energy. We really had to work to excess. I slept on the floor and would get up again to draw. Those who got sick we thought just lacked determination. I didn't even catch any colds. There was an abnormal tension in the air. Junzō Nakajima, the producer, fully supported us. Once the broadcast started, we heard nothing about the sponsors' opinions and so forth. That was a big help.

I wasn't completely confident about my health, but I assumed it would hold up once we started work. With *Cagliostro* I came face-to-face with the reality that my health wouldn't hold up, and I had to confront that frustrating fact.

I think we used up our idea of depicting ordinary life with *Heidi.* Paku-san agrees on this and so does Kotabe-san. When *Heidi* ended we told each other, "Let's make something carefree next," and "Let's not get involved in how the dishes were or what kind of table manners were correct." But our direction was set, with the next project being *The Dog of Flanders.* This was also a ratings success, but I think of it as trash. Then came along *From the Apennines to the Andes.* We were all out of themes. This made us depict the customs of other countries like Italy or Argentina, and the atmosphere of upheaval and belated industrial revolution. In my case, since I was doing scene design and layout, I would try to bring out these factors in scene design to implement my themes. After all, it was a direction that Paku-san had set for himself. It seemed to agree with his inclinations.

Returning to my point of origin with Future Boy Conan

Miyazaki: Changing topics, there was a jinx among us. Whenever we worked with Ōtsuka-san the project wouldn't become a hit. [*laughs*] We thought first the jinx might be Paku-san, but he achieved high ratings with *Heidi.* That project was Isao Takahata through and through. So then we suspected Ōtsuka-san. For *Lupin III* Ōtsuka-san was so sure, he would say, "We'll have a 30 percent share." But when it started airing the viewer rate was 9 percent. [*laughs*] With *Conan*, too, he would tell me, "Miya-san, this'll get 30 percent." But it was only about 9 percent. With *Cagliostro* as well, he said, "This is a hit for sure." [*laughs*]

—*You also worked on the next* Rascal the Racoon.

Miyazaki: I was just drawing key animation since I worked at Nippon Animation.

—*And now we get to* Future Boy Conan.

Miyazaki: When I was told to direct, I didn't jump at the chance. I felt scared and troubled, but I didn't have any other option. I was to direct, do layout, or draw key animation. If I

were to stay with key animation at Nippon Animation my salary would remain low. And for layout, I didn't feel like doing it for *The Perrine Story.* I thought about quitting, but then I said if Yasuo Ōtsuka can work on it, I'll do it.

—Ōtsuka-san was at Shin'ei Animation (A Pro) at that time, wasn't he?

Miyazaki: Yes. At A Pro he was doing layout or something for *Ore wa Teppei* (*My Name Is Teppei*), and we pulled him over. He got a temporary assignment from A Pro to Nippon Animation. He complained a lot that he couldn't handle the working conditions, but in the end he said he was glad he had worked on it. He must have taken a physical beating, but I think he bounced back doing *Conan.* He worked hard on *Cagliostro.* He never left his desk. It may have been because I didn't let him.

—What was your evaluation of Conan*?*

Miyazaki: I thought, "I'm glad we completed it." When we started, we didn't have the right conditions to work on the project. We had no animation staff, and we had no art director. For episode one Nizō Yamamoto-san came to help for three days. I met many people like that.

—This was 7,000 cels?

Miyazaki: Yes. But at Nippon Animation there were many series with 8,000 cels for twenty-two minutes on the Calpis-sponsored track. So, 7,000 cels wasn't surprising. I think it was fewer than *The Perrine Story.* Even for a twenty-five-minute show, as long as the movement's vigorous, it looks like there's a lot of action.

So my honest feeling is that with this work, I really recalled why I had wanted to work on cartoon movies. It would be overstating it to say that I returned to my point of origin, but I had lost sight of my own themes after *From the Apennines to the Andes* was over. I felt I was back to square one.

▶ Moved to Telecom in 1979

Miyazaki: *The Castle of Cagliostro* was like a clearance sale of all I had done on *Lupin* and during my Toei days. I don't think I added anything new. I can understand why people who had followed my work were extremely disillusioned. You can't use a sullied middle-aged guy to create fresh work that will wow viewers. I realized I should never do this again. Neither did I want to. Even so, I did two more (television series *New Lupin* episodes 145, 155), and it was hell. With every piece I made it was obvious that I was just trotting out everything I had done before. [*laughs*] Nineteen eighty was my year of being mired in gloom.

* * * *

Miyazaki: After *Heidi*, I didn't have my whole heart in my work. I was limited to layout or scene design. So it was unfortunate, but the way left for me to redeem myself was with directing. I still think that rather than directing I am more suited to making films as part of the main staff engaged in a group activity. Something as frightening as directing should be left to Isao Takahata. But my tastes had diverged quite a bit from Paku-san's. It was with *Lupin* that I realized that in terms of age as well as redemption it was now my turn to take on the burden of directing.

* * * *

Miyazaki: It was Paku-san who received the sharpest attacks when we left Toei. Also when we left A Pro. It was to Paku-san that people said, "Don't expect us to greet you when we see you on the street." Kotabe-san and I left under a cloud of inevitability, feeling that we couldn't let Paku-san suffer alone, that he needed us to stick with him. Since we quit to go off with Paku-san, we never felt the brunt of the stones hurled at him.

This is the way things were … but I can't talk about animation without speaking about my relationship with Paku-san through my twenties and thirties.

Before he dove so deeply into themes depicting everyday life, we had more in common and I had more opportunities to demonstrate my abilities. For example, in *Heidi* I might suggest that after she is taken to Frankfurt Heidi dreams of Peter becoming a Swiss peasant soldier who defeats the Hapsburg cavalry and takes her back. Of course, my idea never wouldn't have been accepted. [*laughs*]

I wasn't frustrated, because the work of creating a uniform space was enjoyable enough on its own. Everyone asked me, "How did you do that?" or "What is behind that scene?" and I would hurriedly create something on the spot though I had never seen the thing before. It gave me a sense of reality as we made the films.

“Nature Is Both Generous, and Ferocious”

Roman Album[53] *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, Tokuma Shoten, May 1, 1984

This conversation with director Miyazaki took place in the second floor study of his home on March 12, 1984, the day after the theatrical release of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind.*

—According to Toei, viewer satisfaction is 97 percent; what is your reaction?

Miyazaki: I’m still dwelling on the last scene in which Nausicaä comes back to life, so I feel like it’s not over yet.

—What is your concern about?

Miyazaki: For my part, I wanted to stop the *ohm* in front of Nausicaä. But there was no way they could be stopped. So Nausicaä, who put her life on the line, died. That couldn’t be helped. But when Nausicaä is held up by the *ohm* and bathed in a golden color by the morning light, it becomes a religious painting! [*laughs*] Mitsuki Nakamura-san and I said to each other, “We’ve got a problem.” I’ve been wondering all along if we couldn’t have dealt with it some other way.

—Nausicaä seems to be a flying Joan of Arc.

Miyazaki: I didn’t intend to make her a Joan of Arc and I wanted to get rid of any religious undertone. But in the end it became a religious picture with that scene. I really wavered. What I thought I could draw in a more physical style perhaps turned out to look more religious. [*laughs*]

—Even if we call it religion it’s not one with a dogma, but rather a religion that is simple and primitive.

Miyazaki: I do like animism. I can understand the idea of ascribing character to stones or wind. But I didn’t want to laud it as a religion. That is why Nausicaä isn’t Joan of Arc. She acted for her own sake, not for the sakes of those in the Valley of the Wind, but because she could endure no more. Rather

than considering the risk to her own life, Nausicaä felt that unless she returned the baby *ohm* to the pack, the hole in her heart would never be filled. That's the kind of person I think she is.

—What kind of girl is Nausicaä?

Miyazaki: She's a strange girl. She seems to regard the lives of insects and humans in the same way. So, although she couldn't save Lastelle's life, she wants to save the baby *ohmu* … To Nausicaä, embracing the baby *ohmu* and embracing Lastelle are the same thing. Often ecologists and nature-lovers turn into solitary persons who dislike human beings. They wind up negating human society. Nausicaä is someone who might go over to the insects' world if left alone but who stops just at the last minute; someone who takes actions that could easily result in death, but open up a new path. That is what she is made of. Those who can't accept that will find her totally unrealistic.

—Are there any points in common with Little Norse Prince Valiant*?*

Miyazaki: I consider them to be totally different. *Little Norse Prince* deals with problems between humans while *Nausicaä* deals with problems between people and nature.

—Yet they seem similar in the way the villages are depicted as communities. For example, the children seem to have a place as labor units …

Miyazaki [*Emphatic*]: But of course! It's the same all over the world!

—Those village scenes are shown with dense detail.

Miyazaki: There are also many things we couldn't do. For example, we thought of showing men and women gathered separately in large rooms, and even those called "elder sister princess" eating the same food as the others. Or, rather than vineyards, rice paddies. But it was all we could do to make the valley look like a valley. The water drawn by the large

windmill at the castle is raised up higher and higher by smaller wind mills and stored in the reservoir in the forest. But if we had to show these things precisely in animation, we would have ended up able to tell only a very simple story—intruders come to a peaceful valley and abduct someone who is then saved … and everything ends happily. That would be no different from *Sherlock Hound the Detective* and *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro.*

—It might have been better if one or two men like Dyce (from Future Boy Conan*) lived in the village.*

Miyazaki: Well, when the Tolmekian forces arrive, there might have been some villagers who agreed with what Kushana said, and others who became informers, and yet others who angrily confronted Nausicaä—who was urging surrender—and shouted "What an opportunist you are!" at her. But is there any meaning in depicting that? No there isn't! I'm sick and tired of exposing people's differences! Having differences of opinion is what being human is. We have to think about the structure these people with differences can coexist in. We're in the last part of the twentieth century with all sorts of problems piled high—there's no purpose in magnifying people's differences, is there?

—If exposing differences can lead to coming up with solutions, it would be for the good.

Miyazaki: If I answer for myself, I think our life force is the only thing we have that keeps us going. Hols (in *Little Norse Prince Valiant*) was able to escape from the labyrinth of the forest because he himself had the energy to do so; he had an intense desire to live. Wasn't that it? He changed because he himself wanted to change. That's the only possibility, isn't it?

—It was the same with Monsley, wasn't it?

Miyazaki: Yes, she wanted an impetus to change. We have to think that for many people that's the case. It's all right for a

girl who has been liberated and is now wavering to turn into a normal middle-aged woman. In fact, it's better that way, I think. [*laughs*]

—About the depiction of the Sea of Decay: in the early scenes, such as the village where Yupa ends up, it's rather eerie. At the end, the Sea of Decay where Yupa and Asbel are traveling appears very bright.

Miyazaki: We see birds that harm humans as harmful and those that are useful to humans as useful. It's all arbitrary. The impression we have of a landscape changes depending on the emotions of the person viewing the landscape. Nature that is generous is, at the same time, nature that is ferocious. This is why humans feel humbled in the face of nature and why they are able to realize its true abundance. In *The Dark Crystal*, they talk about the earth's surface being damaged for thousands of years. And at the end, what happens is that something like a golf course is shown. [*laughs*] Compared to that, the original jungle, with its multitude of inhabitants, was much livelier. I think that's fine. So I think it's a very strange story. [*laughs*] By contrast, in the last scene of *Shitsurakuen* (*Lost Paradise*), Daijirō Morohoshi understood well the relationship between landscapes and people.

—How was the voice acting of Sumi Shimamoto-san, who played Nausicaä?

Miyazaki: The scene of Nausicaä's dream of her childhood was wonderful. Shimamoto-san's acting was so vivid. The line "And Mother's there as well!" was so real. It was really great. I was overwhelmed.

—How about the staff?

Miyazaki: They all worked really hard—even as I yelled at them.

—You yelled at them? [*laughs*]

Miyazaki: I yelled all the time. When I went to Topcraft, there was a myth that Hayao Miyazaki was a scary guy who

made you do incredibly bothersome work. [*laughs*] So I took full advantage of that myth. [*burst of laughter*] Mitsuki Nakamura-san didn't go home and he didn't sleep. He would fall asleep at his desk with his paintbrush in his hand. On top of that, he never complained, even when he needed to redo his work.

—I understand you were very healthy the entire time.

Miyazaki: The director has to seem full of energy even when he doesn't feel well. I really wasn't healthy at all. [*laughs*] It was a good thing that we worked with Topcraft and that staff. For instance, Tōru Hara, the president, while saying "Miya-chan, this'll take so many cels," never once said I should decrease the number. There was a good convergence of "time of heaven, wisdom of earth, harmony of people." Even if I was always disrupting the "harmony of people." [*laughs*]

—What about the producer, Isao Takahata-san?

Miyazaki: I was helped so much by Paku-san. I felt safe with him at my side. He is someone who understood the problem areas and everything about the project. I did cause him a lot of hardship in the problem areas!

—What about using the new technique—the "rubber multi"?[54]

Miyazaki: Theoretically it was possible, but when we actually used it the parts would shift. It was thanks to Kazuyoshi Katayama that we were able to make it succeed. Because I pushed him to *do it!* [*laughs*] That, and we used a PL filter[55] they have in America to erase the scratches on cels. But it threw off the film numbering. I kept complaining to the filming staff that the backlight photography[56] was wrong. But it ended up being the fault of the filter.

—The music was wonderful, especially the girl's song in the retrospection scene.

Miyazaki: I told Paku-san that I wanted to have a song that revealed that the *ohmu* had been waiting all along for a girl like Nausicaä to come. So I tried my hand at writing the lyrics …

—You clearly had to overcome a mountain of difficulties in order to complete the film. It's amazing that it is two hours long but has no slow spots or respite scenes—the drama dashes forward from beginning to end.

Miyazaki: I kept the dramatic tension high. I had no desire to have a structure with a clear, logical development as in *Sherlock Hound* or *Cagliostro.* I wanted to impart a vastness that we might not fully understand but that … It was inevitable that we made it into this kind of story.

—Having made a film like this, do you now see something new in the original story?

Miyazaki: I do feel that I was able to clarify Nausicaä's character. So I think I will be able to draw a happier Nausicaä in the manga now. The characters I have created in my films so far have been clear to me, but with Nausicaä I really began to wonder if a person like her could really exist. And I wonder if I can bring the strength she shows in the film into the serialized manga. After all, it's such a vast story. She's off to wander around Doruku country, to go deep into a monastery, and there will even be a god-emperor. Then she'll go to Tolmekia and get drawn into the power struggle there in a large ancient country on the verge of extinction. Surviving that, she returns to the Valley of the Wind … but will she really be able to get back? [*laughs*]

I immediately started to like Kurotowa, and from the start I thought of Kushana as a Nausicaä who had remained in the human world. It's always like this with me. [*burst of laughter*]

—Nausicaä, the girl, is so attractive.

Miyazaki: Nausicaä's breasts are rather large, aren't they?

—Yes. [*laughs*]

Miyazaki: That's not so she'll be able to breast-feed her babies in the future or make love to a man who will steal her heart away. I think her bosom has to be large so she can embrace all those poor old men and women in the castle when they are dying.

—Oh, I get it. [*shocked*]

Miyazaki: Her bosom has to allow people to feel secure; she embraces them as they are dying.

—I understand.

Miyazaki: Hee, hee … Yesterday I had a telephone call from my younger brother in Niigata. My youngest brother Shirō, who works at Hakuhōdō advertising company, is involved. He leaked the information that I had made this film. So my brother in Niigata was worried for me and took his whole family of four to see the movie.

—Thinking they would add four more to the box office statistics?

Miyazaki: Yes, just four more! [*burst of laughter*] And yet, and yet, I really want this film to be a hit. It's a model of one approach to filmmaking. If *Nausicaä* becomes a hit, it might be possible for me to make serious projects from a different point of view.

—Well, just as you made Puss 'n Boots *after* Little Norse Prince, *do you feel like making a light movie after this?*

Miyazaki: I'm in a fog right now. I keep thinking I don't want to do anything … I haven't even drawn the cover for this Roman Album yet. [*burst of laughter*]

Personally, I think there is a continuity from *Nausicaä*

From the Roman Album, *Tenkū no Shiro Rapyuta* (*Castle in the Sky*).
September 15, 1986

—I understand that you did some location scouting for Castle in the Sky, *traveling first all the way to Wales in the United Kingdom. How did this help you to make the film?*

Miyazaki: I don't know if it helped or not, but it came about because the producer, Isao Takahata, said that if we were going to set the film in the days of the Industrial Revolution, we probably should go to England. We got all excited about the idea of going to see the coal mines in Wales and the apple blossoms in Sussex along the coast south of London, and we decided to actually go.

—Was this helpful, as you had decided to set the story in a valley?

Miyazaki: I'm not sure. The first images I really got into drawing were of a valley. Flatlands are hard to turn into interesting visuals.

I don't know if they actually had any open pit mines in Wales or not, but I thought it would be fun to show a valley with lots of mine holes in it. Right after returning from Wales I showed the drawings to Mamoru Oshii. He took one look and exclaimed, "What? They actually have places like this?" That's when I knew we could really get away with the idea. [*laughs*] It made me confident of our direction.

Although we never used it in the film, there is a place in Wales where tourists can see an old coal mine. The original buildings have been left standing, and the workers' dining hall has been turned into a tea room for tourists. There is even an underground horse stable, and I was frankly amazed to see that they once used horses in the mines. Elevators were used to go up and down, but until fairly recently horses were apparently used to move things laterally.

In the film there is a somewhat forced scene showing Pazu's boss and Charles getting into a fight and involving the whole town, and I don't think we would have included a scene like that if we hadn't visited the area. I felt a real sense of solidarity with the mine workers! [*laughs*]

The year before we went there was a big strike of coal miners, but it failed. As a result there seemed to be an awful lot of empty units in the mine's housing area, and the hotel was deserted too. The buildings were not made of wood, so on the outside they looked very pretty, but when you went around the back … You could see that they were deserted. They were all tiny houses that looked like they had been stamped from the same mold, lining both sides of the road for what seemed forever.

I really sensed the existence of people who still do physical labor for a living.

The strike had failed, and when it ended there had apparently been a lot of infighting. I saw photos of miners giving up, but I could sense that they tried to maintain their solidarity even though they had lost.

—In the film there was even a poster about the labor movement on the wall of the boss's house, right?

Miyazaki: Yes, with lots of spelling mistakes. [*laughs*] And it occurred to me that the miners in the story had probably gone on strike and had a showdown with military troops. [*laughs*] I'm sure that if they had faced military men, they wouldn't have had much respect for them.

—In the film, the miners don't flinch at all when the pirates appear, do they ...

Miyazaki: Right, because they're all poor people. There was a background story where Dola was supposed to attack only the rich, but you would have wound up wondering why on earth she had come to such a poor town then.

—The fights in the film almost seemed a way for the workers to forget about their troubles in the midst of bad economic times.

Miyazaki: That was what we intended from the beginning. [*laughs*]

—Everyone seemed so happy about the idea of a fight.

Miyazaki: I told Yoshinori Kanada, the head key animator, to really go for it and not worry about the consequences. [*laughs*] From the beginning, I never expected it to be a particularly persuasive scene.

In Japan, the idea of workers with a true sense of solidarity, or local company housing for miners, is a thing of the past. But there are still places in Wales where this survives. Of course, all the young able-bodied people have left these areas, leaving only the older men, but the realization that this sort of thing still exists made us really want to go for it in the movie.

—One thing that struck me in the film is that there a lot of night shots.

Miyazaki: This increase in nights, and skies turning dark, is something that we've used a lot of ever since *Conan.* Not just nights, of course, but for some reason we've also got a lot more scenes that take place underground.

—Why is that?

Miyazaki: For pirates, it's probably better to attack passenger ships at night than during the day. [*laughs*] And I tend not to make it seem as though many days have gone by in the story. It's often only two or three days. This time, I assume they are sleeping and eating a little bit, however …

—Why did Pazu come to the valley?

Miyazaki: That's something that Osamu Kameoka (the author of the *Castle in the Sky* novel) kept bugging me about when we turned the story into a novel. The only thing I can say about it is that all sorts of things can happen in one's

lifetime. [*laughs*] So when asked what happened to a particular character in the past, I could come up with an answer if I had to, but I don't really think it's necessary. Of course, I realize that it probably would have been impossible for Pazu to live by himself in that shack and work as he did. But one of the essential elements of most classical children's literature is that the children in the stories actually fend for themselves. It's probably because if the parents did happen to be around they would never say anything very helpful anyway.

That sort of mood is really essential to these stories. So that's why I decided to make the story truly classical in structure. That's why Dola ultimately becomes a mother figure and why the old men who appear here and there become father figures. [*laughs*] I have to say, it's a bit of a half-baked story. But I was really interested in seeing whether such a classic children's story line would appeal to today's kids.

—In many of your works, including this film, there are scenes of flying. What kind of image did you have for these scenes?

Miyazaki: I personally find airplanes cool and I love flying scenes. But despite *Castle in the Sky* being set in the sky, it really has few real flying scenes, because the inside of an airship can look just like the inside of a sea ship. It seems to me that the only true flying scenes might be the shots of the flaptors skimming over the ground and being ridden in a way that suggests being on a motorcycle.

—So when you imagine flying, you don't necessarily think of flying in airplanes?

Miyazaki: I'm actually not the type of person who flies in airplanes much. I recently flew in a glider, but I have to say that it's one thing to draw flying scenes and quite a different thing to actually fly. [*laughs*] It frankly isn't something I can get too excited about.

—Does the idea of flying inspire you?

Miyazaki: If there were clouds, I'm sure that everyone would like to fly through them. But I think that the solemn and inspiring flying scenes you see of light shining between gaps in the clouds only exist at an altitude of around ten thousand meters. I don't think there are any particularly awesome scenes once you get into outer space. I think that a lot of human sensibilities, as well as many other things, are intimately connected to the weather. I'm not particularly moved when looking at Landsat images, for example. They just make me think of what a simplified world we now live in.

Rather than a conventional abstract universe, I prefer the idea of a boy character looking up at the stars in the sky with a girl, and both of them marveling at how beautiful everything is. In *Castle in the Sky* I wanted to restrict the story setting to that sort of context, and to exploit everything I could at that altitude. [*laughs*]

—In the past you have said that you liked Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's novels about flying.

Miyazaki: I once saw a British film that talked about the development of aircraft, and I fell in love with the last scene that showed airplanes skimming the tops of the clouds. It truly made me want to fly. But if I really did fly the way they did in the film, my stomach would probably turn upside down. [*laughs*]

Once, when Kazuhide Tomonaga, an animator with Telecom Animation Film, came back after a flight on a jet plane, he said, "Wow, the clouds were moving just like they'd been shot with a multi-plane camera." As you probably know, the windows on jet planes are made with four layers of glass, and they are really frustrating. Especially when you feel like you could otherwise reach out and physically touch the clouds … [*laughs*]

When I went for a ride on a helicopter just for the experience, I was really amazed, but that's a bit different, of course.

—I've heard that Yoshinori Kanada came up with the patterns for the way the flaptors move.

Miyazaki: I had a plan myself. Kanada-san was in charge of the key animation, but in the beginning it seemed like he was spending his time dreaming, so I asked him to handle the flaptor scenes.

At first the flaptors didn't look like they were flying. It just looked like they were busily flapping their wings. We wanted to show them actually flying, with the kids on them and the wings flapping away, but we had to drop the idea. In one of the early posters we drew, Pazu and Sheeta were riding on flaptors, but we had to stop showing them riding them that way.

—The wings in front are used almost like horizontal stabilizers, aren't they?

Miyazaki: What? No, those are the main wings. I thought, if you're flying relatively slowly, that's the way they'd move. Instead of having the wings flap like a bird's, we went with a look something like the buzzing wings of a blowfly or horsefly. Since we were only depicting the pirates on them, we decided to go for just that look and have Pazu, the protagonist, ride the flying kite.

—You didn't show any true ornithopters in the film, did you ...

Miyazaki: No, because ornithopters are difficult to pull off properly. I wasn't confident that I could figure out a way to show them flying properly in the key animation stage. For example, if you show an ornithopter with wings flapping but the body not moving, it looks fake. The fuselage itself has to really move about quite violently for the movement to look real. And if the fuselage were moving that much in reality, I don't think the people riding in the ornithopter would last very long. We just couldn't get them to move properly.

It's kind of funny, but if the ornithopter had looked something like the one built by Professor Moriarty in the *Sherlock Hound the Detective* show I worked on, we might have been able to go with it. [*laughs*] It would flap its wings with a whoosh and then start gliding when it reached a certain altitude, and flap again on descent. [*laughs*] It's something that we pulled off in the world of *Sherlock Hound the Detective.* So I knew it was difficult.

—I know that in your films you always have lots of ideas for fun designs of aircraft. Did you decide to just limit yourself to the flaptors this time?

Miyazaki: I tried drawing a variety of weird aircraft, but I wasn't sure how far I could take the designs. If I had used too many different designs, the world I was trying to depict might have looked too ridiculous. I only fully realized that halfway through the production. If, for example, I had shown a beat-up old aircraft in the shape of a sparrow flying over Pazu's head —with Pazu calling out "Hey!" and the pilot responding with a "Yo!"—I might not have been able to get viewers to feel surprised by anything I presented them with later.

There is a fine line in films of this sort. The originally intended world of the work can exist up to a certain point; beyond that you need to use your imagination. If you're not careful, you won't be able to depict anything straight at all.

Of course, just personally speaking, I would love to depict a world where the characters, when they wake up in the morning, hear rusty old ornithopter-style aircraft flying overhead, wings flapping with sounds like *kaphumpa kaphumpa* or *flappity flappity.* [*laughs*] Actually, at one point I even drew designs of the *Tiger Moth* ship with arms and legs. [*laughs*]

And on the subject of the *Tiger Moth*, if I had used a completely enclosed ship, it would have been impossible to show as much interesting action, so we went with an open, more exposed, windblown design. That's also why there's a

bridge connecting the body of the ship to the ship's actual "bridge." I had originally thought of having Pazu and Sheeta have their conversations there, but they wound up climbing on top of the ship. [*laughs*]

—We do see a variety of unusual mecha *designs in the opening of the film, though.*

Miyazaki: It was easy to draw them for that one limited sequence. But I wanted to keep things at a plausible level of fakery, so I used them just in the opening.

Both the airship being attacked and the *Goliath* have fairly realistic designs. I say this with due respect for the artists who drew them, but there was something about them that I personally found rather boring. Of course, looking back on it I think we had no choice but to stay with that level of design.

—The music was also particularly good in this film.

Miyazaki: I had absolutely no involvement with the music at all. I even joked at one point that maybe we didn't need any music in the film [*laughs*], but we couldn't get away with that. So I left everything regarding music up to Takahata-san, because he knows much more about it. Jo Hisaishi had also done the music on the *Nausicaä* film, so I knew I could leave everything up to the two of them.

In terms of actual production work, there are places where music referred to with code names like M16 and M17 comes into play. So in that context I found the "image album" created to be very useful. It made me think that, ah, this or that tune might work here or there. It was easier than using pieces coded with M and a number, etc. And I also could tell where we were lacking music.

—The image album is quite different, isn't it?

Miyazaki: Right, and there are places where you wonder, why is it so rousing? [*laughs*] But it's good.

—I also liked the sound of the robot's footsteps and the whooshing of the Tiger Moth *in the wind.*

Miyazaki: I have a few issues with some minor details, but given the tight schedule, I think they did a great job. One thing I did ask the sound people to avoid at all costs was science fiction–style sounds, including electronic sounds.

—That must have been difficult sometimes, because those sounds probably fit robots very well …

Miyazaki: Well, if a robot rattles too much while walking, it might start to sound like a garbage truck, so I asked them to create a sound that was closer to *klunkety klunk.* It turned out well. But if that had been the only sound it would have been a problem. We were saved by the music.

—The art in Castle in the Sky *is really amazing.*

Miyazaki: We were really lucky there, with both Nizō Yamamoto and Toshirō Nozaki in charge of the art direction. I doubt if either of them could have reached that level on their own. By having them work together we gained more than the sum of their total talents, because they inspired each other and the result was a multiplier effect, an overall upgrading of the art level. I had worked with Yamamoto-san at Telecom Animation Film, and he did a great job of supporting the imagery that I wanted.

I know the deadlines for the artwork were tight, too, but both men did excellent jobs. It was a great help to me because if I have confidence in the art department my own work also proceeds much smoother.

—It was a long schedule, wasn't it?

Miyazaki: And that was a really good thing. Of course, there were several times when I couldn't see the way forward. We thought it would go on forever. Setting aside the issue of whether the film's interesting or not, at least it looks like we tried hard. [*laughs*] We weren't trying to do anything shoddy. When bad guys appear, while it might have been easier to just

show them from their feet, we still shot everything normally. Whether this was the proper approach to take or not is, of course, a separate issue. It may be related to my age, but at least we never tried to telegraph the appearance of a bad guy.

The only exception to this was the general's face. [*laughs*] For him we used almost ridiculously large cels. [*laughs*]

I wanted to show the military as large-as-life as possible, because no matter what Pazu tried, there was no way he could ever have won against them. We had to draw them as solidly as possible. Even Dola and her gang could never have beaten the military head-on. Pirates don't argue with the military, and besides, in this case our pirates only had flaptors. I don't like the military, so I drew their nastier side.

—I found the giant levitation crystal in Castle in the Sky *very unusual.*

Miyazaki: I had a rough time with that. I thought we should create a core section for *Castle in the Sky*, so I discussed the matter with Iida-san, the assistant director. First we thought of making it a sphere floating in liquid that emitted an alternating high-pitched/low-pitched ring. In science fiction stories, the core section of an object like this would often be depicted as something like a nuclear reactor. We agreed that wouldn't be very interesting, though, and eventually wound up with the design seen in the film.

Then we began discussing the idea of having a levitation crystal with tubes running out of it, but that seemed weird too. So we wound up with tree roots wrapping themselves around the crystal. From my perspective, in the story the levitation crystal could have made the tree grow particularly large, but there was no use trying to explain all that in words. So that's why you see what look like pale-blue bean sprouts growing all over it. It's when Colonel Muska says, "What's this?" That's the end of any explanation. It looks like that because of the levitation crystal. Because of the crystal, it could probably stay alive, even in space. [*laughs*] Nozaki-san once mentioned it,

and as there was light being emitted, believe it or not he once asked me what color oxygen would be.

Right around that time we were trying to come up with a good ending, and we were afraid that if Laputa flew off into the sky that children watching the film would be afraid that the little animals like the foxes and squirrels would all die. So that settled how we decided to end the story the way we did. We told ourselves it was okay because the story is set in an age before people went into space in the Apollo program, so nobody really knew what the view would be like from what is in effect an artificial satellite. We joked, of course, that people would have been able to see Laputa from the ground.

At the same time, I had clearly decided to get back to the idea of making a cartoon film. Personally, I do think there's a continuity all the way from *Nausicaä.* I realize that some people may be taken aback when they watch it, thinking of it as the follow-up to *Nausicaä.* But I created the work hoping that little children could also enjoy it.

—So is that why the story is structured around a young boy, a young girl, the military, and pirates?

Miyazaki: Well, I gave a lot of thought to that. If I'd structured the world in the story around an old professor and a young boy and girl, then we could have had tons of *mecha* machines in the story. There is a prototype for that sort of thing, with an old professor and a boy and a girl, in the *Time Bokan* TV series. *Castle in the Sky* is sort of a variant of it, I suppose. Except that in *Castle in the Sky*, instead of the old professor, you have Dola appear. [*laughs*]

I don't have a problem with that sort of structure, but it makes the human relationships a little too simple. The relationships are already established the moment the film starts rolling, so it's hard to depict fateful or romantic meetings or first encounters between characters. And in film the encounters between people are the most interesting part, so we abandoned that structure.

—Dola's a great character, isn't she?

Miyazaki: She is. Whenever I started feeling exhausted or disgusted with what I was doing, I felt like yelling as Dola does, "Get a grip! I hate lazy idiots!" Dola tells her crew and her own sons, "If you were real men, you'd go out and get your own ship." But she always pockets the booty. [*laughs*]

—I can sense a bit of drama in the idea that the old engineer might once have had a crush on Dola.

Miyazaki: He also seems like he might be the stepfather of Dola's boys and the crewmembers. [*laughs*] I came up with this character when developing the point in the story when Pazu and Sheeta get on their kite and leave. In the original scenario, I actually had them take their leave on flaptors. But then it occurred to me that when Pazu and Sheeta board the *Tiger Moth*, it would be boring without some sort of old engineer character around. We call him *mogura oyaji* or "old man mole." [*laughs*] I think he helps balance out the Dola family. I like the way he talks and says things like, "Don't talk so darn loud!" and I'm really glad we were able to include him.

—The character wins out, in a sense. The instant he appears, he's a full character.

Miyazaki: Dola's an old woman, so she obviously can't yell too loudly. When she does raise her voice, it's always raspy. That's just the way it has to be. I had thought of showing one of her sons carrying her when she first appears in the story, but then I realized that in most scenes it would be better to show her as a granny who outclassed her own sons.

The moment she puts on her glasses she starts to look like a very gentle old granny. [*laughs*] Toward the end of the story she doesn't have that much to do, but I would have liked to feature her more if it had been possible. I tried to think of places where she could appear, but in the final battle Pazu has

to settle things by himself. So I just had Dola and her men run off searching for treasure.

For the last scene, I had made up my mind to have Dola give Pazu a big jewel, saying, "Take it with you, you won't regret it," but then I changed it and had her embrace Sheeta, because that seemed more final, given her character.

—*So what is the real theme of* Castle in the Sky*?*

Miyazaki: Theme or no theme, the story is simply about a boy meeting a girl, transforming [*laughs*], and becoming a man. I'm not trying to make excuses; I just thought that we needed a simple story. One young person saw *Castle in the Sky* and said that it was such a refreshing story, and it made me so happy to see that she had enjoyed it that way.

One thing I've reflected on is that when Sheeta is kidnapped, it's certainly done in a very respectful way. I think it's an eternal theme. In fact, kidnapping a girl may even be the ultimate form of respect. But even if I feel this way, I'm frankly losing my passion for drawing young heroines. [*laughs*] I mean that I'm losing that heart-fluttering thrill. Maybe I've really gotten old. [*laughs*]

—*Well, don't give up yet. And thank you very much for your time today.*

Totoro Was Not Made as a Nostalgia Piece

Interviewer: Hiroaki Ikeda, Roman Album *My Neighbor Totoro*, June 3, 1988

Scene setting and the house

—Where did you have in mind as the setting for My Neighbor Totoro*, Miyazaki-san?*

Miyazaki: The setting for the story is actually taken from many places. It is a combination of the area near Seijō Sakuragaoka where Nippon Animation is located, the area surrounding the Kandagawa River where I grew up, and the landscape of Tokorozawa where I live now. And the art director Kazuo Oga-san is from Akita in the north, so it looks a bit like Akita as well. [*laughs*] So I didn't have a specific location in mind.

—When did the story take place? I had heard it was to be around 1957–58, but watching it I wondered if images from your childhood were included.

Miyazaki: It's actually a lie to say it was set in the latter 1950s; the truth is that it is a story set in a time before television. At first I thought of having the radio broadcast *Shinshokoku monogatari*[57] in the story, but that seemed too blatant. I purposely got rid of anything like that. I thought that the earlier time frame would be handled by *Grave of the Fireflies*, which was on the same bill.

—So the only hint of the time is the Shigeru Sugiura manga scribbled in Kanta's notebook?

Miyazaki: That was put in by the original artist, Masako Shinohara, as her personal preference. Anyone who recognizes that drawing is pretty old by now. [*laughs*]

—Come to think of it, our grade-school notebooks always had blank areas around each page like that, just asking for doodles.

Miyazaki: My notebooks were full of doodles. So I only used a bit of the pages for my classes. [*laughs*] I drew all over the back of test papers … We all have those memories. Rather than going abroad to hunt for locations, I was really happy to make a movie full of fragments of landscapes I had seen in Japan, or remembered, or had seen in my childhood. For example, the large camphor tree in Tsukamori, the forest—although there wasn't really such a large tree, I felt I had seen such a large tree. We all have some tree we looked up at in awe of its size and grandeur when we were little. When I drew the tree it turned out to be that huge. I don't feel at all that I am lying because in my mind it really was that big.

—In the initial scene when they are moving in, Satsuki and Mei run around the house. I remembered my childhood, thinking, "That's true, a house with no furniture is *big." Going to a seaside house and opening up unfamiliar rooms in a race with my brothers was always a lot of fun. The reason the house seemed strangely large was because there was no furniture.*

Miyazaki: We've all had that kind of experience once or twice. I like that scene as well even though it isn't an important one. We would run around the house, opening a door, saying "It's not here!" then closing the door, opening another and saying "The toilet!" As we ran around, we got excited and started laughing—that's really the child's world. But when your kids do that in front of you, it's awfully noisy. I didn't have to use any director's tricks in this film. In fact, I made it wondering if it really was all right to use so few tricks. It was easy to direct this work.

—That house they moved into, was that so that when their mother was released from the hospital she would have a place to live where there was fresh, clean air?

Miyazaki: Yes, that's right. There's no other reason. It was quite normal to see a Japanese-style house with a Western-style attached room in the old days. Actually, that house was only half-completed. The garden, too—before a nice garden

could be landscaped, the house was no longer needed … In other words, it's a house where a sick person has died.

—Is that the backstory?

Miyazaki: My thought is that basically that house was a villa that had been built with an attached room in which a sick person could recuperate. The attached room was for a tuberculosis patient. Since that person has died, the house is no longer needed and is empty. That's the backstory.

So the old woman was probably a maid hired to work in the house. That's why she is direct in the way she speaks, unlike most country people. As this is the backstory there's no need to explain all this, so I didn't tell anyone. But in my mind that's how I thought of the house. The fact that the attached room is so sunny also speaks to this setting.

A world we can recall having seen

—Watching the film, I was very taken with the intermediate colors in the backgrounds.

Miyazaki: That owes a lot to Oga-san's artwork. It is his artwork that allows such a thorough expression of the flavor of that world. I suspect he himself didn't think he could do that much. For myself, other than the totoro, the cat bus, and the soot sprites, I used things I had actually seen. They weren't things I had read about in a book, but they were all things and scenes I recall seeing—the house, the land, the water's surface, the trees, and the plants. In that respect making the film was a delightful process. If the setting were a foreign country, I wouldn't know about those things: what would be there when a door is opened or what kind of flowers bloom on the roadside.

The actual setting isn't nearby either. In effect, for Oga-san and myself, it was much better to depict a real scene than to show a make-believe setting as if it were real. That was what I wanted to come close to doing. I wanted to put into the images the feeling I've had on looking at a grassy field and thinking,

“There are so many kinds of plants growing here.” We had some difficulties capturing this mood, but I was happy with the approach we took to the background art. Oga-san and I had many discussions about the story being set in summer, and during the solstice the sun wouldn’t be this high, or the sun would be higher so that the sun’s rays wouldn’t go that far into the veranda, and what we should do about it.

—I saw some of the cels and realized that the grassy field wasn’t just background art, it was also book-processed[58] *in front, and several shots of grass were added—they were treated in various ways.*

Miyazaki: That’s because when cut at the joint line, the outlines of the trees turn out badly. I’ve been doing that for a while. For grassy fields and such I don’t want to draw it entirely using a harmony[59] technique, so I add a bit of harmony leaves to the cels I put on top of the backgrounds, just enough so it can’t be detected. I guess you could tell because there was too much grass. I tried to use a more classical method this time around. I intentionally limited the use of backlighting, for instance.

—The camera angle was always at eye level, it seems.

Miyazaki: That was the way it ended up in order to give the most natural feel. It wouldn’t fit the story to use a remote pan or set the camera low at ground level.

—The bus stop scene had one different shot.

Miyazaki: Yes, that was a high angle shot.

—I wondered if it was a prelude to Totoro’s sudden appearance. [*laughs*]

Miyazaki: Well, actually, we used it because it was too much to shoot the long scene from only one angle. The rain worked really well. If we can go that far, then we get more and more greedy and next want to draw the rain as it splashes up from hitting the ground. We were able to give a much more

natural look than we initially thought. Someone who saw the film said, “Japan’s nature is so beautiful,” and I thought, “We did it!” It’s the kind of landscape we see all the time. This kind of landscape still exists in many places.

—Today, too. Since it snowed yesterday, this morning the sky over Tokyo was so clear.

Miyazaki: That’s right.

—I feel a renewed appreciation for Tokyo at times like this.

Miyazaki: When we are too stressed we don’t notice it, but when the new green leaves come out above, it is wonderful to be able look up and enjoy their beauty. I think Oga-san looked closely at nature as he worked on this film. One interesting thing was that we put some dirt into a planter. All kinds of things grew. It turned into a very strange mini grass field. We counted quite a few types of plants. At first it was a planter with a fruit tree, but we ignored the fruit tree and became enthralled by the weeds growing from the dirt. We brought another handful of dirt from Nagano Prefecture. When strange plants started to grow, we wondered what they were. We thought them strange, but they were just ordinary weeds.

—Did you do any location scouting?

Miyazaki: We went location scouting behind the Nippon Animation studio just for a day or so. It was three of us: Oga-san, animation director Yoshiharu Satō, and myself. Also, Oga-san went several more times to take a look. He lives in Hino City, so he’s close by. Oga-san looked really carefully. So I think the background artists had a hard time. It takes a lot of effort to draw weeds.

—The way they grow is random.

Miyazaki: They’re poor grasses. When you draw a single plant it is pretty, but normally we just see weeds without paying them much attention. Those are the ones that are strangely nostalgic to us. Even now, when I see a sparrow’s gun, I want to blow into it to make a sound. Just after the war

ended, we used to pick plantain weeds[60] and deliver them to the authorities. They said they were baked into brown bread. It was an edible weed. We also ate chickweed. Weeds seem to grow strong and free. That might be what I like about them.

—I remember playing in the hollowed-out trunk of a tree in a nearby shrine.

Miyazaki: Old gnarled camphor trees have a bumpy bark that makes them easy to climb. The ones on the Tokyo University campus grow straight up and are hard to climb. But there are plenty of camphor trees like the one in *Totoro*. Close to Nippon Animation there was one old-looking tree that grew apart from the others. Camphor trees don't live for thousands of years; they become quite splendid after several hundred years. Unfortunately, camphor trees don't produce acorns. They just have small black seedpods. That's why camphor trees don't grow in Satsuki and Mei's garden. In the scene when the seeds grow, I thought that if I tried to depict the plants with the least bit of exaggeration, it would no longer seem like Japan.

—Do you mean it would look like a jungle?

Miyazaki: No, that's not it; it would become Europe. For example, the cat bus comes like a gust of wind. But if we make the gust of wind the cat bus, we shift away from Japan. There is no wind spirit in Japan, even though we do have a fellow who carries a bag and sends out wind from it. So if we make the cat bus into a wind spirit, suddenly it becomes something that isn't Japanese.

Japan is modernized. The totoro are goblins of the transitional phase when Japan hadn't become entirely modernized.

That's what I felt strongly as I worked on this film. This is why I have no intention of returning to the ghostly spirits of Shigeru Mizuki;[61] I can't feel any affinity for those ghosts. As one born in the Shōwa period, it makes more sense to me to

think that a cat goblin has turned into a bus. So to me, creating a story like *Oshin*[62] or something from the Meiji period seems as distant as making a film with a foreign setting. I don't feel any nostalgia when I hear about the old Magome post station on the Nakasendō route. What ate my heart are buildings that were built before the war and survived it and buildings of the early Shōwa period. Some try to show Japan with a spiritual medium from Osorezan[63] or the world of people mired in the pathos of Ōtsu-e[64] paintings. I have nothing to do with them. In that respect, unfortunately, I have become a modernized person. Kenji Miyazawa,[65] who lived on the land in Iwate in northern Japan, longed for Europe somewhere in his heart. Though he had that longing, he wrote from that place just at the edge of his earth without leaving it. I felt sad when I read his *Milky Way Railroad* (*Night on the Galactic Railroad*; *Ginga tetsudō no yoru*). The main character in the novel seems like he would return home, take his shoes off, and step up into his house. Of course we have that kind of thing as well. I made *Totoro* wondering what kind of work it would be if I made something completely honest. I do want to state clearly that I didn't make this film out of personal nostalgia for that time. I made it hoping that children would see it and then go out to run around the fields or pick up acorns. Or, though we only have a few such spaces left, that they would play in the thickets behind shrines, or become excited while peeking in the crawl spaces under their houses. That's why I made this film.

Why I am attracted to plants

—*From* Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind *on, your films consistently tackle the theme of wild nature and civilization, plants and people. When did you become so attracted to plant life?*

Miyazaki: In childhood and youth, boys are fixated on girls and they don't particularly like plants. I wasn't especially fond of plants as a child. I only grew fond of them much later, after

I turned thirty. But I do recall when I first noticed the beauty of a tree. I was enthralled by how magnificent the tree was. I was in about ninth grade.

Before then, I wasn't particularly drawn to them even when walking in a wooded area. I thought that hyacinths were prettier than the flowers blooming in the fields. That was about it. I wasn't especially impressed with spring's new green leaves in my twenties; but in my thirties I had a period when I thought there was nothing more beautiful in this world than the new green leaves of zelkova trees. It was from that time that I became attracted to plants. Trees are so beautiful. Yet, when I went abroad and thought that some tree was wonderful or beautiful, there was always something different about my feelings.

For example, when I went to the giant redwood forests outside San Francisco, the forest floor was dry. And there were very few types of plants in the undergrowth. One could easily spend the night outside with just a blanket. In Japan, if you slept on a forest floor, centipedes or pill bugs would come out for sure. Flies, mosquitoes, and horseflies would be buzzing about. But in the redwood forests they weren't there. It seemed a kind of false nature to me.

—Were those trees planted for reforestation?

Miyazaki: No, they weren't. They were naturally growing trees. It may have been due to the climate, its humidity and temperature. When you go south, the scale is so large it's hard to deal with. Then I find it most satisfying when I see a plant I know well.

In fact, when I went to Sweden on my first trip abroad, I thought the trees there were beautiful, but after I returned I thought they were monotonous. One weekend morning I was wandering around alone in Shakujii Park when no one was there. I was walking in the park at that hour because no one was at the Toei Animation studio that early, so I used to spend time there nearly every day after dropping my son off at

nursery school. I thought the trees were so beautiful. I also realized that Japan is beautiful when there are no people around. [*laughs*] Japan became ugly because its population grew … That was when I understood. When reading Grimms' fairy tales, I never could understand how people could sleep in the hollow of a tree. In Japan they would be covered by bugs. So many kinds of bugs would come out. A place full of those bugs, a place where so many trees and grasses grow in tiny, empty lots—that was nature to me. That is why I was always puzzled by the fairy tales.

That's when I realized "Ah, I'm Japanese, after all." I didn't like many things in Japanese history, but I felt I understood something within myself.

—So for you it all started with being attracted to the trees and nature of Japan?

Miyazaki: Have you heard the term "broadleaf evergreen forest culture" promoted by Sasuke Nakao?

—No, I don't know that term.

Miyazaki: This was a term coined by Nakao-san when I was about thirty years old. I received quite a shock when I read him.

There are very few peoples in the world who like fluffy, sticky rice. Just the Japanese, Yunnanese, and Nepalese. Also only a few like *nattō*, or sticky, fermented soybeans. The people who lived here before there was a Japan or a Japanese people were part of that cultural sphere in ancient times. This is why even now there is a dish like *okowa* (steamed rice with red beans) in Yunnan, and why the people of Bhutan look exactly like the Japanese. I felt greatly relieved when I realized that the country I had thought was confined to the Japanese archipelago—one with an insignificant history of the usually touted *Genji* and Hideyoshi Toyotomi[66]—was actually connected to the wider world beyond borders and ethnic

groups. This is what the "broadleaf evergreen forest culture" is about.

I felt the clouds clear when I realized that even though Japanese may have committed various mistakes, we are not limited to that history—our history also includes the uninhibited clay vessels of the Jōmon period and the people who made them. It allowed me to look with more freedom than ever before at history as a whole: Japanese history, the way we are now, the folly of war, and many other things.

—Do you mean that Japan wasn't as isolated a culture as you had thought?

Miyazaki: Yes, previously I had a really strong sense of it being closed. Looking at Japan with this new perspective, I was able to reassess myself, to figure out what sort of baggage I carried, and to recognize that I liked the stickiness of Japanese culture. The shape of my nose—which distressed me so much in my youth—is undoubtedly that of the Jōmon people. [*laughs*]

When I thought of these physical traits and the history I had learned at school—the postwar democracy that denied nearly all aspects of Japan, the anti-militarist backlash that taught me to say that Japan was a stupid, ignorant, fourth-rate country—I realized I had many bottled-up feelings inside. I was able to put all that aside, to suddenly liberate myself, and embrace the broadleaf evergreen forest culture. That's when I understood why I preferred and felt calmed by zelkova trees rather than brush. [*laughs*]

I felt so liberated and so pleased when I found out that what flowed inside me was connected to the broadleaf evergreen forest. My culture went far beyond the idiotic Japanese who started the war, beyond Hideyoshi Toyotomi who invaded Korea, and beyond *The Tale of Genji* that I detested. It was then that I realized how valuable plants are and how important the issue of cultural climate is to us. If we were to destroy that climate, I would lose my last connection to being Japanese.

The primeval forest of Hokkaido's Shiretoko peninsula should be preserved, and I am furious at those who want to cut its trees down. But I don't feel an intimate connection to it. It seems to be in a different cultural region. It feels like Europe or Siberia. There's nothing wrong with that.

What I would like to see left alone are the woods and forests of beech trees, camphor trees, oak trees, and holly trees, though we don't really have any broadleaf evergreen forests left in Japan. We had more of them in times past. It was because people honored the *sakaki* tree that was used for decoration. Japan's original forests and woods are actually dark. When you enter into them, there's something scary and exciting. It feels like an animal might be lurking just out of sight.

A world inhabited by spirits

—That is why Totoro lives inside a tree, in a forest that is dark and shadowy even during the day ... Are totoro nocturnal? He was asleep during the day.

Miyazaki: Westerners tend to think of dark and light in opposition: light is good and dark is evil. I dislike this dichotomy. Although in Le Guin's *Earthsea* books, she suggests that the dark is actually more powerful.

The Dark Crystal is similar. It simplistically divides things into a duality—one side is the Soviet Union and the other side is the United States. But I don't think things can be treated with that kind of duality. For Japanese who don't think that way, the gods are in the darkness. They may come out into the light at times, but they are usually deep in the forest or mountains. When a holy spot is created, the gods drop down onto it. That is why, in the shrines that are closest to their original form that still exist in Okinawa, though there are altars in the shrines, the image of the god is just a tree or a stone. And such a shrine isn't in a bright, shining place, it's in an overgrown dark area where the silence is deep—a butterfly might flit about, but it's a bit eerie. When I went there with my

children, they felt the eeriness and said it was scary. It felt as if something were there. This sense of dark awe is the sort of veneration that Japanese have toward certain forests and natural objects—in short, it's an animistic primitive religion. Many places have a "forest that shouldn't be entered." Even people who are used to working in the mountains feel there is something there. They are suddenly overcome with fear and it becomes the custom to avoid certain places. These places exist. I don't know what is there, but I think they are real. I'm not a believer in the occult, but the world is more than we can fathom with our five senses. This world doesn't exist just for humans. So I think it is all right to have such things. This is why I think it's a mistake to think about nature from the idea of efficiency, that forests should be preserved because they are essential for human beings …

I am concerned, because for me the deep forest is connected in some way to the darkness deep in my heart. I feel that if it is erased, then the darkness inside my heart would also disappear, and my existence would grow shallow.

I don't go to worship at a shrine at New Year's. It's because I can't believe that the gods are inside those gaudy shrines. It seems much more likely to me that the gods of the Japanese are deep in the mountains and far-off valleys. [*laughs*]

—That's why Totoro is always snoring away.

Miyazaki: Or he's casually dancing in a windstorm. I really wanted to have a typhoon scene.

—There is the gust of wind that comes up the night Satsuki and Totoro meet.

Miyazaki: That was the only way I could do it. Like having the house shake in the night wind. I wanted to show that sort of thing in a scene that everyone would have had an experience with. For example, when the house is creaking because of a typhoon and you wake up in the middle of the night to find your father nailing on the storm shutters outside

on the veranda. Helping him out, you're excited, and though your father says everything will be all right, you wonder if the house just might fly away … When you peek outside, the trees are bending way over and the leaves are flying around. Even the branches with green acorns come flying over. There was hole in the rain shutter, wasn't there? I made a window that opened up like a "samurai window" for that purpose. But I couldn't use it. Why couldn't I use it? It was frustrating, but Mei's eyes didn't reach that high. [*laughs*]

—I suppose not. There wouldn't be a window so low down. [*laughs*]

Miyazaki: If I could have done that well, then I could have depicted the night of the typhoon and made a really exciting movie.

—And when that night was over, you could have shown the cloudless blue sky the following day.

Miyazaki: And when you go outside, acorns would be strewn on the ground. If we could do that well, even just one scene, it would be a film with anticipatory excitement, what Paku-san calls making a clear impression of what one experiences. We may feel frightened during a typhoon, but that scared, excited feeling occupies a large place in our heart. In other words, it allows us to experience the meaning of the landscape or the climate on a much deeper level, rather than just recalling what someone said to us or how someone was mean to us. Actually, I think that the climate, landscape, weather, temperature, wind, rain, typhoons, and earthquakes that occur in Japan have especially strong meaning for Japanese people.

It is a delusion to think that we can ignore this, that we can raise children by installing air conditioners in rooms and saying "It stinks" when we go to the countryside, by putting air fresheners scented with fragrant olive (osmanthis) in our toilets so that children say, "That's the toilet smell," when they come across the scent of an actual fragrant olive plant. We

can't afford to be cut off from the earth. *Totoro* shows us a way of living that is not like that.

—Totoro is the spirit of nature, but says nothing. Had you decided from the start that Totoro would not speak?

Miyazaki: Yes. I was determined not to make him into *Obake no Q-tarō* (Q-tarō the Ghost).[67] I thought he shouldn't appear too much. I had also decided strictly against having scenes where Totoro sympathizes with Satsuki because she is sad. Satsuki is so endearing as she searches for Mei. Totoro can see that Mei is right over there, so he provides a service and takes her on the cat bus … That's all that scene is about. He may not even be conscious of being of service to her.

—The cat bus is more human. It indicates the hospital name as its destination by flipping the signs, clatter clatter. [*laughs*]

Miyazaki: I made the sign clatter in a familiar way so that younger children watching the film would feel some relief. I knew that to see "Mei" on the destination sign would absolutely give them a sense of relief. I wanted to end on a note of good feeling. The ending would have been too quick if they hadn't been reassured until the moment Mei was found on the road. When the cat bus comes with its destination sign clattering, the audience knows that Mei will be found. Then they also think that the mother will be all right as well. This is a directorial decision. So I thought it was all right to include happy music in that scene.

—I understand that in the initial synopsis, Satsuki meets Totoro and lends him her umbrella. When she wakes up the next day she finds the umbrella at the entrance to the house along with a thank-you gift of acorns. Why did you change that?

Miyazaki: Yes, I did make a storyboard of the return of the umbrella. But that would make Totoro understand things too much. There is no way he would understand lending and

borrowing. And there is no way Totoro would have an aversion to getting wet in the rain.

—Because he is an animal.

Miyazaki: Right. And rain helps plants grow. Since he lives as the lord of the forest, Totoro can hear the joyous voices of the plants. There is no way such a being would dislike the rain. Especially as it's rain falling during the rainy season. When we think of him enjoying the *plop, plop* sound of the raindrops on the leaf on his head, he wouldn't be thankful for having been lent an umbrella. I realized that we had a problem. Then I thought that he would be happy hearing the louder *plop, plop* of the raindrops as they hit the umbrella. Totoro thinks the umbrella was some kind of wonderful musical instrument. Satsuki has given him a musical instrument, and he has no concept of returning it. Instead, he thinks it is best to give some acorns to reciprocate.

This shows how stories aren't always completely finalized at the start.

—Children really loved that bus stop scene in the movie theaters.

Miyazaki: It made me very happy. That scene has very little action and it's a difficult one. Satsuki is surprised but she's also excited.

—The children must have been sharing that feeling.

Miyazaki: I thought about who should meet Totoro first, and decided it should be Mei, who doesn't shrink from things. Satsuki may be tough-minded, but even she would have been shocked to find a huge creature standing next to her in the rain. So it seemed better to have Mei meet him first, then Satsuki. When Satsuki is quietly standing alongside Totoro, the cat bus appears, ruffles things up, and leaves. So it's not necessary for her to be frightened when the cat bus appears all of a sudden. But when we put in the roar of the wind, it became scary. I

realized that was more true to the scene. So it became difficult to put in the music composed by Hisaishi-san.

—Was there some music?

Miyazaki: Yes, the cat bus theme tone—*ta-ta-ta-ta*—was supposed to be inserted there. When we put it in, it turned into a jolly, silly cat, a foreign cat.

I had always imagined that it would come with the wind, riding on the wind. But it was among large trees. There was no way to have the wind blow. I didn't want to kill that background art's depth by putting in more cels, so I had decided not to have the wind blow. But, curiously, the roar of the wind didn't sound strange when we actually put it in. [*laughs*]

Between reality and dream …

—The fantastic scene of the soot sprites crossing over to the woods at night is very interesting as it dovetails effortlessly into reality.

Miyazaki: It's as if I'm creating two entirely different types of stories. I thought about the ways in which the appearance of Totoro and the depiction of nature would mesh. I had some doubts, but I was convinced that if I showed that house, that forest and nature surrounding it, and those children clearly at the start, it would seem too normal for an odd creature to appear. And if it were normal for any creature to appear at that point, the whole thing would just seem like a big fantasy. That's why it was important to depict how they lived in detail at the beginning. In the latter half, that could be skipped over. That made our calculation of the number of seconds required for the scene go way off schedule. [*laughs*]

—Is that what happened?

Miyazaki: I didn't think it would require so many seconds for the first night after they moved in.

—So Part A expanded?

Miyazaki: It wasn't that it expanded, it just needed that much time.

—This film doesn't have much of a plot line compared to your other works.

Miyazaki: No, it doesn't.

—The climax is when the little girl almost gets lost ... I thought you took quite a risk with that. There could have been more of a story there. What was your intention?

Miyazaki: I had no doubts at all from the beginning. I even thought I created quite a bit of a story. It felt like I could even have made a film that would excite children just from one night's typhoon.

—Is that because you could make them feel moved enough?

Miyazaki: No, that's not it. The night of a typhoon is in itself something unusual within normal life, something that creates its own excitement. So if that can't be made interesting, this type of movie can't succeed. And this relates to what I said earlier about not having to use tricks. Satsuki and Mei meet Totoro, but the scenes of the bus stop where Satsuki meets him and inside the tree where Mei first meets him are basically presented so that it is unclear whether they were real or a dream. Of course, I think they really happened.

—The part where the tree grows when they do the dondoko odori *dance is the same way.*

Miyazaki: That was, well, a radiological mutation of the tree …[*laughs*]

—As I watched, I wondered if it was an expression of the largeness of the life force inside the seed, or a dream the tree itself was dreaming.

Miyazaki: [*laughs*] [*Though he laughed, Miyazaki-san didn't say anything. It seemed he wanted viewers to make their own interpretations.*]

—I like the phrase, "It was a dream, but it wasn't a dream."

Miyazaki: It might do for Satsuki to utter such an overly explanatory phrase, but I wondered if Mei should follow so closely behind. I think I should have had Satsuki say, "It wasn't a dream," once, then have her say it again, and then have Mei imitate her and say it. [*laughs*] There's no need to understand everything. When I'm asked what a totoro is, I don't know myself. Talking with Joe Hisaishi, we agonized over the music—it would not do to emphasize the mystical. And it would also not fit to create undue affinity with Totoro, as if he were merely an ordinary *tanuki* raccoon dog that had just shown up there. That's why Hisaishi-san's minimalist music was best. If it were more mysterious, then it would be supernatural. What I thought was perfect was that he includes sounds we've heard somewhere and recognize, but still gives us the feeling that something is a bit different.

What was strange was the music for the scene when Totoro appears standing beside Satsuki. The music—with a seven beat basic rhythm—was playing all along. I asked to have some of it removed as it was a bit too much.

So Hisaishi-san removed a little bit each time during the mixing. He counted, "one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, huh" to remove it. And then counted again to insert it. The result turned out well. When that was played with the film, it was perfect. It was an amazing fit.

When Satsuki looks up, there's no rhythm, and when Totoro appears the rhythm comes on. Once in a while we're lucky and that kind of thing happens. I liked the music in that section. It didn't get in the way, and it didn't determine a certain character, yet it is strange and mystical, but not too mysterious, and it's oddly familiar … That scene turned out great with the sound and music added.

Hisaishi-san had a lot of concerns about the music. He thought it needed to be light. It was only after completing the film that I was able to state definitively that it didn't have to be

light. During the process, I told Hisaishi-san that it wasn't necessary to have the music so light, that it wouldn't work to put music in everywhere indiscriminately, and had him redo some of the music in places. There are several places that I thought, "Shoot, if only I knew more about traditional dance music, things could have been better." With music you really can't tell if it will work until you actually put it in.

—Nausicaä says that gunships cut through the wind, but her mehve *rides on the wind. I was surprised by that image. But in* Totoro *he becomes the wind. It seems like Totoro was having so much fun, twirling around and flying in the wind.*

Miyazaki: If that scene were in an action story, I could have pushed it more. But he's just flying as the wind. I couldn't push it anymore than that. If I had pushed it, it would have expanded too much, into a larger scene, so I restrained it a lot. It would be different if he were going somewhere on the wind. Without that kind of purpose, I felt it was okay to finish the scene with, "Hey, we've become the wind!" That's all there is, nothing more.

—Just that alone is a dreamy experience for Satsuki and Mei.

Miyazaki: I do regret something. You know how when the wind blows across water little ripples form with the gusts? Oga-san and I often talked about wishing we could do that. He said, "If you gave me three times the time, I could do it for you." And in the same way, when I would say it would be wonderful if we could draw the camphor tree as if it were really swaying in the wind, he would reply, "If I had three times as long, I could do it."

—There were scenes where the top of the camphor tree was swaying.

Miyazaki: We were thinking of something else, not that kind of overlap. We gave up on it. We figured out how to do it, but would artists of Oga-san's caliber be able to draw the

frames? The issue becomes how many frames are needed for the animator to draw the moving tree and then draw the leaves, and then to have the shimmering movement as it changes color. We were convinced that we could show the movement in three frames and draw the shimmering in one frame. If we did that we could show the leaves waving on the branches and the light dappling through. But there was no way we could have enough time to do that.

When they cross the ridge, if the ears of rice are out, flowers should be blooming by then too. If we drew that, we wouldn't be able to show movement. We made it just a carpet of green, but that kind of thing is frustrating. Oga-san and I would discuss how wonderful it would be to show that when the wind blows the rice stalks bend and the wind creates a depression in the field as it blows by. If it's a river, the ripple of waves on the surface … but that would take three times as long to do. [*laughs*]

—*In* Panda! Go Panda!, *the pandas appear all of a sudden in Mimiko's daily life. What do you think of the difference in that regard with* Totoro*?*

Miyazaki: I don't think it's that different. The Kenji Miyazawa story I like best is *Donguri to yamaneko* (*The Acorns and the Wildcat*). Even after reading it, I couldn't figure out what the wildcat was. And it wasn't necessary to know. When I saw the illustration, I didn't like it at all. I thought it was wrong to have such a small wildcat. In my mind I had imagined a huge, two-meter tall wildcat just standing there, looking off in the distance, with small acorns running around screeching at its feet. When I thought of the wildcat vacantly standing there, I fell in love with that world. Actually, I was quite disappointed when I first saw a fox. Doesn't it seem that a creature that can bewitch people should be larger? I thought it wasn't possible that a creature smaller than a medium-sized dog could bewitch people. It was the same when I saw a real *tanuki* raccoon dog as well. When you hear of a raccoon dog, doesn't it seem like a large, dazed animal?

Having often heard as a child from my mother about raccoon dogs and foxes bewitching people, and about foxes that turn into humans and ride on horses and are caught as they try to eat deep fried tofu, I assumed they were much larger animals. But they weren't.

That was why when I made *Panda! Go Panda!* I made sure they were huge and just dazedly standing there. I am Japanese after all. We have the term *korikō* or "being clever" (on a small scale). We also have the term *taigu* (great fool) for incredible stupidity. I think Japanese people like a bottomless, enormous foolishness, especially in people who become important. These great fools are able to enfold those people who are scuttling about concerned with minutiae. For example, Takamori Saigō[68] gives off that kind of air. I like that kind of dazed benightedness that wafts around enormous foolishness. This is how Totoro came to be that way.

—When he grins broadly, without any dialogue, viewers feel a sense of liberation just from watching him.

Miyazaki: Unlike the foreign countries, where people may argue about whether Christ ever laughed or not, Japanese gods are basically laughing gods. It's like the weather in Japan: there may be some harsh times, but basically the sun smiles on us. When I was young I hated that. I sought something with greater severity.

—Japanese gods are more commonplace. They seem to be no different from humans in terms of their emotions.

Miyazaki: They can become wrathful. That's why they must be soothed; and when they are soothed, they become smiling, gentle gods. I like these gods better. It doesn't seem to me that Japanese people want a god who saves their souls. People talk about where they will go when they die, but rather than paradise or heaven, it seems more fitting that they actually will be reborn into the mountains or earth, or trees growing nearby. That's why I prefer burial of the body. When my mother was cremated, I strongly felt I would rather have

her body buried. Then, if flowers bloomed above her grave plot I could think, "Look, my mother has turned into these flower blossoms." It seemed a waste to turn her body into mere carbon dioxide and carbon. I thought it would be better to have it become fertilizer for trees, grasses, or insects, to became a fragment of things that would live on … What am I talking about? [*laughs*]

—In the story, there is no explanation at all about Totoro or the cat bus, so it would be fine if someone thought they were gods, or beast spirits, or goblins. The premise that a cat-beast spirit saw a bus and thought it would be fun to imitate it is really interesting.

Miyazaki: The cat bus used to be just a cat ghost. He saw a bus and thought it looked like fun. Totoro, too, learned about Jōmon clay pots from the Jōmon people, and is likely spinning tops imitating an Edo period boy who was playing with them. [*laughs*] *Totoro* live for 3,000 years, so to him these are things he learned just a short while ago. It may be that Kanta's grandmother met Totoro when she was a child, crying as she walked along the woods after being scolded by her parents. Totoro may think that Granny as a little girl and Mei are the same girl.

—The cat bus has twelve legs; how did you depict its running?

Miyazaki: We talked about how its legs should move in sequence, like a centipede's. I left it up to Katsuya Kondō to create the movement and had him show me his drawings every now and then. There is a bit of a strain; probably it's best to draw it in one frame. When animals walk, in actuality their shoulders move ahead. But on the cat bus the shoulder joint is stuck on too tight, so we couldn't show this movement. It's much easier to fake the way a fictional character runs. It's much more difficult to show Mei and Satsuki, who are real children, running.

To create the world of children

—What is it like for Satsuki and Mei to meet Totoro?

Miyazaki: Satsuki and Mei are saved just by Totoro's existence. Just by his being. He helps when they are looking for Mei, but I thought it wouldn't work if he went searching with them.

—It's enough to know "There was once a Treasure Island."

Miyazaki: That's right. It's "Laputa really existed after all." [*laughs*] There's no purpose to it; Treasure Island exists and Totoro exists. Because of his existence, Satsuki and Mei aren't isolated and helpless. I think that is sufficient. By creating this kind of film I have come to realize what is in my core. Such as what I like. I recalled all sorts of things about my own childhood, when my children were young, what my now-grown nieces and nephews did when they were little. Because of these recollections, I didn't have to fret over what the children would do when they went outside.

One example is when my younger son—he's probably forgotten all about it—went shopping with his mother when he was in nursery school. It was a windy day, and when they came home my wife told me, "I wonder if our son is a genius." He had said to her, "Today the beads of air bumped into us." This was the reality that he felt. I'm sure my son has forgotten it, as has my wife. At that time I thought, that's the kind of thing a child would say. But I remembered that in creating the scene where the firewood that Satsuki is carrying is blown away by the gust of wind. And I smashed beads of air there. For some strange reason, that kind of phrase remains in my head. *My Neighbor Totoro* was created from gathering bits like that. When my mother was in the hospital and I returned home from school to an empty house, I definitely experienced loneliness …

—Satsuki seems more mature than an actual fourth grader.

Miyazaki: She was forced to become more mature, as children do in her situation. Fourth grade is about the time

when a child graduates from watching *Doraemon.* It's the time of life when you become the main character in your own story. There's a children's story called *Boku wa Ōsama* (I Am King) that young children love. Actually, the story is about oneself. A stupid king appears and enjoys reading it, saying, "This king is really stupid," as he giggles. But actually he's reading about himself. In the same way, it is in fourth grade that a child starts to think, "Rather than this kind of person, I'd like to be that kind, or I wish things were that way." It's about then that children start to like someone. I think age ten is one touch point of separation. If you were to ask me if Satsuki is supposed to be ten years old, I'm not sure how I would answer … but ten-year-olds do live with these concerns. At least I think so. A ten-year-old can do kitchen chores. I did. I also cleaned house, fired up the bath, and cooked.

—I heard from a staff member that you gave a lecture on walking to the in-betweeners during the production. Is that true?

Miyazaki: It wasn't about walking, it was about running.

—What did you tell them?

Miyazaki: Their drawings weren't of running. Everyone had memorized the formula but it wasn't real running. Running with six frames in a two-frame setup wasn't yet the norm when I entered Toei Animation. There were various opinions—some asserted that a six-frame sequence was best and others thought using five frames was better for running. The Yasuo Ōtsuka group, including Paku-san, thought six frames was correct and they insisted on it. At that time I was lectured by Ōtsuka-san as to how to show running in six frames of two frames each. The three drawings each had meaning and purpose: one was the coiled spring, the next was the stretch, and then the kick up. It only looks like running when these three factors are combined, so three pictures are needed of these three poses. I was convinced by his explanation. But that's not to say one should produce this

pattern by rote under all circumstances. I applied this theory in my own way to figure out how to shift the pattern when a little child runs or when a bad guy runs. In doing so, I came up with my own theory, because I figured out that drawing this kind of pose would not always work, for a variety of reasons. I thought this had become common practice, but realized it hadn't at all.

People were drawing in a set pattern without knowing why, just thinking that this was the only way to draw running. Even people I had instructed as new hires had already forgotten the reasoning behind the method.

How to determine whether to have both the upper and lower body move, when movement should or shouldn't be put in—that is what I instructed them on. But just one lecture wasn't enough for them to remember it.

—Did you do the running for Satsuki and Mei?

Miyazaki: No, I just explained the basics of the kinds of running to our animators and told them what they should observe when they wanted to draw characters running. When you want hectic movement, of course just shifting the images will express that movement. But rather than that, I told them to think about whether it would be better this way or another, and what sort of meaning a specific technique imparts to a character's movement. There are three basic poses that come from this way of thinking. But even a slight mistake in assembling them makes the character's running look unnatural, as if they are stiff or rattling along. I corrected a lot of running sequences. But this ends up with the director having also to correct the key and in-between animation and insert reference poses. So we wound up with some truly miserable-looking frames.

—Watching first and second graders at a primary school, I sometimes wonder how they can move around so much and not get tired. And they're so quick.

Miyazaki: Yes. Children aren't conscious of wanting to run. They're only aware of wanting to get somewhere quickly. In order to go quickly they naturally end up running. So, when you send a little child on an errand and tell him, "Don't run," as he is replying, "Okay," he's already running. [*laughs*] He thinks of moving quickly and does so without intentionally running. This film is not pulled along by a story; it is the frames themselves that must be expressive. In that sense, the abilities of the animators are insufficient. They are grossly insufficient!

—They aren't accustomed to doing it that way—few stories require that of animators.

Miyazaki: That's not all. There are too many animators who aren't interested in that way of expression. Many of them didn't enter into this field to draw everyday occurrences; they want to forget about reality and go somewhere else. Like explosions. It didn't bother me when I was working on action dramas, but it bothered me greatly when working on *Totoro*—not only with Satsuki and Mei but in many other respects as well. Children don't run at the same rhythm. When you look at children in reality, you can tell so much. It's all helter-skelter. When you watch children as they walk home chatting with their friends you can tell that they don't walk as they talk back and forth like in *Sally the Witch.* They turn backwards, wander off to the side, and this goes on without any break. I told the animators over and over again to watch from the window at the way children pass by.

Satsuki and Mei

—Do you have any daughters?

Miyazaki: No, I don't. I have two sons. And my own siblings are males, all four of us.

—Why did you decide to make this a story of two sisters?

Miyazaki: That's because I am a man. If it were a story of boys, it would have been Kanta and his brother. That wouldn't

be the same.

—It would become more rough-hewn?

Miyazaki: No, that's not it … It would be more pitiful and I couldn't have made it. It would overlap too much with my own childhood. So I didn't want to make that kind of film. For example, I didn't have a close relationship with my mother like Satsuki. I was overly self-conscious, and my mother was that way too. When I went to see her in the hospital, I couldn't rush to hug her. It's natural for Satsuki to feel a bit shy and not go directly to her mother's side. Then, what would Satsuki's mother do? She might brush Satsuki's hair or something. That's one way she could show physical affection. That is what gives Satsuki support. There must have been that kind of consideration. Actually this was a real occurrence. Kihara-kun, in production, told me about a woman he had heard about.

Her mother was ill and she couldn't do anything for her child. But on her sickbed she did brush her child's hair as she talked to her. And the daughter felt her mother's love with this gesture. It wouldn't be natural for the mother to give her daughter expansive hugs, like it would be for Americans. It would be even more unlikely when the girl is a fourth grader. So for Satsuki, the ritual of having her hair brushed is very meaningful. Mei, on the other hand, can crawl into her mother's lap and feel the warmth of her body. Mei is still young enough to hug her mother.

—I was so moved by the gentle and free movement of the three on the bicycle, overflowing with relief, as they make their way home after visiting the hospital. It was a wonderful scene, their expressions full of the joy they felt inside. I'm not sure if I should even ask you, the director, about this … There is scene in which Satsuki, unable to contain her emotions, starts crying. I'd like to ask about that scene.

Miyazaki: Initially, I didn't intend to have her cry so much. I thought of Satsuki as a girl who could keep her emotions under control. After completing part B, I looked at the

relationship between Satsuki and Mei. Mei is guileless and doesn't think deeply about things, so she's not gloomy. But Satsuki gets depressed. Why? Because she is trying too hard to be good. If she could recognize that she is trying too hard, Satsuki would be able to feel better. If she fails to do this, she will turn into a delinquent. It was only after the storyboards had been done for part B that I realized I had to let this girl's emotions explode somewhere. I was already starting part C.

—She was opening the rain shutters, making meals and box lunches, and taking care of her little sister.

Miyazaki: After part C, when I started on part D, I thought Satsuki would reach her limit … But I didn't like the idea of her slamming cooking pots around. I have the same kind of memory. For a child to have to do kitchen work while his mother is sick in bed is not a moving story. It's daily life. If it's once in a while when your mother is sick for a day, that's fine. But it's tough to do it on a regular basis.

—And she's been doing it all along for half a year or so.

Miyazaki: Her father is doing some as well … So I thought Satsuki couldn't be redeemed unless she yelled and cried once. That is why her mother in the hospital says she feels sorry for Satsuki. I thought unless I could understand Satsuki's feelings, she would become warped and turn into a delinquent … This is why in the pictures during the ending credits I had Satsuki feeling relieved with her mother at home and playing normally with the other children. Their faces look similar so you can't tell which one is Satsuki, but that's fine. And it is better to have Mei, who has been the little sister bossed around by her older sister, find a younger kid to pull into her play.

This is why I intentionally didn't show the sisters together with Totoro at the end.

If they had stayed in that place with Totoro, those girls wouldn't have been able to return to the world of human reality. I think it's fine if they never see Totoro again.

—They may make a snowman and totoros may be watching.

Miyazaki: They may watch, but that's all right too. Basically, it was only when I reached the end that I realized what I had to do for the last shots. It was only then that I was finally able to see the entire work. It was then that I decided there would be no sequel. It was enough for them to have met Totoro just during one part of their lives.

The scene that concerned me most

—It seems many people recall their own childhoods when they watch My Neighbor Totoro.

Miyazaki: Shortly after I moved to Tokorozawa, a neighbor family's child was thought to have fallen into the nearby river. The parents jumped into the river and the entire neighborhood was all upset. It was a filthy river, a drainage ditch, but everyone joined in an exhaustive search. Then, the child appeared out of nowhere; he had just been playing somewhere else. This sort of thing happens. Suddenly, ordinary life just flies out the window.

Once when we went to a festival my little brother didn't make it home with the rest of us, and fearing that he had been taken by someone, we all split up to search for him, losing sight of one another in the process. We realized he had gotten lost. Nowadays everyone has telephones and kids don't get lost as often. I still recall how I felt when I thought we might not find him, when we split up and searched in the dark for him at the festival. When we found him, he was crying, clinging to the sleeve of an old woman he didn't know. That old woman hadn't known what to do so she had walked around with him. [*laughs*] It's episodes like this that make up this film. There's no need for a plot. I wish I could have made it a ninety-minute film. If I could have, I would have expanded the section on Satsuki and Mei's everyday lives, rather than the Totoro section—that would make it the story of Satsuki and Mei, not the story of Totoro.

There's a part when Satsuki and Mei are asleep after making a telephone call. That's the part I had trouble with for a while. I drew Satsuki crouching in the kitchen, feeling sad, but it was totally wrong. I hadn't felt that way. When my mother was in the hospital, only our maid was at home—do we call them helpers now? Well, sometimes maids and children don't get along very well. Sometimes they are enemies. In the morning the maid would yank the covers off me to wake me up, and she was heartless. She was only eighteen or twenty years old, and she had to deal with these brats who wouldn't listen to her, so she must have been mad. My older brother came home from school one day after second period and said, "The dog's been taken away." This was the dog I had been caring for. I recalled how I felt then. I felt so nauseated I couldn't stay on my feet. More than feeling sad or sorry for the dog, I just didn't know what to do. Had my parents been there, I'm sure I would have begged them to do something, but they weren't around. The maid couldn't care less. With the dog gone, she wouldn't have to take care of it. When I try to think of what I did then, I can't remember at all … Probably, I went to sleep.

I talked it over with Tsugiko Kubota-san, the children's literature author who wrote the novelization of *My Neighbor Totoro*. When we asked, "What do you think children do at those times?" she, too, said she thought they would fall asleep. And when I drew Satsuki lying down and falling asleep, it made perfect sense to me.

I thought, Mei wouldn't go to sleep right away, and she would have finished crying by the time she returned home. She plays with a toy from habit, but she isn't fully engaged with it. Then she gets tired and falls asleep …

When I resolved that scene, I suddenly realized what I must have done in my own childhood.

—You understood what happened in a blank part of your life. [*laughs*]

Miyazaki: That's right. I realized that's what must have happened. I probably fell asleep in any old room. I must have fallen asleep on the spot without caring about blankets or a pillow. I don't think the maid would have brought a pillow or placed a blanket over me. That's why I like that scene in *Totoro* so much. I was so happy that I was able to coax out that feeling.

When I drew Satsuki asleep on the floor and asked Oga-san what he thought, he said, "It must feel good to take a nap in a spot like that." [*laughs*]

Parents can misunderstand their children. They think that children are able to fall asleep with no cares at all even in the most stressful of times and conclude that children are innocent. In reality, the children are not without care—they are so upset they can't stay standing up, so they go to sleep as a self-defense mechanism. It's when they are the most troubled that they fall asleep. Children who hate school and refuse to go, come home and fall asleep; it's when they are so troubled and full of stress that they sleep … When I finally understood this behavior, I felt I was able to comprehend a lot of things a bit better than before.

Moreover, Mei sleeps holding an ear of corn. At that angle, we can't see the corn, but it wouldn't have worked to draw her facing us. If we saw her face, and it was a dejected face, it would become false. I loved being able to overcome some of my misconceptions and create that scene.

—I hadn't noticed that she was holding an ear of corn. How unobservant of me.

Miyazaki: You can understand, though, can't you? When I went to a seaside summer school and saw a sea urchin for the first time in my life, I desperately wanted to show this fascinating thing to my sick mother. I stored the sea urchin in the crawl space under the floor. When I think of it now, I'm sure my mother must have seen sea urchins long before then. [*laughs*] Naturally, the sea urchin spoiled before I could take it

home, and I remember being disappointed. I just wanted to share my surprise and joy—it hadn't occured to me that my mother might already know about sea urchins.

This is the first ear of corn that Mei has picked—she's forgotten that Granny had picked it for her. She's convinced that if she can deliver it to her mother, her mother will eat it and get well. So corn becomes a key word for Mei. "My mom will get well if I give her the corn, Granny said so." What's more, this corn was picked by Mei, whom Mother loves so much.

—It's bound to work a cure.

Miyazaki: I don't know if she thought it through that far, but at least she is sure her mother will come home to her if she can give her the corn.

—Her older sister is despondent and crying.

Miyazaki: That is the first realization for Mei that something is wrong. Seeing Satsuki cry, she thinks her mother is in peril. That is why Mei thinks she has to go to her mother no matter what … This is something so valuable. I think we've all experienced this once or twice when we were children.

—What about the word "Mother" on the corn?

Miyazaki: Satsuki must have engraved it with her fingernail as she sat on the branch of the tree next to the hospital. Mei is still too young to be able to write.

—In the climactic scene of searching for Mei, the background artwork gives a wonderful sense of urgency as sunset turns to twilight. How did you direct the light for this film?

Miyazaki: I'm always aware of the light. Unless there's light, the screen won't hold viewers' interest. In *Totoro* over one-fourth of the running time consists of the last sequence when the sun goes gradually from midday to the west, then

sunset, and dusk to night. It must have been difficult for Oga-san.

We wondered if it should have gotten a little darker as we were working on it, but that would have been hard to do. It would have been easy to have a bright red sunset, but instead we toned down the sunset in the preceding shots.

When they leave the hospital to go home, the sun is starting to set, so the background should have strong colors. Since the story is set in Japan, we had to depict the background art and light with a sure hand. Because all the viewers are familiar with the sun's rays in Japan, we couldn't make any mistakes. I don't think we did everything perfectly. But having forced ourselves to avoid garish colors, we were lucky to be able to make the changes in the color and light vivid enough for the final act of the film. We joked that it was the light of summer in the northern highlands. [*laughs*] "There's no humidity, so it must be summer in Akita."

—As with the light, other impressions of the weather also play a major role: falling rain, blowing wind, summer days, a silvery moonlit night. Is this because children are sensitive to weather?

Miyazaki: Isn't the world like that? [*laughs*] That is all. It's just showing that there are sunny days and cloudy days and sudden evening downpours and nights when the wind blows. People live feeling that kind of weather and temperature on their skin.

Kanta's Granny took to Satsuki and Mei because she loved them for being able to see the soot sprites even though they had come from the city. She realized that they were not just unusual city kids, but children whose eyes were unclouded and clear. Such children notice the blueness of the sky, the acorns on the ground, the little flowers blooming at the roadside. And this is true of all children throughout the country.

—We may see more adults and children gazing in awe at the immensity of the clouds drifting in the sky after seeing Castle in the Sky. *Or noticing new plant leaves and the little flowers on weeds as they walk along the road after seeing* Totoro.

Miyazaki: I experienced tremendous happiness as I was making this film.

—Miyazaki-san, please continue your efforts to make wonderful animation films for children. Thank you.

I Wanted to Show the Various Faces of One Person in This Film

Roman Album *Kiki's Delivery Service* (Majo no Takkyūbin), issued October 15, 1989

A day in July after the film was completed and waiting its release. An in-person interview at Studio Ghibli with director Miyazaki. What is the theme of *Kiki's Delivery Service?* He spoke enthusiastically about this and other topics.

What are the characteristics of adolescence?

—I would like to start by asking what your intentions were in creating Kiki's Delivery Service.

Miyazaki: The starting point was wanting to film the story of a girl in adolescence. Moreover, she would be one of the ordinary girls who come to Tokyo from the countryside. I wanted to depict the situations faced by such girls in our current society. This is a fictional story set in a fictional land where witches live. But our story also deals with girls who arrive in the big city, get a room and a job—what they face as they settle in. If we could show an appealing girl facing these challenges, we thought viewers would be able to empathize with her.

At the same time, it was also my obstinate way of showing up those who say of my work, "All of the girls you focus on are princesses." [*laughs*]

—It does seem that Kiki is, in many ways, a normal girl.

Miyazaki: Yes, the characters in this film are fundamentally different from those in my previous films, films that featured dramatic stories of life hanging in the balance and characters experiencing great hardships. The hallmark of this film is the expression of the many faces of a person. In the presence of her parents, Kiki is childish, but on her own she thinks things over with a serious expression. She may speak roughly and bluntly to a boy her own age, but to her seniors, especially to

people important to her, she acts politely. These faces are not calculated but rather come out either naturally or as a result of what she has learned from her parents. My thought was that one characteristic of adolescence is learning to understand the appropriate use of these various facial expressions.

—The main character is a girl who has these various faces she shows to others.

Miyazaki: This is a very natural thing in our everyday lives. If it seems somewhat calculated, it is the unavoidable folly of youth [*laughs*], something that is common. My aim in making this film was not to express my opinion about each of these faces, but to make this kind of girl happy. [*laughs*]

Here I do want to note that Kiki goes into a slump when she finds she can't fly. Kiki will be depressed about other things in the future as well. She may become sad, but she will climb out of that feeling. That's how I wanted to end the film. I didn't want it to have a happy ending with her business becoming a success or her becoming the town's sweetheart. I wanted to give the sense that she will repeatedly become dejected and then regain her cheery vitality … I was careful from the start to avoid making it a career success story.

—That ending, then, wasn't simply a happy ending?

Miyazaki: I certainly wanted the ending to be a scene viewers would be happy with. I also wanted to show Osono-san's baby somewhere … And what I thought I needed to do most for Kiki was to have her become friends with girls her own age.

—They are the girls she met in the town—the ones she at first resisted?

Miyazaki: More than resisted, Kiki held a grudge against them. When Kiki was able to throw off her own grudge, she found that the people around her were not really mean-spirited. When she delivered the old woman's pie, she was given the cold shoulder by the girl, but that happens

sometimes when you run a delivery service. It wasn't a particularly horrible occurrence, but that is what you encounter in your work.

That is how I see it, and Kiki's wishful thinking was brought up short by it. She was sure she would be thanked … But that isn't it. She was paid, so she had to deliver the pie. And if, by chance, she meets people through her business, she is fortunate. That is the way work goes … I didn't delve that deeply into attitudes toward work in this film, though. Each time a deliveryman comes to our door, we don't say, "You must be tired. Come on in for a cup of tea." [*laughs*] We just sign for it, say thank you, and that's it.

—But it may be different if it were a delivery girl.

Miyazaki: Nah, I don't think so. That's why I like what the girl at the party says as she comes to the door. She's not lying, she's speaking honestly. She's thinking, "I told Grandmother I didn't need it, but still she sent a pie." This kind of thing happens often in real life. It might have been shocking for Kiki to hear and may have hurt her deeply, but there are many things in this world that we just have to bear.

What is Kiki's magic?

—How should we understand the magic shown in this film? For example, Kiki's ability to fly, and when she is unable to fly.

Miyazaki: Why do you think Kiki can fly? Is it because she's a witch?

—In the movie, they say she has flying in her blood ...

Miyazaki: What is blood, though? It's what we receive from our parents, isn't it? It's not something we learn to do. Talent is like that. We all have to pass through a period when we are unconsciously using a talent, while learning to consciously make that power our own. This is what Ursula says. She could paint, but what she thought was her own talent was actually something she inherited. This is the same for

everyone. During our twenties, thirties, and forties we work to be able to understand our own abilities and limits, and ultimately find their level. Becoming unable to do something we were once able to do unconsciously means that it is also impossible to grow without becoming conscious of our talents and developing them.

This is why the magic in this film is restricted to Kiki's type of talent and is distinct from the tradition of true witchcraft. There is every likelihood that she might not be able to fly at some point—the issue is whether we want a reason for her inability to fly.

—It may be because she fought with Tombo.

Miyazaki: But even giving a reason for it doesn't help clarify the problem. Rather, I think this kind of expression might satisfy the girls watching the film—isn't it something like, "I could do this until just yesterday, but why did I fall all of a sudden? Why do people's words sting so much? Why have I lost so much energy?" In our work as animators, too, we often come to a point when we can't seem to draw anymore. Then we wonder how we were able to draw before and why our skills have seemingly left us. We don't know why that happens. And reasoning doesn't help … There are all sorts of examples like that.

It's not just talent, but our feelings as well. Kiki doesn't know how to deal with her own feelings. That is what adolescence is about. Even if you don't mean to pick a fight, when words are exchanged you might use much sharper words than you intended or you might make a stupid comment. You might be thinking it's better to do this, but react and do the exact opposite. We do all sorts of contrary things …

—And you're showing that's what adolescence is?

Miyazaki: Yes, though recently there seem to be people who are still doing this sort of thing in their thirties and forties, even … A person who has established himself or herself in a

secure manner should be able to take the same attitude toward anyone wherever he or she goes. Or, we all want to take the same attitude. But in actuality, when watching the shop Kiki jitters her leg nervously when no one is there, and when someone passes by she suddenly smiles … That's not because she's sneaky. People have to do many things like this to go out into the world. It's not about whether these gestures help. What will fulfill us most in those instances? There are obvious things, like gaining confidence from work going well, or earning more money than others and feeling superior with wealthy trappings. What I think becomes most necessary for a girl like Kiki is a place to take refuge.

What are the foolish doings of youth?

—Where was Kiki's refuge?

Miyazaki: I think it is her getting to know someone who will respect and understand her in her struggle with a life she doesn't understand well. This is why she asks Ursula if she can visit from time to time. Ursula answers that she will be there during the summer. This place becomes critical for Kiki in her effort to bounce back. The old lady who baked Kiki a cake was a nice acquaintance. But what gave Kiki more pleasure was the first person who visited her room as a friend, not as a landlord. What's more, Ursula understands Kiki's anguish in an affirming way. I think these aspects are much more valuable to Kiki than whether her business will succeed.

This is the same for the animators around me. They go out drinking late at night and all say, "Maybe I should call it quits," or "Maybe I should give up and go back to my hometown." They too are searching for a place of refuge and trying out different ways of living. But it's not easy for them to regain their vitality. They end up repeating their feelings—things didn't work out, can't work out. We can't help but think that disappointment is our path in life. Those reading this book will also go on in a similar way. But people often turn out to

be helpful when we get to know them. “Hey, that’s the theme of this film!” is what Yoshifumi Kondō told me. [*laughs*]

—Rather than being a little witch heroine who brings happiness to those around her, Kiki is a normal girl who wants to become happy herself.

Miyazaki: And she is helped by those around her even when she isn’t aware of it. What’s most important for Kiki is not that her business succeed—though of course that is no doubt important—it is how she herself can become acquainted with many different people. While she rides on her broom accompanied by her cat and flies around the sky, she is free. That’s because she’s at a distance from people. But to live in the town, in other words, to train for a profession, requires her to confront herself in an honest way. In terms of Kiki, can she become someone who can comfortably walk around town alone and converse with people without her broom or cat? In our world everyone arms themselves with the latest fashions, reads up on performances in magazines like *Pia* and uses them to get to the movie theater without asking anyone for directions (because they don’t want to embarrass themselves). That’s why information magazines sell so well. No one wants to be embarrassed (or show their ignorance) so they assiduously rehearse their actions.

I understand this so well because I am very self-conscious. Sometimes I can’t even ask a train station attendant if I am at the correct exit. Sometimes I’m even too embarrassed to stand still and look around to figure out which street I should take in town—I keep trudging along the wrong street and end up nowhere near my destination. I’ve done a lot of foolish things like that in my life … I never thought that I would want to depict this sort of thing in a film, but at my age I’ve come to look back on such things objectively—foolish behavior can actually be quite heartwarming.

—That is the kind of foolish behavior that we all unavoidably engage in.

Miyazaki: I think everyone has this kind of experience; we human beings do many stupid things. So I don't think we can negate them as being bad or wrong. But they aren't things we should continually do, either. It would be best if we didn't have to do them. We've all done things that make us want to shout in mortification when we recall them years later in the middle of the night, but we have to go on doing these things. After we become parents, we regret the things we've said to our own parents—but then our parents must have thought the same thing when they were young. And we'll no doubt hear it from our children. I wonder if I will think about these things differently in the future. But this is a grown-up's impression, and I think making a film like this is due to my having aged …

—You said you didn't intend to direct a success story.

Miyazaki: Our times are different from the past. In the old days of apprenticeships, daily life was extremely harsh and grueling. Adolescents faced hardship and poverty; they had a drive to graduate to journeyman status as soon as possible; sometimes they just wanted to return home. Nowadays (though not everyone may be like this) there are idiotic parents who say, "Come back if things don't work out," even when the "things" involve marriage. [*laughs*] And, on top of that, they give their children a considerable amount of money. It's quite different from the training that young people endured in the past. Yet, in terms of psychological issues there are still similarities. That was the idea behind making this film.

There are many young women in our company like this. Most of Kiki's mannerisms are taken from what I have observed of the behavior of young women animators I trained when they were new hires. So I'm afraid they may recognize themselves. [*laughs*] It would have been better if I could have sublimated their behavior into humor. But there was the problem of whether that would work as animation … I thought it would be nice for a change to work on a small-scale film about regular life. It's enough to have made just one film like this. [*laughs*]

—So, what kind of film will your next one be?

Miyazaki: I want to make a nonsensical film that can be enjoyed on a simple level. That's how I feel now, though I don't know what it will be.

An Interview Just Prior to the Release of *Porco Rosso*

Animage, August, 1992

In the Whirlwind of an Era: Feeling stimulated by work

—Yesterday I had the privilege of watching the first screening of Porco Rosso *with your staff, and I left with delightful memories of Fio Piccolo and the ladies who worked so hard at her father's company, Piccolo S.P.A. This was especially so because in today's world, people are always loudly demanding that their work hours be reduced, or that even public schools have both Saturday and Sunday off every week. I sensed that perhaps you were trying to send us a different message.*

Miyazaki: No, there was no particular message. But I obviously believe that any true professional, if engaged in fulfilling work, will work as hard as he or she can. And I don't think this is affected much by whether the hours are short or long. But I do hate it when people go around saying that people should sacrifice themselves for the sake of a corporation. Working hard for a corporation and working hard for the sake of one's own profession are totally different things in my view.

Now, whether one person could really manage a sea plane factory like the Piccolo plant in *Porco Rosso* is of course a bit questionable. [*laughs*] But from what I've heard, Ryan Aeronautical Company, which built the plane Lindbergh used to cross the Atlantic, might have been somewhat similar. In those days, in little shops across America, some planes were being made by engineers drawing up blueprints on their own, working on a hunch, with a collection of ladies from the neighborhood doing the assembly. It was still a time when a person's intuition, sense, experience, or even passion could have an overall effect on a plane's performance. It's an idea

that I love, frankly. Now we're in the high-tech age, and everything is made using computers.

—While making Porco Rosso, *you yourself were obviously also running Studio Ghibli, an animation studio, so I wonder if that experience might also be reflected in the film.*

Miyazaki: It would be great if, like Porco, I could sit around and smoke cigarettes while watching some young kid and making comments like, "Staying up late all the time'll shorten your life," or "It'll be bad for your complexion." [*laughs*] In the animated film, the men all run around acting stupid, and the women are all clever, hardworking, and reliable … What can I say, except that it's a world such as you might find in the Japanese form of comic storytelling known as *rakugo.*

Of course, reality doesn't work that way. It'd be pretty tough to live the way the characters in the film do. The staff members who worked on *Porco Rosso* had to burn the midnight oil all the time, and some didn't even get to rest on Sunday. There are a lot of reasons for this, of course, and it's an area where I need to make improvements, but I personally enjoy it when I become so absorbed in something that I completely forget about myself.

—It does seem as though that was reflected in your depiction of the late 1920s-style Piccolo seaplane factory.

Miyazaki: I think that the whole film really reflected the fact that to me, passion and effort are what working is all about. In the film, there's a scene where Grandpa Piccolo says "Please forgive us, oh lord, for we are guilty of employing women's hands to build this fighter plane," and then laughs out loud, adding with a joyful expression, "Well, then, let's load up on the grub so we can work like bees!" That's it to me, that's it. I think there's a universal excitement that people experience when working.

Everyone thinks there are lots of jobs in today's Japan, and they don't get very passionate about their work, but in most countries around the world it's the opposite—there aren't enough jobs. There are probably more countries where people graduate from school only to find themselves unemployed.

People talk a lot about the collapse of the American economy, but I happen to think we'll also witness the collapse of the Japanese economy soon. America switched from being a creditor nation to a debtor nation during World War II, and reached its peak in the 1950s. And it's taken thirty or forty years to reach the state it's in now. It's taken far less time for the American economy to fall into the ruinous state it's in than it did for the British economy to collapse after reaching its zenith in the Victorian era. As for the Soviet Union, well, even Imperial Russia lasted three hundred years.

In China, the Warring States and Spring and Autumn periods of history lasted five hundred years; five hundred years, despite the fact that there were huge strains on society, with terrible poverty and constant warfare. Compared to that, the socialist system in the Soviet Union only lasted seventy years, meaning that we're seeing a tremendous acceleration of history.

Many people in Japan today are of the opinion that working all the time is a problem, but I happen to worry that in the near future so few people will work that it will become a problem. I think this is hinted at by the fact that so many people today just do the work they are told to do and are incapable of figuring out what they need to do beyond that. At the very minimum, I never want to lose the excitement I experience when I'm working. When I do, I think it'll be all over for me.

No matter how messy things get, we've no choice but to live with vigor and courage

▶ At the turning point of an era

—Last summer, when production of Porco Rosso *began in earnest, you did an interview for the* Only Yesterday *roman album, and in it you said something to the effect that, "We have come to a turning point in our era, but* Porco Rosso *is not a work on the cutting edge of that turning point; on the contrary it represents more of a 'moratorium' work." Yet in viewing the film, I can't help but think that some aspects of it do not fit into that category.*

Miyazaki: I sensed that we had reached the turning point of an era when we began producing the film, but throughout the production I had no idea of what this really meant. Until then I had always thought that I made films with a good grasp of the era in which we live, but this was the least true this time. The film kept gradually getting longer (in the beginning *Porco Rosso* was supposed to be forty-five minutes, but it wound up being ninety minutes). But in making it, I had something of a realization.

—What kind of realization?

Miyazaki: Put quite simply, that "no matter how messy things get, we have no choice but to go on living." In other words, up until the 1980s I think there was this view of the future that included an End Times. Japan would continue as is, get bigger and bigger, and then one day something would burst with a loud noise, and civilization would suddenly collapse. Or there might be a repeat of the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake in Tokyo, or everything might be turned into burned-out ruins. Of course, if this really happened, it would be a true disaster, a living hell, but if it were to happen, I think everyone also had this hope that they would feel cleansed. We were thinking a bit too naively and sweetly, in other words, even in the way we imagined things might all end.

At the beginning of 1990s, just when the *Porco Rosso* project got going, the Soviet Union collapsed, there was an escalation in ethnic conflict, we witnessed the start of people again starting to do all sorts of stupid things, and saw Japan's

economic bubble burst all around us. I came to realize that the End Times were not going to be as neat an affair as I had once imagined.

Even if problems we have now, such as atopic eczema and AIDS, run rampant, and even if the world's population reaches ten billion, we'll still have to go on living in a crush with everyone around us. There will have to be much more effort put into protecting the environment, and there will be, but the air will still be ever more polluted, and we'll still have to go on living.

In other words, even if we're surrounded by burned-out ruins, it won't be possible to redo our urban planning, or to turn Tokyo into a beautiful new city. Even if we have an earthquake the size of the one that hit the Kanto plains in 1923, the buildings we have today won't all fall down. The condo that Suzuki-san (the producer at Studio Ghibli) owns at Ebisu in Tokyo won't collapse either. [*laughs*] So will it be possible to tear down all the old buildings and rebuild them? Probably not, because after a huge disaster no one will have any money. I suspect people would just keep living right here in the ruins, as is.

So that means most of Tokyo would turn into a slum. And if this were to be accompanied by the receding tide of a severe recession, all of a sudden the areas that used to be the liveliest in the city would go to ruin and become ghost towns, or turn into little Harlems. Some people may think that typhoons aren't so bad because when one comes, it is followed by a flood, and after the waters have receded the sun will emerge in a blue sky and all will be sparkling clean and dandy. But it doesn't work that way. Nothing's sparkling clean after a typhoon passes. Yet I do suspect that we'll see something like this is happen.

Heading into the twenty-first century, nothing's been resolved. Everything's being dragged into the new era, so

we'll just have to go on living, repeating the same stupid mistakes over and over again. That's the realization I've had.

—So what you're saying is that ultimately, in this context, you'll just have to keep doing what you've been doing, keep struggling and muddling through.

Miyazaki: What we call the "bubble" period in Japan was, I think, a bloated and carefree era. It was a time when people were quite giddy about the future, and it was possible to take time out and just work as a job-hopping *freeter*,[69] subsisting solely on part-time work.

But when the new era truly comes into play, I suspect that the current generation of twenty-somethings will be the last generation to have no particular interest in the state of society. Instead, it'll be the young people, now in their teens, such as those reading *Animage*, who are forced to take an interest. It'll happen because even the shallowest young women, who have been living without a care in the world, will be forced to confront problems like the health of their children, who increasingly have atopic eczema or nervous disorders.

When I see people who plan to get married these days, I always tell them the following: Be patient. Don't just trust your own emotions. When you get sick of being married, don't worry, because there will come times when you will appreciate it. So be patient, and make as many babies as you can. To live through this era together, it's best to have lots of children. You may suffer with them if they have atopic eczema, feel threatened by AIDS, cancer, and many other things, but it's still better to try to live with your head held high. Japan can't unilaterally and deliberately isolate itself from the world as it did in the old *sakoku* days. The world's population is exploding, but you can't go around hysterically blaming others, pretend you can cut yourselves off from the world, or even think of getting involved in race wars. You may not like what's happening, but just accept it, and let's try to live together. Even if you feel angry, let's be patient and endure,

let's try to live together. I've realized that this is the only way forward.

And it's important then not to fall for some cheap nihilism or for living for the moment. Be willing to take a certain amount of risk to preserve the environment. But don't spend too much money, or even time, on it. And make sure you do crazy things once in a while. While inhaling lots of smog, drive a two-seater convertible to work. Show them how you can drive around the filthy streets of Tokyo, collecting dust and dirt, in a car with no heater and no air conditioner, with only the clothes on your back to ward off the freezing temperatures. You must be prepared to do this.

If I can do this, I think I can probably live through the next ten years feeling good. With *Porco Rosso*, I feel as though I gained the means to do so.

On Completing *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*

The Story Continues

Yomu (To Read), Iwanami Shoten, June 1994

A work I wasn't sure I could complete

—You've finally finished serializing the manga version of Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, *after a total of thirteen years, haven't you ...*

Miyazaki: Well, there were fifty-nine episodes, which itself amounts to five years, but I spent time on the story before and after that, too, so the total amount spent on it probably means that during the last twelve or thirteen years, I was actually busy working on *Nausicaä* about half the time, in some form or another.

In the beginning, it was a work that I wasn't sure I could complete. But since I had decided that I could stop working on it at any point, you could also say that I was able to create the story without worrying about the future. I was able to work on it without just hoping to make it this or that way—I was able to really impose my will on it.

—That's interesting. To me it seemed to be almost like one of the long-running period dramas they serialize on NHK TV—a fictional work of such grand scale that it requires a very meticulous organization from beginning to end, and takes a great deal of time to write very carefully.

Miyazaki: There's no way that I would have been capable of that sort of organization. I was always under the pressure of lots of tight deadlines; several times I didn't realize until much later the true significance of what I had actually written.

—In 1984, three years after starting the serialization of Nausicaä, *the animated film was released, and now, exactly ten years later, you've finally finished drawing the manga. In the interim, the work has been evaluated and critiqued from all sorts of angles, hasn't it?*

Miyazaki: Yes, and some people who had first seen the film apparently went back and read the manga version from that perspective. Some who first saw Nausicaä as an ecological warrior were therefore never able to think of her as anything beyond that. Of course, I suppose you could say, conversely, that the manga wasn't sufficiently powerful to move them beyond that impression …

—There is quite a difference between the film and manga versions, isn't there? In the manga version you get a better idea of the more complex aspects of Nausicaä's personality.

Miyazaki: Yes, of course. If the film version and manga version were the same, it would've been ridiculous to keep drawing the manga story after the film ended.

I didn't have enough confidence in the direction of the manga story when I resumed it after the film; there were aspects of the film story that I wasn't able to shake off, and I really had to force myself to continue. To be more honest, I should say that when I had to temporarily stop work on the manga serialization in order to make my next film, I felt such a huge sense of relief that it was almost as though I had fled from my desk.

It's not something I'm proud to say, but when work on the next film ended, even after I had taken a bit of a break, I still found it agonizing to go back to the *Nausicaä* manga. I ultimately wound up stopping the serialization four times.

—And the film version wound up becoming the flag-bearer for the ecology movement that was so popular in the 1980s …

Miyazaki: That wasn't intended at all; I think that *Nausicaä* just happened to be in the right place at the right time to play that role. I'd actually been thinking about such issues much earlier, and had gotten my start with them thanks in part to books by the botanist Sasuke Nakao.

What I mean to say is that I didn't start out writing and drawing *Nausicaä* because I specifically wanted to talk about

ecosystems or the need to protect the environment. I started out intending to set the story in the desert, but when I drew some illustrations they weren't very interesting, so then I came up with the idea of setting the story in a forest, and that seemed to make more sense. So I ultimately wound up with the story that you know today.

So this is yet another example of how I created a story without having a big, overriding plan. I wrote it thinking that maybe I should go in this or that direction, and then just followed my whim. When I got stuck, I tried to put something big into the story and came up with the idea of the long-sleeping *kyoshinhei*, or giant god-soldiers … This was just something I came up with when I was in a pickle and didn't know where to take the story. I kept deceiving myself in order to keep going; I felt that everything would probably work out all right and that besides, the magazine in which the story was being serialized would probably do me a favor and go out of business before I got to the end anyway … [*laughs*]

—What sort of story did you intend to create when you first set it in the desert?

Miyazaki: I don't remember. I'm sure that I must have been thinking of all sorts of things, but I really don't remember … One thing I do remember well, however, is that I was extremely irritated at the time. I confess I was angry about the general state of the world, among other things.

—This was around 1981 or 1982, wasn't it?

Miyazaki: It was right around 1980. In addition to being upset by environmental problems, I was also concerned about where humanity was headed, and especially about the state of Japan. Most of all, I suspect, I was angered by the state of my own self.

—So right at the peak of the economic bubble you were ...

Miyazaki: I was embarrassed. I was disgusted. I wish I could say that I'm over it now, but my feelings of gloom have

just shifted to other areas.

Feeling cornered after finishing the film

—If it's true that you didn't really have a framework for the entire story until you finished it, it must have been tough for you when you actually got the go ahead for the Nausicaä *film project.*

Miyazaki: Frankly, I was really in a fix. I could have aggressively attacked the problem if the film had been based on someone else's work, but it was my own work, something that I had been cooking up until that point. It was almost impossible for me to be objective about it. Even if not explicitly written or drawn in the original manga story, there were many personal feelings—as well as my own wild ideas—in every panel of every page. So I just took what was in the original manga story as motifs, changed their meaning, rearranged them, put them into a Japanese *furoshiki*-wrapping cloth, so to speak, and tried to make them fit as best I could.

For films, you have to untie the *furoshiki* to show people what you have inside; then you also have to tie it up again. Now, I know that some people say that with films you can just leave the *furoshiki* untied, but I'm in the entertainment business, so I have to think about what fits and what doesn't.

That's all you can do with film. It's important that Nausicaä, the heroine, discover the real role, structure, and significance of the *fukai*, or Sea of Decay, and as a result trigger a Copernican-like revolution in understanding. I had decided that was about all I could show in a film version, but there were too many elements still in my mind that wouldn't fit into that simplified framework and it bothered me that I couldn't make them work.

It's no wonder that there were problems, because in the manga I essentially decided to write about whatever I wasn't able to depict in the film.

—That makes sense. So that's why the film and the manga book versions are clearly two different works. Because, as with a furoshiki, *with a film there's a specific way that the story has to be opened and then tied-up, isn't there?*

Miyazaki: I've finally finished serializing the manga version now, but even if I had to go back and redo everything and make the film first, I'm sure I would make the same thing. There would be no changes.

—Do you think the way you ended the film influenced the way you later ended the manga story?

Miyazaki: As I indicated before, films have an "end mark," or clear ending, so I didn't keep creating the manga story in an attempt to follow the film's story. I frankly didn't worry about what I had done in the film at all. Mainly because I'd already forgotten most of it. [*laughs*]

Yet, especially in the initial stages of making the *Nausicaä* film, I kept insisting that the story only represented a wish on my part, that I wasn't working from any assumed reality. But when the film was finished I discovered that I was actually up to my neck in the religious zone I had always wanted to avoid; I seriously felt that I had backed myself into a corner, and thought, "*Uh-oh …*"

On finishing the film I told myself that if I were going to continue the manga serialization I would have to take a more no-nonsense approach. While creating the manga, however, I also realized there were so many things I didn't understand that I would have to keep going without ever figuring them out.

—You wrote far more of the manga story after finishing the film than before, didn't you …

Miyazaki: Yes. And as a result, there was probably a changeover of readers. I also worried that my readers wouldn't have a clue what was going on, even if they did follow the

whole story as serialized in the magazine. But I still wound up pondering too many imponderables.

—What do you mean?

Miyazaki: If you assume that there is a God, you can explain everything in the world. But I can't do that. Still, in *Nausicaä* I wound up entering a zone that I didn't particularly want to enter, about humans and life and so forth.

I can more or less understand the world from the perspective of human conflicts and contradictions, but there's a part of me dissatisfied by that sort of explanation alone. So that means there's nothing that I can say with much conviction about anything at all.

I started to get dizzy just thinking about what I would do if addressed as "mama" by something with the destructive power of the *kyoshinhei.* So Nausicaä's confusion is also my own confusion.

—The kyoshinhei, *or giant god-soldier, plays a totally different role in the ending of the manga story than it does in the film ...*

Miyazaki: In popular culture, there are countless examples of characters coming upon some giant thing that gives them power. This "thing" may take the form of elephant herds in Tarzan, or the robot in *Tetsujin 28-go* (*Gigantor*). And what we see appearing over and over again in different forms can be explained as a human desire for a larger existence than oneself or a desire for growth. In popular culture the true nature of a giant force is often depicted vaguely, but it is ideally a good force.

In reality, most power has probably been created by technology. I think that technology is by itself neutral, innocent. It's like the automobile. Automobiles are extremely loyal to their drivers, and self-sacrificing, too.

It may be safe to assume that machines don't have souls, but in reality people impart souls to machines. Just as a dog will

obey the orders of its master no matter how evil that master may be, the essence of a machine is its loyalty, devotion, and self-sacrifice. I think that this concept of humans imparting souls to machines is at the core, for example, of Isaac Asimov's famous "Three Laws of Robotics." The basic concept behind the *kyoshinhei* in *Nausicaä* is therefore really a very ordinary one. You can even find countless prior examples that illustrate the roots of the design. But the moment I made the *kyoshinhei* pure or innocent in a visible way, it got out of my control. And I probably made it that way because I, too, have an intense fascination with things pure and innocent …

—After the kyoshinhei *gained consciousness, the story began developing into something quite different, didn't it?*

Miyazaki: When creating a work like *Nausicaä*, all sorts of ideas, even random fragments of ideas, come to me. I just have to assume that they mean something. I can't ignore these fragments even if they might destroy the story structure. I know I'm not explaining this very well.

Whatever I may think, I'm sure someone else has already spoken about it long, long ago, with greater depth and insight and more appropriate language. In writing *Nausicaä*, I became painfully aware of my lack of ability in this area.

—Do you mean the ability to talk about the religious area you found yourself getting into?

Miyazaki: It seems to me that many of the attributes of the human mind, including the beliefs and convictions we think important, may actually exist in nature …

Bonnō, or worldly desires, may emerge in our minds as a scrambled mess, but if we want to transcend them and arrive at a true, purer state of being, then I have this terrifying sense of foreboding that we might wind up as plain old pebbles or drops of water.

Yet the moment one starts talking about this sort of thing, it immediately starts to sound like a very annoying and even

sinister religion. I've never reached this state of consciousness, and there's no way I could write about it properly anyway. In short, after a while, the *kyoshinhei* started to seem even more charming to me than the humans.

—*Sort of the way the* ohmu *start seeming more endearing ... I know there are also other, similar examples in the manga version of* Nausicaä.

I was at a loss for words

Miyazaki: I'm still confused, because I tend to get hung up on things like that. Sometimes I think it's like *Dr. Strangelove*, or maybe that it's just truly abnormal. I really don't know.

The world's simplest viruses may share with us what we think of as uniquely human emotions, etc. In our case, do these qualities just happen to be accidentally invoked in human form? When I start thinking about this, I feel that I need to do some religious training and develop some more advanced gray matter. If not, I might wander into an area that probably shouldn't be verbalized.

I really got bogged down in *Nausicaä* with this sort of thinking. I knew it was dangerous, but I felt compelled to take the story in the direction I did because ten years earlier I had started using the *kyoshinhei* character. And I couldn't get away with saying that I'd used it and then just forgotten about it. [*laughs*]

So in effect, I myself wasn't in the lead in creating this story; I was just trying to keep up with it.

—*So you're saying that the story started rolling on its own?*

Miyazaki: Rather than rolling on its own, I should say that the story took on a life of its own. And it wouldn't agree to go where I wanted it to go. Of course, while realizing that I wasn't being very honest about it all, I still felt forced to try to get the story to go where I wanted it to, but that's not something I recommend.

Ultimately, the question is whether the young heroine, Nausicaä, who has the weight of the world on her shoulders, can ever truly return to a normal life. Can she really go on living without losing her mind? The only thing I know is that she probably will never be able to go back to being the way she was, but that she can definitely continue as she has become, that she can be a witness to what has happened.

—There's a certain resolution to the story in the animated film, but in the beginning of the manga version Nausicaä poses a variety of questions. The number of questions keeps increasing, and the story ends with them still unresolved.

Miyazaki: That's true. There were many questions—such as the meaning of life—that from the beginning I knew couldn't be resolved, but it turned out that I couldn't avoid asking them.

My dog is sixteen-and-a-half years old, and so worn out that we wouldn't be surprised if he passed away any day now. He has cataracts so bad that he can hardly see, he can barely smell, and he barely hears out of one ear. But he's still alive. When I look at his face, I often suspect that he's not particularly happy, but when I offer to take him for a walk, he lights up quite a bit.

It makes me wonder what it means to be alive. Both of my parents have already passed away, so it may seem a bit twisted to say that I think such thoughts when I look at my dog, but sometimes I wonder if he's really the same dog as the one who used to be here. Perhaps it's sort of like ripples spreading on the surface of water. The farther out the ripples travel, the fainter they become—they are still ripples, but they are not the same as they once were, when first generated and full of energy.

Some people say living things are, among other things, merely carriers of "selfish genes," but that's ultimately not enough of an explanation for me. All I can say is that we're just at the beginning of figuring all this out, and that I suspect

wise old people in ancient times probably sensed such things, and spent a lot of time thinking about them, long before there was any formal field of study of them.

—So in other words, you begin to understand how much you don't understand ...

Miyazaki: Yes. You realize that, whether talking about the relationship between man and nature, or the nature that exists within man, there is no single easy answer to any of it. To live means to have a method of maintaining an easy balance, so that all you can do is say that one should or should not do something for the sake of maintaining that balance.

But if you take this logic a step further, you soon run into problems that require confronting the chaotic dark side of the universe, and when it gets to that point, I think the answers lie not with our modern brains, but with what the ancients pondered in their mountain retreats not too long ago.

Recently, I find myself being shocked by religious language that I never used to pay much attention to. I feel as though I understand what it is trying to say. I sense, for example, that behind the very simple writings in an introductory Buddhist text or oft-spoken religious words, there are truly incredible experiences and ideas. But if you ask me if I have absorbed these ideas, the answer is no, I merely live in awe of them.

The moment you start transcribing words they start transforming themselves; unlike the Buddhist sage Shinran or others who fearlessly wrote down such words, I decided not to give Nausicaä any similar lines. Had I done so they would have sounded fake.

I had intended to organize my thoughts to have a better grasp of things, but in the process of writing *Nausicaä* I lost control; I felt like I was at a loss for words. It was almost as though Nausicaä herself were at a loss for words. I felt that I didn't want to express myself in words; whenever I wrote

down something that I thought probably expressed my intent, it immediately turned into something else.

—So after Nausicaä resolves to tell what is in effect a lie, the story soon comes to a conclusion ...

Miyazaki: That somehow seemed more appropriate for my heroine, so that's the way it turned out. The only way to look at it is to understand that her "lie" is an expression of her love for the life around her.

At any rate, it would be false to say that because we're on the side of justice, we can go ahead and destroy our opponents and the world will be at peace. That, at least, I can say would be a total lie. Now, I know that there are such things as good and evil in the world, and that people do good things. But people who do good things are not necessarily good people, they just happen to be people who have done good things. The next instant they might wind up doing something bad, and if we don't take that into account in our view of humans, we'll constantly make mistakes when making political decisions or decisions about ourselves.

The collapse of the Soviet Union came even more unexpectedly than that of the Dorok nation

—Many big events happened during the long serialization of the Nausicaä *manga, both within Japan and in the wider world. Did any of them influence you?*

Miyazaki: The most shocking thing to me was the civil war in Yugoslavia.

—What do you mean by that?

Miyazaki: I just didn't think the people there would resort to that sort of thing. It's a place where so many terrible things have been done in the past, I thought they would have had enough of it, but apparently they haven't. It taught me that people never do have enough of anything, that I was naïve.

—Compared to the Gulf War, it has been a fairly traditional war, hasn't it?

Miyazaki: Yes, the Gulf War was in a sense fairly easy to understand. There were actually a lot of similarities between the Iraqi government and the government in Japan when it was controlled by a military clique. Like when our military used to send troops to some ridiculously out of the way island or desert and abandon them there, without water or food, and tell them to fend for themselves. Looking at the Iraqi military was painful, almost like looking at Japan's former military, but the situation in Yugoslavia is completely different.

I think the people who started everything in Yugoslavia were probably just a few gangster types, but no one could stop them. It probably resembled Germany when the Nazis emerged and most of the people just saw them as a bunch of thugs, but then suddenly found that the Nazis had grown into an unstoppable force.

If you just watched a news source like CNN, you would think that the Serbs are overwhelmingly bad. But there is something completely different at work there. Within Christianity, there is clearly bad blood between the West and the Eastern Orthodox Church. So it was inevitable that the Serbs would be skeptical of NATO's moves. They probably would be relieved if Russia were more involved.

But that doesn't mean that the Serbs are in the right. Both sides are truly foolish, and both are doing horrible things. The thing about war is that even though people may have a sense of what is just in the beginning, once you start a war that sense of justice inevitably becomes corrupted.

—Nausicaä herself says that there is no such thing as justice, doesn't she?

Miyazaki: I'm fascinated by wars, and I read a lot about them. People therefore often ask me, "Miyazaki-san, do you like war?" and I respond by asking if they think AIDS

researchers like AIDS. Either way, the conflict in Yugoslavia has taught me that my understanding of history was completely naïve.

—What do you think about the collapse of the Soviet Union, which triggered the conflict in Yugoslavia?

Miyazaki: The Soviet Union collapsed while I was still serializing the *Nausicaä* manga and writing about the collapse of the Dorok empire. I was actually marveling at how suddenly the Dorok nation fell apart in my own story, and then the Soviet Union collapsed even more suddenly, which really shocked me.

It taught me that nations can collapse and people can keep on living their lives as ever, and that both things can quite easily occur at the same time. I had always wondered what had happened when the Roman empire collapsed, and what sort of changes the people living there might have experienced, and with the collapse of the Soviet Union I now feel as though I have an idea.

—I see. It was really quite a coincidence, wasn't it?

Miyazaki: Yes, and I actually should have written many more details about the collapse of the Dorok empire into the *Nausicaä* story, but sixteen pages a month was my measly physical limit, so I had to leave out a lot. I kept thinking, while drawing, that I should explain why Dorok collapsed, what a country really is, what sort of system Dorok had, how that system stopped functioning, and so forth, and while worrying about running out of time, in the manga story the Dorok empire collapsed all on its own, just like, in the real world, the Soviet Union did.

Nausicaä changed my way of thinking

Miyazaki: As I was trying to complete *Nausicaä*, I experienced a change in my thinking that some people might regard as a political sell-out. It's because I clearly abandoned Marxism. You might say I had to abandon it, but it wasn't easy

to decide that Marxism was a mistake, that Marxist materialism was all wrong, that I had to look at the world in a different way. I still occasionally think it would have been easier for me to continue thinking as I had been.

I didn't experience any dramatic, fierce internal struggle before changing my way of thinking; I was simply no longer able to deal with the various doubts that had been accumulating as I wrote. And I don't think I abandoned Marxism because of any change in my position within society —on the contrary, I feel that it came from having written *Nausicaä.*

For example, I felt a little hesitation in the beginning simply because I had made Nausicaä the daughter of Jihl, the king of a small nation, which therefore made her a princess. Anticipating that some people might criticize my heroine for belonging to an elite class, I armed myself with all sorts of theories to defend myself. But after a while I no longer cared about that. Nausicaä could have been born anywhere. I have no intention of arguing about it at all. No matter what class people are born into, idiots are still idiots and good people are still good. It's not just about right or wrong in this world; people are either good or not, people we want to have as friends or not. I've resolved not to think of things in terms of class consciousness. The idea that someone's right just because he's a worker is a lie. The masses are capable of doing an infinite number of stupid things. And I certainly don't trust public opinion polls.

So with all this, we simply wind up back at a very ordinary place. I'm not talking about something as profound as having had the scales fall from my eyes, but if I think of my new state of mind as returning to believing just what I've been told over and over again, then it does seem depressing. However, it is something I have to accept. I have simply resolved to take responsibility for the way I see the world.

Around the end of the 1950s, when I first saw a film about Mao Zedong standing in Tiananmen Square to the acclaim of the masses, he seemed to have a truly ominous, ugly look to him. But since he was always described as really being a big-hearted, warm man, I thought that, well, perhaps he hadn't been feeling well, or that maybe the photography hadn't been very good. [*laughs*] Looking back on it, though, I should have trusted my first impression.

That sort of thing has happened several times to me. Using my own sense of what's proper, I've twisted and suppressed my initial subjective impressions. Well, I don't do that anymore. Even when looking at today's politicians, I just rely on my impressions.

—So you rely on your intuition …

Miyazaki: Rather than call it intuition, I just have a sense that this or that person is a good person. Even if they don't have much ability as a politician, I might feel that they are basically good. And since I know I can't really expect much of them anyway, I'd rather just pick the best person of the bunch. That's the level that I've finally come to, and the only way I feel comfortable thinking of things. In other words, I've reverted to being a true simpleton.

—Perhaps it's not a matter of reverting, but having climbed a long spiral staircase?

Miyazaki: But I sometimes feel as though I'm just spiraling around … Take the Totoro Forest Project movement, for example. The people in the movement are using a film character that we created, but I don't support what they're doing because they're "right." I support them because they are really good people. They're really doing good, steady work.

Long before the movement started, these were people who loved the Sayama hills and walked through them whenever they could to admire the fauna and the birds, and they wondered if they couldn't do something to preserve the area.

And because the movement comprises this sort of people, I felt it would be all right for them to use our characters. Believe me, if they were a bunch of ecology fascists, we'd quit helping them.

So this is an example of how I now try to interact with people; not on the basis of whether they are correct or not, but whether they are good people or not. Of course, as a result, my world has been getting smaller and smaller. [*laughs*]

An environmental problem solved by cleaning the neighboring river

—*Can you comment on what about Japan angered you so much before you started to draw* Nausicaä*?*

Miyazaki: I personally feel so much better now; I'm long past the stage of feeling that Japan got what it deserved after the economic bubble burst. None of the big problems have been solved, of course, but now the walls have come down and the outside world's coming in. People moan about a shortage of domestically produced rice, but it's really nothing. It's not as though we're starving to death. I've actually been more amazed by our economic power.

—*You mean that we can buy whatever we want today?*

Miyazaki: Well, if we'd had a shortage of rice around 1945, it would've been a huge problem, but today the main issue is people complaining about rice imported from Thailand not tasting as good and so forth, so I think we've got enormous underlying strengths now. At the same time, it makes me realize how hard it is for countries in the world that don't have much economic power …

At the risk of being misunderstood, let me say that I'm getting sick of hearing everyone arguing about the state of Japanese agriculture. I happen to know a farmer who continues to grow rice organically, without using pesticides, and I decided to sign a contract with him to grow rice for us, even if we have to pay more money for it when there is a poor

harvest. That solved the agricultural problems for my family. [*laughs*]

Of course, this doesn't provide any sort of solution in the larger sense; I can understand the anger behind sensational statements like, "Japan's agricultural industry has lost!" but I'm frankly just as sick of hearing that as I am of hearing people say, "The Japanese film industry has been ruined!" It seems to me that people are missing the point. We're not talking here about issues where words like "winning" or "losing" really apply. I just get more and more irritated when I hear people going on and on about agricultural problems, or this or that aspect of the nation's Agricultural Cooperatives. My position isn't a popular one, but I say we'd be better off solving far more personal problems. I would, of course, think differently if there really were a danger of people starving to death …

I find that I can only deal with these sorts of issues on a local level. In terms of the environment, some people in the area where I live have been trying to clean up the local river, so when I have the time, I help out, and I think that sort of contribution ought to be okay. Now, I'm just talking about picking up plastic bags people have thrown away, and that sort of thing, so I'm fully aware that it doesn't yield any fundamental solution to our problems.

What I'm trying to say here is that if we're mainly confining ourselves to big-picture, general statements about things, there's simply too much beyond our control. One reason we humans have so many problems, I'm convinced, is precisely because there is this huge disjunction between the world of generalized statements and the world of specifics, or details. But humans can be perfectly satisfied by working with the details. It's an idea that I recently find very appealing.

If you only think of problems from the big-picture level—as if looking down from a mountain or an airplane—they may seem to be truly unsolvable. But if you get closer to the

ground, you may see a path to solve them that proceeds fifty meters or so. It may look like an appealing road, and if the weather's good and the sun's out you may feel energized and able to make it down the road. The point that intrigues me here is that by merely changing your perspective your thoughts on an issue may change as well.

So for me, rather than pontificating from a lectern at some symposium or lecture, I'd rather be engaged in the sort of activities I've mentioned. I'm going to keep irresponsibly saying whatever I want, and for those determined to keep driving and spewing out pollution, and those who insist on driving until everyone else quits, or are determined to be the last drivers on the roads, well, they really ought to raise the price of gasoline to three hundred yen a liter. [*laughs*]

—If they do that, the number of cars would really drop, wouldn't it?

Miyazaki: Yes, and I get really upset when I hear people say that we should stimulate the Japanese economy by reducing the price of gasoline. People who are determined at all costs to drive cars should drive them. But the idea that everyone should drive a car doesn't represent human progress or contribute to equality at all.

In many areas today, mass popularization has become a bit of a problem. To give you an example, when I look at an old photograph of a zeppelin airship, it makes me realize how much I would have loved to have flown in one. But if I think about it objectively, because I'm presumably a bona fide member of the ordinary masses, I also know that during the actual age of zeppelins my kind of people probably couldn't have ever bought a ticket. Yet that doesn't mean I think we ought to go out and create an age where everyone can ride in a zeppelin.

At Studio Ghibli, we're thinking of installing sod on the roof of the building and planting grass this year. Doing so won't solve any of the world's problems, but it feels better

than just getting angry, and I'm told that it may reduce our heating and air conditioning bills. Of course, lots of people would say it won't solve anything at all, and they may well be right, but it's at least something we can do, so I just want to try it.

I know a cameraman who started a movement to bring children who had been exposed to radiation at Chernobyl to Japan for treatment. Simply bringing them to Japan for a month or so and giving them nutritious food, among other things, apparently makes them much healthier. Some kids who've stopped growing apparently even start growing again.

Now, the cameraman I'm talking about knows that if the children go back home after a month here, they'll probably revert to their former condition. So he's troubled by the thought that even if he does manage to bring a dozen or so kids to Japan, he won't be able to do anything to help the tens of thousands of others still left behind. At the risk of being misunderstood, though, I think that what he is doing is fine, because he is doing what he is capable of doing, and that's really all we can do. Now, some people might say that if one of the kids goes back and dies it would negate the meaning of what the man is doing, but I would say no. If that were to happen, I think everything would revolve around what that particular child felt. But anything you can say about this personal level of activism can potentially be terribly misunderstood. It's a difficult problem. If you try to form an opinion about something like this based purely on results, everything becomes very problematic. If I say that the moment we are living in is the most important, then I could be misinterpreted as advocating merely living for the moment in an irresponsible way, so that becomes difficult, too. Everything becomes difficult when you put it in words.

—Words are easy to interpret in different ways, aren't they? No matter what you say, people can find fault with it.

Miyazaki: There are a lot of things I simply can't put into words. To give you an example of how hard it is, if I say that all one needs to do is to clean up a river, then plenty of people will immediately brand me as someone with the government-approved Eco Mark.

—It sounds like a bit of a sore point for you.

Miyazaki: It is. Because I really don't want to say anything about this sort of thing. It'd be much easier just to shut up. It's much easier for me to just do things like this as part of being a good neighbor.

I've decided to accept what I don't understand as unknowns

—After you finished the Nausicaä *film but were still serializing the manga story, you managed to create animated features like* Castle in the Sky, My Neighbor Totoro, Kiki's Delivery Service, *and* Porco Rosso. *These are all quite different from* Nausicaä, *aren't they?*

Miyazaki: I actually feel as though working on *Nausicaä* may have made it possible for me to create those films. Of all of these works, *Nausicaä* weighed the heaviest on my shoulders. Going back to the world of *Nausicaä* after stopping work on it was so difficult that I found myself not wanting to. In fact, although I was obviously writing it while living in the real world, working on *Nausicaä* made it difficult to reintegrate into society.

—You mean that you find yourself becoming more and more withdrawn?

Miyazaki: Yes. When I'm working on a film production, everything's chaotic, as you can imagine. There are lots and lots of truly stupid, ordinary things that I have to deal with. I find myself living in a truly crude world, thinking, "Hey, why's that guy loafing?" or, "Why doesn't he hurry up and get married and settle down?" [*laughs*] And I find myself trying to work, whether the theaters showing our films are jammed with crowds or not.

After my work on the films ended, and I was feeling dazed and wanted to take a break, I always had the *Nausicaä* manga waiting for me. This is what I really hated. I would usually spend about six months doing everything to avoid *Nausicaä*, and then, finally, because I had no other choice, eventually start working on it again. So to tell you the truth, as I mentioned earlier, it was almost as if I'd been creating films just to avoid *Nausicaä.*

I won't go so far as to say that because I had something as heavy as *Nausicaä* to work on, I deliberately created lighter works. I do think, however, that if I hadn't had *Nausicaä* to work on I probably would have been floundering about, trying to incorporate somewhat more serious elements into the films. Of course, I can only say this in hindsight; at the time I didn't feel this way, and just made such films because I thought it was the right thing to do.

I didn't set out intending to make a work like *Nausicaä*, so I doubt if I'll ever make anything like it again.

—What's on the horizon, now that you've finished serializing the Nausicaä *manga?*

Miyazaki: Having ended *Nausicaä* doesn't mean that everything has ended or come to a conclusion. Things will continue, but we've come to the point where we all probably know how things will turn out. In other words, I ended the story at the same point as we are now, at the starting point of an incomprehensible world.

We can expect all sorts of ridiculous things to occur in the future, and people will make all sorts of efforts to overcome them. In *Nausicaä*, when it became clear that humans were destined to repeat the same things over and over, I finally tried to resolve the story.

While creating the story, I realized that the role of Nausicaä herself was not to become an actual leader or even a guide for her people. Rather, it was to act as a type of *miko*, a shaman-

maiden who works at a Shinto shrine. But I agonized over this. Since it is not Nausicaä but the people who believe in her who move things along, from the perspective of traditional storytelling the story structure may not seem very logical.

Right now the story is supposed to be complete, but I still need to address a lot of issues, including those I have raised in this interview, before we put out the final paperback in the manga series. Still, I intend to end the story at this point, leaving what I don't understand as unknowns.

If I don't wrap things up now, this work—that I started back in my forties—will never, ever end, and I'll never be able to peacefully transition into my old age. And to be quite frank, the moment I actually decided to finish the serialization, I already felt as though I had turned into a real wrinkled old geezer.

That stated, my work has by no means ended. And I'm really in a bind, because as a result I don't truly feel liberated either. I wish I could say that I've just had a heavy load lifted from my shoulders. I thought life would be easier, but that isn't the case. I thought that not having to continue the story anymore would make things easier for me, but instead what has happened is simply that the second-most difficult work I have has just moved up in rank, replacing *Nausicaä* as the most difficult work. [*laughs*]

—So the one thing that's become clear is that lots of issues have piled up.

Miyazaki: That's right. And that's something that Nausicaä knows better than anyone.

Panda in Process

LD Box *Panda! Go Panda!,* Shōgakukan; distributor: Pony Canyon, August 19, 1994;
first edition: LP drama edition released by King Records, 1982

This work brings back memories. It's the rare work that gave me a warm feeling while I wrote it, while I animated it, and while I watched it.

We wrote the proposal in one night and heard nothing for a few months after submitting it. When I heard on the radio news that pandas were arriving from China, I was sure it would be approved. Just as I thought, the project was immediately set to go. In that respect this work rode the wave of the panda boom. As for me, when I read the wording of the proposal that Isao Takahata-san had quickly written up, I felt my heart swell in anticipation—I could create a wonderful world. The excitement remained without dissipating; I had no compunction about exploiting the panda boom.

I saw the film again the other day and thought I could have made it better had I had a bit more time. I do recall that the scene-setting for the story went smoothly even though we didn't have any preparation time.

The landscape of the cherry tree–lined streets, the garden where cosmos flowers bloom, and the quiet suburb where cars rarely pass by are from the Kandagawa of my childhood, a town by the river that was later sung about as a polluted waterway. Naturally, the world realized in the film was not the reality of those days. All of Japan was far poorer than it is now; adults and children lived burdened with difficulties and hardships different from those we experience today. Or perhaps not that different. Since then, we Japanese have worked hard to escape poverty and have become incomparably wealthy in material terms. Many people now realize that at the same time we have also lost much.

The world depicted in *Panda! Go Panda!* is not a product of nostalgia for those of us who worked on it. The work is an effort to depict, at least in animated film, Japan as it might have become, the landscape showing streets that should have been, the scenery that even now has the potential to appear the way we depicted it. This vision of Japan remains a meaningful challenge facing us even now.

Panda! Go Panda! Creator's Message

This Is Animation: *Panda! Go Panda! Rainy Day Circus*, Shōgakukan, September 1, 1994

Panda! Go Panda! is a film from some twenty years ago, but for us (Isao Takahata-san, Yasuo Ōtsuka-san, Kōichi Kotabe-san, and myself) this film remains very meaningful.

At the time it was thought that children liked flashy, noisy films. But we thought that fun and excitement are best found in the small moments of everyday life. We made *Panda! Go Panda!* in the hope it would be something children would fully enjoy.

When the film was released, I went to the movie theater with my son and niece. It was shown with a Godzilla movie and it wasn't very long. But the children who came to watch it enjoyed it immensely. At the end they sang along with the theme song. I was thrilled. I recall feeling very happy at the sight of those children. And I think it was because of the support of those children that I decided on the kind of work I'd do from then on.

By the way, Panda is a very big-hearted, easygoing character. He makes those around him happy just by being there, without doing anything in particular. In that respect Totoro and Panda are similar for me. I think films that children feel are thoroughly fun can make people of all ages happy.

The Pictures Are Already Moving Inside My Head

Atarashii gazō gaido: suisai (A New Guide to Art Materials: Watercolors), Bijutsu Shuppansha, September 1, 1994

Miyazaki-san has published a new illustrated book. It is titled *Mononokehime*, or *Princess Mononoke.* An adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast*, it resets the work in Japan, telling the story from the perspective of a young girl. Estranged from her father, she is married off to a *mononoke*, or vengeful specter, and then tries to free her father from evil spirits. The book is in reality a collection of artistic impressions or "image boards" that Miyazaki-san did for a presentation in 1980. Long shelved, the film project finally got off the ground, and the book has thus been published in anticipation of the film.

Miyazaki-san uses transparent watercolors to draw his image boards, and he has reportedly been working in that medium for nearly thirty years. The main advantage of transparent watercolors, he says, is that they are simple and easy to use. All you essentially need, after all, is a palette and a brush washer.

"Once I put the watercolors onto the palette, I can keep using them forever. All I have to do is dissolve them with some water and then use them to paint. The transparent watercolors I buy last a long time and can actually be used for years, so they must be one of the least expensive art supplies in the world." [*laughs*]

Miyazaki-san is not trying to create permanent art when he uses transparent water colors for his image boards. This is because the boards only represent a type of preparatory work to create the look of a film.

"First of all, I create them to show the production staff what sort of setting I want the story to have. Of course, I also paint them because I need to know, too. Once we know what we want, there isn't much need for them, so as we go forward in

the production and things become clearer, I tend to make fewer and fewer image boards."

This is the reason that Miyazaki-san doesn't worry at all about what sort of brushes or paper to use. He just goes over to the section of the studio where they are drawing backgrounds for the film, grabs whatever paper they have there, and then borrows some worn-out old brushes from the finishing section.

"At the studio we're always overwhelmed by deadlines, so the idea is not to spend an infinite amount of time creating these things, but to do them as quickly as possible. It's a totally different approach than most people use when painting with transparent watercolors. In what is completely my own style of doing things, I first draw in pencil, and then quickly trace over that with watercolor, all the while trying to render as many images as possible, with as little effort as possible [*laughs*], as fast as possible."

Transparent watercolors are perfectly suited for applying on top of pencil or pen lines because they do not destroy the lines. Miyazaki-san uses watercolors by Holbein. He bought a twenty-four-color pack, and then added five or six more colors.

"A good watercolor painting is not determined by the number of paint colors you have. I once bought a really big palette, but then I always got lost trying to figure out where each color was. After using the same palette for over ten years, with each color always in the same place, my hand now goes to the right color without even thinking about it."

Since Miyazaki-san doesn't need a big palette, when he takes a sketching trip, all he needs to do is take a Holbein palette with him. It takes time to draw, so he often just relies on his memory of what he has seen while walking around, of the cityscape, the architecture, and the layouts of houses. One thing he is dissatisfied with is the fact that the colors he uses often do not match the colors found in Japanese nature. When

he went to Europe, he noticed that Holbein colors harmonize better with the colors of the scenery there.

"The brown color that Japanese elementary school children have in their watercolor boxes is the color of Japanese *akamatsu*, or red pine. But that brown doesn't exist today, at least not in the environment around me. It is still included in the paints, but I think they should stop including it. They should instead include colors that match the surface colors we're familiar with. With about eighteen colors, including adequately darkened earth colors and tree texture colors, I think you could probably recreate the colors of a typical grove of mixed trees in Japan. Not with the artificial greens and yellows that we have now."

Miyazaki-san himself almost always mixes his watercolor paints. And he pays particular attention to skin colors.

"With watercolors, once you apply them, there's no way to make corrections, so I use really diluted colors on first brush, and then while painting other areas, if I notice something is too faint, I'll go back and apply more paint. If I make a mistake I apply white and paint over it, but that totally changes the color, so that when we go to the printer I'm always in a state of despair."

The image boards Miyazaki-san drew for *Princess Mononoke* over a dozen years ago—that are now on view for the first time in this large-format book—were created in less than a month, mainly from information and images stored in his head. When creating the images, Miyazaki-san didn't go back and refer to any reference materials he might have. Apparently, when going on location scouting during the actual film production, Miyazaki-san wants to reconfirm what he has in mind and to decide how much liberty he is going to take to fake, or depict, the scenes that he wants. It is the details of daily life—whether the positions of rural village samurai houses in the feudal period or their construction—that attract his attention and make his works come alive.

Narrative picture scrolls are an example. “In narrative picture scrolls of the twelfth century, when artists drew members of the nobility or anyone else walking, they drew them all the same size. The artists viewed them all, in other words, from the same distance. But drawing things from this perspective is really quite rare in the world. And I think some snippets of this sensibility must live on among us today.”

While doing background research for *Princess Mononoke*, Miyazaki-san wanted to pay particular attention to the details of people’s lives. But when actually making the animated film, the results can be quite different from what was first intended with the image boards.

“At some point, whatever I’m thinking of in my cerebral cortex or my frontal lobes is no longer useful. Then something I’ve been thinking of further back in my brain, something that’s been held at bay in my subconscious mind, comes forth, and if I don’t go with it I wind up with an overly logical film. It becomes boring, for example, to have a lord possessed by an evil spirit turn into an evil person. It becomes much more interesting to depict him as an attractive, appealing person.”

In that regard, Miyazaki-san has been inspired by evil characters in Victorian-age novels.

“The evil characters that appear in them are truly dashing. They are lighthearted, generous, and good-looking—the epitome of cool everyone idealizes in our modern society. I’m frankly so sick of stories where the most negative characters appear with scary faces, so sick of them that they don’t do anything for me anymore. It also becomes too easy to do away with them. But if you turn them into characters that aren’t so easy to get rid of, then you can pose the interesting question of what would happen, for example, between this young woman and her betrothed’s *mononoke* or spirit. I don’t have an answer for this question yet, but I’m pretty sure it’s worth making a film about.”

Miyazaki-san says that, “Animation is forever unskilled labor.” What he means is that, unlike skilled artisans carefully and slowly crafting works that live up to their sense of aesthetics and standards, animators must always work as hard as they can (within the limits given them) to create a commercial product. Right now, and leading up to the start of production in the fall of 1994, Miyazaki-san’s brain will be in a whirl, busily planning *Princess Mononoke.*

Earth's Environment as Metaphor

Interviewers: Tetsuji Yamamoto, Jun'ichi Takahashi
iichiko No. 33, No. 34, Japan Belier Art Center, October 20, 1994; January 20, 1995 issues

Jun'ichi **Takahashi:** born 1950; professor, Waseda University; author of *Sensō to Bōryoku no Keifugaku* (*Genealogy of War and Violence*), etc.

Tetsuji Yamamoto: born 1948; former professor, Shinshū University; author of *Michel Foucault no Shikou Taikei* (*Michel Foucault's Systems of Thought*), etc.

Life forms and ohmu

Yamamoto: Our subject for this issue is cultural studies of earth's environment—in this discussion we will consider the earth's environment from the point of view of culture. Recently, Miyazaki-san finished drawing *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind.* Reading it, I was moved to tears. This makes me want to ask Miyazaki-san about his views on the environment. People find it very difficult to understand environmental problems from discussions about the ways in which the environment is being destroyed or the fact that the earth is facing these sorts of changes. But when these issues are depicted as in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, they are forced to think about them in a symbolic manner. I am now urging my students to read *Nausicaä* because by reading it we are made to think and feel much more deeply than we do when we listen to what scholars say. I think we can approach these problems with real faithfulness to the issues from this vantage point.

What I want to ask right off is about the *ohmu.* I was extremely moved by them. What are *ohmu*, where did you come across their existence, and what are you expressing in the form of the *ohmu?* Could you speak about these points?

Miyazaki: I don't recall those aspects as it was over ten years ago when I started drawing the story. What I can say is that in my childhood I found Tarzan movies thrilling. When Tarzan called out "Aaaaaayaaaaahaaaaah!" a whole herd of

elephants would come to him. Actually they were Asian elephants and not African elephants, but from that image I felt as though Tarzan had the strongest creatures in the entire world at his beck and call—and I was filled with longing. I think we were all like that. When I became an elementary school pupil, I learned that elephants can be killed by machine guns and I recall being very dejected. I had assumed that machine gun bullets would bounce off elephants. In popular culture this attraction toward the strongest being appears repeatedly, even though it may change form. In the work *Shōnen Keniya* (Kenya Boy) by Sōji Yamakawa, a snake named Dana appears. I don't know why, but it just slowly slithers out. And I was relieved when it did.

Related to that, there was a film called *The NeverEnding Story.* It was somewhat changed from the original story. A dragon appears and has a very obvious face. You can tell what it is thinking from its face. This was totally uninteresting. For us something is far more likely to become an object of our longing when we don't know what it is thinking. The more we humans anthropomorphize something and make it an easy target for empathy, the less interesting it becomes. From the beginning we seem to have a longing for a presence or a power that is far greater than ourselves and not easily understood, a presence beyond our current framework or whose origins are prehistoric. This longing isn't unique to me, but rather is what we all feel, a memory repeated over and over from our ancestors. When I think of myself and the way I think of nature, I seem to want to comprehend it in such a way. I don't know why, but nature exists as an incredible force, as something huge, far exceeding our own little good or evil ways. This is the view of nature that we have.

Watching *The NeverEnding Story*, I feel the filmmaker's perspective is not the same as mine. It's uninteresting, like the dragon. There's also a tortoise that has a face like a drunkard's. Had its eyes been depicted as unfathomable holes, I would have been moved when the huge creature crawls out of the

rock. But when I saw the face that appeared, looking like a drunken Disneyland doll, my thought was that the filmmaker's view of nature was so stunted I couldn't take it. It made me lose interest in watching the film.

Takahashi: It seems to me that among Europeans, or in European culture, the idea of nature untouched by human hands is unthinkable. They can't even conceive of raw nature.

Miyazaki: I don't know if that is true of all of Europe. If you go to Ireland, it may not be that way. But what comes to mind when we think of European-style nature is the Tyrol region. I don't like it at all. Let's keep this a forest, let's make this farmland, let's have people live here, let's build roads here. They've made it exactly as planned. When I went there, it was so boring. Walking there was absolutely uninteresting.

Yamamoto: Do those thoughts relate to the form of the *ohmu?*

Miyazaki: I think anyone who collected insects as a child had the experience of looking at the bumps on a cicada's head and wondering why its shape is so interesting. They have three simple eyes—small red spots. They look practically like jewels. The wonder one experiences in that moment is extraordinary. And the amazing colors of the dragonflies like the large *oniyanma* and the yellowish *ginyanma.* These are among the first awesome things children encounter. Looking at the larvae of beetles or the curve of the back of a crayfish, or the spaceshiplike shape of an ant, we feel like we've peeked into some of the secrets of the world. When I was in elementary school and learned from my teacher that spiders have eight eyes, I was so shocked that my world seemed to crumble. I wondered, "How can they see with so many eyes?" I made the *ohmu* from a collection of all these experiences.

When I want to have a huge creature appear that represents the birth of another ecosystem, the world in which reptiles and mammals live doesn't work because it is too familiar to us. Technically as well, no matter how we change the form of

reptiles or mammals, it is just a collection of familiar parts. It seemed to me that combining insects and arthropods could more easily result in creatures we have no way of recognizing. I wanted this form to resist empathy. There are many people who don't like bugs, so I thought bugs were just right to express a contrasting ecosystem. I also wanted to use the term "writhing." A friend of mine borrowed a prewar book full of censored words. It was by Rampo Edogawa, but there were so many blanked-out words that I couldn't tell what was going on in the story. The term writhing seemed awfully full of squirming, so it stayed in my mind. The origin of the word *ohmu* is a mixture of the words for the king's worm, the sandworm from *Dune*, and Daijirō Morohoshi's Buddhist term "ohm." It is written with the character for king, and because it has many legs the second character consists of three bugs. The rest was how to show it as a large bug. I considered many forms, wondering, "What will this guy look like when he becomes an adult?"

Takahashi: Are *ohmu* forever in larval form?

Miyazaki: I thought of various ways to treat them, even wondering if one day they might all suddenly become adults. But I thought that would push me into a trap of my own making, so I didn't pursue it for this story. I thought it more fitting to think of *ohmu* as beings whose lives end in the larval form.

The forest and the Sea of Decay

Yamamoto: A new world opens up with the *ohmu* going into the Sea of Decay. What is the condition under which fungi and bacteria, which are a cross between plants and animals, overrun the area? Is the image one of the environment decaying with mold?

Miyazaki: No, the term "Sea of Decay," a rotted sea, comes from a place that exists at the base of the Crimean Peninsula. It's called Sivash where the sea has ebbed away and become a marshland. Apparently they also call this area the Sea of

Decay. When I first read this term it made a strong impression on me. Mold suggests rot to humans. Just as the term Sea of Decay exists, if an area is surrounded by a black forest as overpowering as the sea, the term Sea of Decay would fit well. I wavered until the end over using the character for world instead of sea, but I decided on sea, thinking either would work fine. I took this term from the area called Sivash which actually exists in Crimea.

Takahashi: The image of the Sea of Decay is overwhelming. It was a shock to me to have the vague image we have of nature overturned. I wondered what brought about your depiction of nature with this evil image.

Miyazaki: At the end of *Macbeth* there is a scene of the forest moving. Macbeth has been told that as long as the forest doesn't move, he will prevail, but in the end the forest moves. When I first heard the phrase "the forest moves" as a child, it sent shivers down my spine. I have long thought, "It's all right if the forest moves. It's all right to make a film like that." I thought, "If trees had the power to curse people, human beings would have been killed off by their curses a long time ago." With that idea in mind, I thought it would be interesting to overturn the concept of defenseless plants always being destroyed and instead create a forest that was on the offensive. In other words, isn't it the height of arrogance to keep showing nature as needing protection to keep from disappearing? This is what I don't care for. Everyone depicts nature as being charming. But it is something more fearsome. That is why I think there is something missing in our current view of nature. Even now, when we are in a forest, it is silent and quite frightening. There are paths that feel scary to all who walk them. Near the mountain cabin I often go to there is a road that feels creepy when I walk along it. I have asked the locals, "Did something happen on that road?" They answer, "No, that place just feels scary." I agree with the slogan, "Nature is wonderful, nature is precious, we must protect nature," but I want to think that it is only one part of the world we have. For

the time being this is the case, but I feel we cannot forget that within our historic memory there was a period when the forest was overwhelmingly powerful. This is why a forest on the attack can exist.

Yamamoto: Deep in the Sea of Decay is a pure place that doesn't require a breathing mask. And the old lady says, "We shouldn't intentionally stop the encroachment of the Sea of Decay; it's best to leave it to what will be." Industrialized society is convinced that if it can subjugate nature it can win. What prompted you to think that this was not right and perceive that there is something pure in the depths of that which is polluted?

Miyazaki: When we try to live in that kind of world, that is the conclusion we are forced to reach. C. W. Nichol[70] saw the film version and was very moved. When he asked me, "At the end there were buds sprouting; are you going to send a group of pioneers there?" I thought, "This fellow hasn't changed at all. He's just going to repeat the same thing." I wanted to explain that my point of view was different, but it was too much of a bother, so I didn't. What I did wasn't in any way logical or articulate, but I did it because it matched the way I felt. I didn't start drawing the story having composed its world, didn't think from the start that the Sea of Decay was pure at its core.

Takahashi: That scene is very memorable for Nausicaä as well. She lies down and says, "Now, for the first time I understand the meaning of the Sea of Decay." That scene made a deep impression on me.

Miyazaki: I realized after I drew the manga that I had been drawing something truly fantastic. While I was drawing the manga, I usually didn't think about it much because I was just going with the flow of the story. Realizing what I had done later, I made the scene with the Sea of Decay a key element in the film, but while drawing the manga it was no more than if I had made a cast-off comment like, "What a beautiful sky." In

other words, I was dealing with material that would have collapsed if I had treated it in a logical way, so I had to go along with my feelings. I worked on it thinking, "This is more convincing to me," and then, afterward, thinking about what I had done, I would try and justify it in the context of the story. This happened quite often.

Yamamoto: I think, to the contrary, that the scene shows a strong sense of logic. An alternate value is set up and a world harmonious to it naturally appears, out of necessity. The European world pushes off and eliminates oppositional existence, but Miyazaki-san, your Asian logic sets up a structure that moves us. You say it's all accidental, but the very fact that this "event" is created by intuitive logic and the possibilities it creates are interesting. In addition, at first Nausicaä rides on her *mehve* using an engin, but later she rides the wind. While first she used heteronomous energy, later she uses nature's autonomous energy, the wind. To my way of thinking, this is a logical metaphor for moving beyond industrial society, making it very interesting for me. I also thought that the image of machinery, or technology, that Miyazaki-san created in *Nausicaä*, was very interesting.

The image of technology

Takahashi: I also like *Nausicaä*, but my favorite is *Castle in the Sky.* I think the images of machinery in it are especially excellent. I have a very simple concern: is the world of *Castle in the Sky* the past or is it the near future? This is a real puzzle to me.

Miyazaki: I made it seem like science fiction written a long time ago. I wrote it as science fiction written in the days of steam engines. That is why I didn't think trees would wither outside the earth's atmosphere; in those days they wouldn't have considered that trees would wither there, either. So I went full force with the last scene, thinking, "This is all right." It's best to think of it as a work of science fiction written at the end of the nineteenth century.

Yamamoto: Huge robots protected small flowers and eggs in Laputa.

Miyazaki: My view of machinery is a complete illusion. As I ride in my run-down car under the hot sun, I think, "Hell, it's hot." All the while I'm amazed: "In this heat the engine still works so well. How can it be so self-sacrificing, so devoted?" Humans make machines as extensions of their own hands, but at the same time we make something that will give us unlimited devotion. It's too simplistic to consider them living beings, but I feel that we are making things that could be prototypes for living creatures. This means what is most noble in people's hearts—devotion, self-sacrifice, things that aren't so popular these days—is extremely simple. These machines are not born from something complex, but rather they consist of something much closer to the prototype, like a stone or other object has in this world. Music is the same. People have been giving form to what exists in space. People have merely turned into music the radio waves and vibrations that the stars and wind possess and continue to emit even when there is no one to hear them.

When I write this sort of thing, I think, "Music exists." I don't like to think that machinery keeps developing in one direction, endlessly becoming more complex. If I consider that machines can regress or turn back, then it might be possible for a spirit to dwell in machines. I like the guy who keeps riding an old motorcycle as he fixes it up because he relates to his machine with deep affection. I dislike someone who flips through a catalogue, says, "This is cool," and buys a new one to replace the old. Isn't he missing something important? I don't like guys who trade in their cars every two years for a new one. I prefer people who detect a kind of animistic power in the marvel of machines.

Yamamoto: And Laputa is in the shape of a ship. It is shaped like a ship but flies through the air.

Miyazaki: There were many things like that in the nineteenth century. Jules Verne created the most interesting science fiction related to the undersea world. There have been many books written after his, now that we have more knowledge about diving into the sea, but they are all boring. Jules Verne's story of going under the sea overlaps with entering into one's own internal world. The fascination with the sea the story depicts and the idea that the sea hints at a far deeper and richer world full of secrets—this is the wonder Captain Nemo feels. At the same time, the sea shows the depth of his mind and the depth of the entire world itself.

What I find interesting is that when people imagine flying in the sky, they usually don't think of flying in actual paragliders or being hoisted up by light cranes, because these things don't fulfill their psychological yearnings. Instead, over and over again, they seem to imagine something else. This is why even when we are actually flying in the sky, our wish to fly in the sky under our own power exists as a separate desire. It's a fascinating aspect of people's minds.

Further, I think the time will come when we won't be able to fix our air conditioners, there will be no electricity delivered, and we'll be saying, "This is what we used to call a television and it showed video images." It takes two weeks for an air conditioner to be repaired now, and when these things accumulate, I'm sure a time will come when we must face the fact that even if things worked in the past nothing works now. A time will come when maintenance isn't kept up, so that power lines exist but electricity won't be delivered. I dislike it when people insist things will always keep progressing in the same direction that we're moving in now.

Yamamoto: That robot turned into a living *kyoshinhei*, or giant god-soldier, didn't he?

Miyazaki: I struggled with that. Nausicaä was troubled as to what she could do, and so was I. That was a true act of the greatest devotion. It was most self-sacrificing, noble, and pure

—the *kyoshinhei* have the greatest destructive power, but that was what they were made for. Even if we divide them into living and nonliving beings, no matter how devoted they are, you still cannot just treat them any way you like. That's the same logic as not giving a damn about killing and eating a chicken because that is why you raised it. I don't agree with that. I couldn't help but think, "What if that machine or creature really started to speak words?" Then it becomes a problem, doesn't it? Because then it means that we have to question ourselves about everything. So I didn't draw the story with a full understanding of what I was doing. I got into more and more trouble as I went along. But I had to end it, so I did.

Yamamoto: *Kamuiden* (*The Legend of Kamui*) didn't seem to end easily, either.

Miyazaki: No, it didn't. Sanpei Shirato-san reached the point where his materialistic view of history became totally discredited. I've heard that there is a *Legend of Kamui 2*, but I find it hard to believe. There is no way it could continue. The world depicted in that story is untrue. When I read it, I thought, "History as class struggle is a lie, after all." In the real world things are a bit more complex, ambivalent—even if there is a hierarchical class structure, it is full of cracks. That's why people have been able to continue to survive.

Yamamoto: What moved me about *The Legend of Kamui* was the depiction of the people living in the cracks that appear in the principles of materialistic history. The nihilism of the dropout ninja Sanpei Shirato describes doesn't fit into the historical materialist view, so he was forced to write a side-story "history" in *Kamui gaiden.*

Takahashi: Listening to you talk today, Miyazaki-san, I wonder if my way of looking at *Castle in the Sky* was wrong. I had thought *Castle in the Sky*'s main themes were honor, bravery, and devotion, and that these came from the main characters Pazu and Sheeta.

Miyazaki: Well, I think that honor, bravery, and devotion are very important in relations between people. But I'm sure that these qualities are not exclusive to human beings. When I made *Castle in the Sky* this wasn't that clear to me. But now I think that these qualities are an essential element of this world, just as many of the adjectives we use were born from shapes in this world that predate humanity. What I wanted to say was, "Basically there is such a thing as Treasure Island. We don't know what the treasure is, but it exists." I also wanted to say that this treasure has a value different from the economic value implied in the comment, "If I find the treasure, how much will I get?"

Takahashi: I didn't realize that, in the story, the image of devotion could have come from a thing like a robot.

Miyazaki: That's fine with me. I didn't make *Castle in the Sky* with that in mind. I just like things that way. But I ran into trouble because, overall, the island of Laputa had a negative image. In other words, I drew a type of diagram in which everything has a duality. In the end, while it is liberated from duality, Laputa is no longer Laputa, and it is released into the heavens. I drew the diagram in an arbitrary fashion because I don't dislike the schema of drawing a duality and then at the end negating it. But in making a film based on such a schema I would have run the risk of the rug being pulled out from under my own schema.

Yamamoto: In my case, I think of the world of *Castle in the Sky* as the ultimate stage of industrial, technological society; and unable to come down to earth, it drifts off into the skies. When it goes, the machinery breaks down and only the trees are left. In contrast, in *Nausicaä*'s case, I think the idea of struggling to survive on a decaying earth becomes increasingly powerful.

Miyazaki: That's the difference between film and manga. A film lasts only about two hours, limiting us considerably as to how much we can say. We can't deal with a major theme. I

usually feel sick when I read my own manga. When I'm feeling particularly well, I have flashes of thinking it's interesting; when I'm not in good spirits, I'm appalled at what I've drawn … I have a bad habit of drawing manga that are hard to read. That's my contrarian quality coming out. For me, drawing manga isn't just an occupation, so I was determined to make it hard to read. When I started, I wanted to draw a manga that would be impossible for someone to read casually while slurping noodles. So I would become upset with myself whenever I felt it was becoming too easy to read. I would notice that there were fewer panels on the page, or that there were only eight, and then draw eleven panels to make the work even more difficult to read. And when *Nausicaä* came out in paperback books, I did silly things like adding more panels and even pages.

Yamamoto: I first read the manga and then saw the animation. The animation stands alone as a complete as a story, but there's a certain chaotic quality in the manga that is a lot of fun.

Miyazaki: A film has to have an ending. There are those who claim a film can be anything the director wants, or a film should be like this or that. But if you show a paying audience something that seems to say, "The rest is up to you to think about," you're liable to hear people cry, "I've paid my money to have *you* think about it. So *you* come up with an answer." If I were in the audience, I know I'd make the same demand.

Even if a film like *Nausicaä* is criticized for ending like a religious movie or a miracle movie, it still has to conform to the basics of filmmaking and it must follow a logical development. I'm one of those who feel that a film should show some problem being overcome, even if it's a small one. I think, as filmmakers, that it's a type of business ethic we have to maintain. But for manga stories, this sort of business ethic doesn't apply. So the manga version of *Nausicaä* was a kind of penance for me. I stopped drawing the manga four times, thinking, "I'm done with this; I don't want to draw it

anymore." But whenever I finished a film, the publishers would aske me to draw some more of the manga. And I would feel like I could. After about six months I would tell myself, "Okay, I'll draw twenty-four pages a month; at times thirty-six pages." But I would end up drawing sixteen pages, or at times only eight. My productivity was so low. I was battling the knots in my shoulders. When I read other people's manga, I'm so impressed at how good they are. It's true.

Critique of industrial society

Yamamoto: There are many discussions on reevaluating industrial society from philosophical and sociological perspectives. Similar debates arise from *gekiga* and animation, with the resultant formulation of a discourse taken to extremes. Yet I find that the Miyazaki world is far more symbolic and potent.

Miyazaki: Well, I don't know about that. What each of us is asked is difficult to fulfill. It may be all right for us to discuss human society or ideological developments from a bird's-eye view. But when we try to do this at the level of our daily lives, it doesn't work so well. Still, we've come to the point where we should be having these discussions at the level of our daily lives. This is the greatest issue of our time. That's why, when I started drawing *Nausicaä*, I was able to enjoy doing it and debating what sort of conclusion it should have. I wanted an aesthetic conclusion. And I'm sure it was the same for Ōtomo when he was creating *Akira.* Then I entered a period where I realized that human beings would continue to increase in number and continue with their messy and listless ways. One might ask, "Are we just left with religion, then?" but I don't think religion will come as a solution all of a sudden. These days I am acutely curious as to what kind of faces Christ and Shakyamuni had. I've come to the conclusion that they couldn't have been very handsome. Rather, they must have had faces that would make others want to crucify them.

Yamamoto: In issue no. 33 of this magazine, Takeshi Umehara-san[71] states that the world's four greatest spiritual men, including Shakyamuni, Christ, and Confucius, all created human-centered doctrines, and that we must go beyond this way of thinking. The crux of this, he said, is the forest and the philosophy of the forest. Agriculture, particularly wheat growing, has destroyed the forests. Rice-growing agriculture left the forests relatively safe and has been somehow able to maintain a balance with water resources, but it nonetheless has problems of its own, according to Umehara.

Miyazaki: I understand that, but rice-growing areas have high population densities. If we could go back to the stage you're talking about it would be all well and good. In effect, though, agriculture itself was the result of humans facing dire straits. Human beings haven't become wealthy from cultivating crops; they have only become able to increase to greater numbers while avoiding starvation. That is the reality of humans. The book *A Green History of the World: The Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations* by Clive Ponting, deals with this, and I think the birth of this way of thinking indicates a major shift. In terms of considering the history of living beings as part of the earth's history, NHK's special programs *Chikyū dai kikō* (Great Journeys on Earth) and *Seimei* (Life) have had a great impact on mass audiences. We learned from these programs that when oxygen became part of the atmosphere, it was a deadly poison to living beings on earth. We also learned of the results of research on the Burgess Shale Formation and the Copernican revolution. People say that the Cambrian age explosion was a coincidence; that our current form and the fact that we are still here are also coincidental. But if this is to become the basis of our way of thinking as we continue living on earth, what types of thought will emerge from that? The commonly accepted evolutionary theory of the survival of the fittest has had a significant effect on us. But if there are problems with the theory, what would the result be? It could mean great changes

for the twenty-first century. It might turn out that dinosaurs didn't become extinct because they became so large.

Takahashi: Living creatures appear suddenly, and then disappear suddenly, for no obvious reason. This has been repeated many times in the history of living things. The idea that living things have evolved in a linear progression toward a set goal has been discredited. This was shown in the clearest way in the NHK special on *Anomalocaris*, an extinct Cambrian "anomalous shrimp" (NHK Science Special, *Seimei: Yonjūokunen harukana tabi 2* **(**Life: The Long Journey of 4 Billion Years 2).

Miyazaki: The scale models they used were amazing.

Takahashi: I thought that was so Japanese. I don't think the British would have thought of using models like that.

Miyazaki: For a while the words *Hallucigenia* and *Opabinia* were even popular at our studio. I had a big laugh when I saw that *Hallucigenia* was pictured upside down in the book *Wonderful Life* by Stephen Jay Gould.

I don't know what way of thinking will control our response to these issues. Even if the environment is at the mercy of the usual, dull thinking of democracy—which we are forced to deal with—I still think we're facing an incredibly major change. We're facing an age when the world's population will be ten billion. And how are we to relate this to the concrete issues of how we live our daily lives, and what we are to do about old age pressing down on us? We lack that connection between the vast changes we face and our immediate concerns. I don't want to be considered an ecologist, so I puff away on my cigarettes. We think cel animation is better than computer graphics, yet at the same time we face the problem of industrial waste, so we ask whether it makes sense to continue producing films with cels. But we end up leaving things ambivalent.

Yamamoto: I think there is nothing as artificial as the idea of preserving nature. What you depict in your films is a world that transcends this way of thinking.

Miyazaki: Near my house in Tokorozawa there is a dirty river that has been cleaned up a bit since sewers were built. It was a clean stream forty years ago; at its worst it turned milky white and nothing could possibly live there. Then it became a bit cleaner and became a habitat for nonbiting midges. There were so many of these bluish insects that we could have cooked them up as a dish with soy sauce and sugar. Even though their appearance is usually a sign of environmental decay, in this location it was proof that the river had revived somewhat. It had been a place where even midges couldn't survive. For ten years or so there were outbreaks of these nonbiting midges. Then, when the river became even cleaner, the outbreaks stopped. A program for citizens to clean up the river began and I participated in it. A middle-aged woman who participated just once said that it allowed her to physically understand the kind of difficult ideas that eminent scholars write about. She and other participants understood that a specific type of conservation of the river bank wouldn't work, that it wouldn't make the river clean. But then when some sand accumulated, the public works office would smooth it over with a bulldozer; and the riverbed that had stabilized for a habitat for fish would be completely leveled. The participants in the program were angered by this.

There was no question of being leftist or rightist in this movement. When I participated, I felt more pleased by seeing a real crayfish than by some grandiose feeling that I was preserving nature. We were able to become simply happy rather than thinking we were providing aid to protect this or that. We could see that the river was getting closer to what we remembered as children. The last time I went there, an old man was sitting in the river, bathing, and I wondered, "What's he doing when the water isn't that clean yet?" That's about the only thing I'm doing in particular, and it's only about four

times a year, but I think my neighborhood river is better if it's clean rather than dirty and foul smelling. If we do these sorts of things in our own limited way, thinking how wonderful it would be if we could go fishing here, in just an hour of crawling around in the riverbed we can understand what it would take a renowned scholar to tell us in a two-hour lecture. About fifteen of us worked to pull out a motorbike that was buried in the riverbed, cheering each other on, shouting "*Wasshoi, wasshoi!*" so heartily that those who lived nearby probably thought there was a festival going on. I discovered that I love this feeling of satisfaction. I figure that, for the time being, this is fine to have as a routine activity. We tout "protecting nature" as our aim, but the river itself doesn't care whether it has a motorbike buried in it or not. Creating a cleaner river is merely our goal, so it is no doubt meaningless in terms of the overall environmental index. We were excited to see fish again, but those fish are no doubt suffering from asthma or atopic dermatitis.

Even so, let's give the program credit for now. In the past I didn't greet people I saw on the street, but now when I see members of the river-cleaning group we acknowledge each other. At a very basic level, I feel more at ease in my surroundings, and think, hey, I've come to belong here. I have no idea how this relates to difficult environmental issues, but I've decided to live this way on a daily basis. I won't become one of the leaders of such a movement, but at this level it's not about the politics of the Liberal Democratic Party. Talking with the LDP's city assemblyman while picking up empty cans and putting them into bags, we did manage to agree in a very simple way that it's better that the river is clean. He was probably thinking, "It's good if this also helps me in the next election." And recently, I've come to think that's fine with me.

Yamamoto: Why do you always have girls as your main characters?

Miyazaki: It's not from any logical thinking. It just seems to me that when you compare a boy doing something with a

girl doing that same thing, the girl is much more spirited. If a boy is walking with long strides I think nothing of it, but if a girl is walking boldly, I think she looks so full of vitality. That's because I'm a man; women might think a boy striding along looks cool. At first I thought, "It's no longer a man's world; no longer an age when just causes are relevant." But after ten years, it seems silly to keep saying that. So now, when people ask me your question, I just respond, "Because I like girls." That answer seems more real.

Takahashi: You focus on girls, but listening to you talk, you also give a lot of attention to children in general.

Miyazaki: With actual children I'm the type who hits it off with those I really like but can't connect with those I don't hit it off with right away. My friends' children come by, and those I get along with right from the start I become friends with. Other times it's hopeless, as when a baby bawls upon meeting me. So I've stopped thinking that all children are cute. There are those I just don't get along with. I tell my friends, "Unfortunately, it looks like I just can't get along with your kid." This may be a cliché, but I think young children can get used to anything. They gradually become more boring. Three-year-olds are more fun than five-year-olds. When you compare five-year-olds and schoolchildren, the older ones become more complex but in contrast they become easier to understand. What the world has given them is swapped for what people give them. I used to think I wanted grandchildren, but nowadays I don't really care. I think it's fine as long as I can relate to young children all the time. After all, children pass through that stage and keep growing. Our work remains the same; children keep passing through, but there are always new children to encounter. That, at least, is how I have come to think of things.

Yamamoto: Nausicaä takes the passive stance of initially not wanting to do anything, doesn't she? If it were a boy, it seems to me that he would have done something, but a girl

wouldn't have. And yet Nausicaä is eventually forced to join in the struggle.

Miyazaki: I hadn't realized that. I only became aware of that as I worked on the story … I thought initially I was drawing the story without knowing what she was trying to do. She wanted to avoid the tragedy that she saw in front of her, and she initially only tried to alleviate the symptoms in a haphazard manner. She doesn't think she can prevent the core problems. She takes action to try to see what is about to happen. So she does stop being passive. It was only much later that I became conscious of this.

Making movies for children

Takahashi: I mentioned the existence of a pure world at the bottom of the Sea of Decay. I don't know if this relates, but Nausicaä raises plants from the Sea of Decay in her own room. I thought that the adults in the story would probably never have come up with this concept. I thought that the existence of a pure world at the bottom of the Sea of Decay was paired up with raising those plants in the human world. To me it seems that we can see the meaning of Nausicaä by inverting the concepts of clean and dirty, good and evil.

Miyazaki: As for me, that didn't occur to me until I got to that panel. I hadn't thought at the start what the inside of the castle, with Nausicaä's secret room, would even look like. When I was wondering, "Where would Nausicaä be at this particular point in time?" I found she was in that room. I only realized this afterward. I added my own sense of logic to the story later, by questioning whether something was really possible, or whether specific characters might really have existed. It's a lot like making a film. You can make a film up to a certain point using logic. In the preproduction planning stage you think in a logical manner that if we do it this way, we can make it. Or you put it together thinking, if we do such and such we can bring it to an end.

However, when you enter into the actual production process, it all becomes unfathomable and you feel like you can't proceed. You can no longer rely on the part that was made with logic, the part I call made by the cerebral cortex. It becomes useless. The film can't be completed unless you think with your subconscious. That is why you must become desperate. When you are faced with real hardship, convinced that your plans are no good, your subconscious mind thinks for you and lo and behold an answer comes. When the answer comes in that form, I really feel like I'm creating a film. That's when I know I have the right answer.

I think my films are not inside my head, but are in a space above my head. The films already exist. It sounds impressive when I say I'm being creative, but that's not what's really going on. There is only a single best solution given the combination of my present abilities and the objective conditions in which I am placed. Once I decide on a method for the production and a direction, although there are many ways of determining the direction, there is only one way to proceed each time. My work consists of nothing more than discovering how I can get as close to that direction as possible. The film tries to become a film. The filmmaker just becomes a slave to the film. The relationship is not one of me creating the film, but rather of the film forcing me to create it.

Yamamoto: A narrative that emphasizes causality and continuity lets us see the next steps in the plot but doesn't necessarily move us emotionally. But with *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, even when there are discontinuities in the story line and we are pointed to things whose presence is not resolved, we are nonetheless moved. We are moved by a world of discontinuity that causes us to make great leaps in thought.

Miyazaki: Our brains seem at first glance to be logical, but the structure of our brains is not. That is why I believe that the most important thing is our intuition. When we're asleep this is what does our thinking for us. There may be a certain way to do things according to logic, but as filmmakers we can take

things anyway we want. There is nothing that says that we have to do things in a specific way. We can choose anything we want. With freedom to choose anything, we just have to choose what we think is best. Working as a film director I recognize the truth of the old Japanese adage: "Logic and plaster salve can stick to anything." We can eloquently argue why we should do it this or that way. Then, we decide that we're convinced we should do it a particular way. Yet we might just as well argue for a different method, saying that it would be better after all.

Yamamoto: What made you come up with Totoro?

Miyazaki: I didn't want Totoro to be a bear or a *tanuki* raccoon dog. But this was really just a vague idea. While I was making the film, I couldn't figure it out, so I became anxious. What I was sure about was that the creature's face should be inscrutable; it should be hard to know what it was thinking. I wasn't able to understand the effect of this when I was making the film and I didn't know what I had done until at least six months after the film was completed. I had no idea that the audience would react as it did.

Takahashi: My daughter was four years old when the film came out and her whole nursery school went to see the movie. I was free that day so I went along as a parent volunteer to help the teachers deal with fifty children. They were ages three to six, and I could tell that the children were really responding to the scenes as the film progressed. When the cat bus appeared, they yelled in excitement. The children's response was so vivid I was surprised. And I was swept along by their excitement.

Miyazaki: When two or three young children enjoy something, the adults around them become happy, too. This is really true. The only time I saw the film at a movie theater was for the test screening. There were a few young children there, and when they were happy the adults near them became happy. That kind of emotion is contagious.

Takahashi: That's true. That kind of feeling was clearly communicated to us as well.

Miyazaki: When that happens, I'm happy, too. I just think, "I'm glad." I was delighted to hear that when the film was shown at a kindergarten, the children hid under their chairs when they saw Mei going into Totoro's cave. For children, what is scary and eerie is mixed with what is cute and fun. Feeling excitement is a bit scary. I think it's a mistake to separate out what is cute, like little birds, flowers, and butterflies, from what is creepy or what causes damage. The worlds of beer bottles, cider bottles, and butterflies are all connected in some way. When we separate things according to an adult value system and suggest to children that, for example, when they see a snake they should scream in fright, we end up creating very boring children. Although we expound on difficult subjects, as living beings we are made so that when young children are really enjoying something nearby—not just movies, but something in daily life, and not just our own children—we become happy as well. This is so true that I've decided to always try to honestly recognize these feelings.

Takahashi: I realized what you've just explained for the first time when I watched your films. I think there is a strong connection between what I felt raising my children and what I feel watching your films. And this relates to what I wanted to ask about children. In having children, for the first time I felt empathy for a developing life and for the image of life and nature that empathy allowed me to have. This is why I think I relate Miyazaki-san's films to my own childrearing experiences and continue to feel a strong sense of realism in them.

Miyazaki: I am left only with an irreparable regret about my own children. I was always working and away from home during the time they were the most fun. On occasions when I was home I would be excessively generous; it wasn't a normal, daily-life relationship at all. Sure, I took them to

Toshimaen amusement park and told them, “Go ahead, go on all the rides.” But I was just spoiling them; and I feel I missed out on many things I can’t revisit. That is why I now feel it doesn’t matter whose child it is, I just want to share the moment. Just that alone can bring pleasure. It’s not easy to keep associating with children over the course of a long time. Raising children is such an effort, and only when it’s over do we realize, “Next time, I’ll be able to do it a bit better.” But by that time you’ve exhausted your physical energy. It is so true that parents are also being raised as they raise their children.

Being allowed to make films for young children is a wonderful gift that other generations haven’t been able to experience. This is priceless to me. I doubt that I would have wanted to make films for little children if I hadn’t become a parent. Most of all we want to make films to satisfy ourselves. There are many among our staff who are thirty years old but haven’t gotten married. But if you have a child and it turns three or so, you feel, “I have to show this kid something good.” And then you think, “There’s nothing good out there, so I’ll make a film myself.” We think we’ve gotten to this stage by doing that. Buffeted as we have been by the upheavals of the world in the past few years, however, both Isao Takahata-san and I think we have also ended up making films that seemed to be merely ways to justify ourselves. Nonetheless, we continue to tell ourselves that we need to return to our starting point and make more movies for children.

On Your Mark[72]—I Purposely Distorted the Lyrics for This Film

Animage, September 1995

—"Police Officer," "Angel"—they make it sound like a film by Mamoru Oshii-san.

Miyazaki: Oshii-san is playing coy whether an angel is born or not, so I just went ahead and got this out. [*laughs*] I'm not saying it's an angel, it might be a bird-person. It doesn't matter either way.

—It felt like an entire feature film's worth of content was packed into six minutes and forty seconds.

Miyazaki: I've put in a lot of coded meanings, but it's a music video so people can take it in any way they want and I don't care.

—What is that strange building in the quiet countryside at the beginning?

Miyazaki: You can interpret it anyway you want. I just hope people will have some general recognition when they see the truck with the nuclear hazard sign that comes up just after that scene. Radiation has permeated the ground, making it impossible for humans to live there. But it's surrounded by greenery, like the area around Chernobyl. It has transformed into a nature sanctuary. The human beings have built a city underground where they live.

In reality, I don't think we could live that way, so we'd probably be living above ground and getting sick.

—This animation was made as a music video for "On Your Mark," wasn't it?

Miyazaki: The title is from the phrase "on your mark, get set, go" but I've purposely distorted the meaning of the phrase in making this film. I made it a story set after the end of the century. It's set in a world where radiation proliferates and

sickness spreads. I think this time will actually come. I made this film when I was wondering what it would mean to live in a place like that.

Anarchy would be widespread in such an age, and the authorities would be very conservative about any criticism of the establishment. This is because they would think they still had something to lose: if all is lost, anarchy reigns and people start dying in the streets. What distracts people from these conditions are drugs, professional sports, or religion; doesn't this sound true? They all proliferate. In the kind of age that I'm describing, it occurred to me that people might try to hide what they want to say from the authorities by expressing it in a song with coded words. So this is a somewhat subversive film. [*laughs*]

—For example, in the phrase, "whenever I ran I caught the cold going around," does the "cold going around" mean the world covered by radiation and sickness?

Miyazaki [*neither agreeing nor denying*]: After all, for the entire history of earth, the problems of people have been like a cold going around.

—The angel saved by the two policemen can be seen as a thread of hope in this chaotic world. As in the phrase, "even so we won't stop ..." the scene of rescuing the angel is repeated many times; after many failures, she flies into the blue sky like a shaft of hope rising up from a chaotic world. But the policemen are left behind on the ground ...

Miyazaki: I'm not suggesting that she was a savior or that there was any sort of heartfelt exchange with her after her rescue. What I am saying, though, is that if I had my own dream or hope—something that I refused to allow anyone else to touch—and without totally surrendering to the situation I let go of it, I would want to let it go somewhere no one else could reach it. That is what this is. There might have been a minute heartfelt exchange at the instant of release. That is all, that is enough … The policemen will try to go back to working as

policemen. Of course, I don't know if they'll really be able to. [*laughs*]

—The world to which they'll return is the world of "the cold going around."

Miyazaki: In the end, that's where we must start from each time. Even in a chaotic, ruined world, there will always be good things and exciting things. As in *Nausicaä*, "We are like birds, forever going beyond that morning, spitting out blood as we fly."

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50 A *cours*, similar to the U.S. broadcasting term "season," consists of thirteen episodes. The series lasted twenty-three episodes.

51 On December 10, 1968, someone posing as a police officer ordered a Nihon Shintaku Bank car carrying 300 million yen to stop to be checked for an explosive device. Once under the car, the criminal lit a flare, the smoke from which convinced the bank employees that the bomb in the car was about to explode. They fled, and the criminal took the wheel and drove off with the money. One of the biggests heists in Japanese history, the incident also led to the largest police investigation in that country's history. Neither the thief nor the money has ever been found.

52 Traditional baggy trousers worn by field workers. Contemporary mompe, based on the agricultural design but for everyday wear, generally have pockets and an elastic waist. Mompe are worn by both sexes.

53 A series of reference guides to various anime series and animated feature films, published by Tokuma Shoten. "Roman" is short for "Romance Adventure."

54 A technique in which small pieces of rubber are used to suggest simultaneous movement of several animated elements within a frame. Used in this film for movement of *ohmu* body segments.

55 A polarizing filter used to eliminate or mitigate reflected light.

56 An animation technique use to represent strong light or flames. After shooting the image of the light or flame, animators paste a black paper cut out in the shape of that image on the cels, shine light from below the cell, and reshoot.

57 NHK radio swordplay drama.

58 A Japanese animation term that uses the English word "book"—the use of multiple layers of illustration to depict a background so as to create an illusion of depth. Background images can be overlaid atop characters (e.g., if a character is hiding behind a rock) or underlaid beneath characters.

59 The technique of drawing details on cels very similar to the details already on background images in order to "harmonize" the visuals of a scene.

60 Small plants with broad leaves and small green flowers. Not the banana-like fruit known in the West.

61 Shigeru Mizuki (March 8, 1922), manga author known for tales of horror and ghosts.

62 NHK serial drama (April 4, 1983–March 31, 1984). In it Shin Tanokura reminisces about her life from her time as a child in a Meiji period through historical events such as the Great Earthquake of 1923, the Second World War, and up through the 1980s, for a total of 297 fifteen-minute episodes.

63 Mount Osore or "Mount Fear" is a volcanically active region in Aomori Prefecture, once believed to be an entrance to hell.

64 Folk paintings from the Edo Period which often depicted Buddhist figures, generally expressing positive themes of health and prosperity.

65 Kenji Miyazawa (August 27, 1886–September 21, 1933). Poet, author of children's books, and social activist; perhaps best known for *Milky Way Railroad*, a story about two children on a magical train whose final destination may be the afterlife.

66 Hideyoshi Toyotomi (February 2, 1536–September 18, 1598), the second great unifier of Japan, was born of peasant stock. He joined the Oda clan as a servant, and rose to become a general. He was adopted into the Fujiawar Regents House and gained a number of imperial titles. Hideyoshi subjugated a number of provinces, instituted a rigid social hierarchy, and barred peasants from owning weapons, which tilted the balance of power toward the central government

67 A ghost in the comical children's manga by Fujiko Fujio.

68 Takamori Saigō (February 7, 1827–September 24, 1877)—"the last true samurai"—opposed Japanese modernization except when it came to military matters. Without great conviction, he led the Satsuma Rebellion against the central government. His 40,000 rebels, seeking to secure the traditional role of the samurai, were defeated by a force of over 300,000.

69 An idiomatic term for underemployed or part-time workers under the age of thirty-five. Freeters do not attend university and often live with their parents well into adulthood.

70 Welsh-born author who traveled to Japan in 1962 in order to study martial arts. Author of *Moving Zen: One Man's Journey to the Heart of Karate.*

71 Takeshi Umehara (1925), playwright and scholar of Japanese culture, who attempted to develop a theory of historical Japanese uniqueness.

72 A 1994 song by Chage & Aska. The video, animated by Miyazaki, features a pair of police officers attempting to save a winged girl. The policemen in the video bear a resemblance to the singers.

▶ BIOGRAPHICAL CHRONOLOGY

1941–1962
Birth, wartime evacuation, schooling

1941

January 5, Hayao Miyazaki born in Bunkyō Ward, Tokyo. The second of four sons.

1944–1946

Evacuated with the rest of his family to Utsunomiya City and Kanuma City in Tochigi Prefecture. Miyazaki Airplane Corporation, run by Hayao's uncle, was in Kanuma City, and his father was an officer of the company.

1947–1952

Entered elementary school in Utsunomiya City. Studied there through third grade. Returned to Tokyo and transferred to Ōmiya Elementary School in Suginami Ward. In fifth grade started at Eifuku Elementary School, which was newly established after splitting off from Ōmiya Elementary. Was a rabid fan of Tetsuji Fukushima's science fiction manga *Sabaku no maō* (*Devil of the Desert*).

1953–1955

Graduated elementary school in Eifuku Elementary School's first graduating class. Entered Ōmiya Middle School, Suginami Ward. Often went to see movies with his movie-

loving father or with the family help. Memorable films include *Meshi* (*Repast*, 1951, directed by Mikio Naruse) and *Tasogare sakaba* (*Twilight Saloon*, 1955, directed by Tomu Uchida).

1956–1958

Graduated from Ōmiya Middle School. Entered Toyotama High School. Wished to become a manga artist, and began to actively pursue drawing studies. In final year of high school, saw *Hakujaden* (*Tale of the White Serpent*, 1958, directed by Taiji Yabushita), Japan's first color feature-length animation film, and became interested in animation.

1959–1962

Graduated from Toyotama High School. Entered Gakushūin University in the department of political economy. Declared Japanese Industrial Theory seminar as his major.

Upon entering university, discovered there was no manga study club, so joined children's literature study club, the closest thing. At times Hayao Miyazaki was its sole member.

As a budding manga professional, drew many manga and approached publishers of manga for the *kashihon'ya*, or rental-library market. No completed works, but accumulated several thousand pages of beginnings of long stories.

The only course that interested him at university was one taught by Osamu Kuno. Read many works by Yoshie Hotta. At a time when ATG (Actors Theater Guild) had just been founded, saw films such as the Polish *Mother Joan of the Angels* (1961, directed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz).

Was a bystander during the 1960 demonstrations held by the anti–U.S.-Japan Security Treaty renewal movement. Started to show interest after seeing photographs published in *Asahi graph* magazine. By then it was too late to participate in demonstrations as a non-ideologically partisan student.

1963–1970
Period at Toei Animation

1963

Graduated from Gakushūin University. Entered Toei Animation in the last year of regular hires.

After joining the company, rented a four-and-a-half *tatami*-mat apartment in Nerima Ward, Tokyo. (Rent was 6,000 yen.) Starting monthly salary was 19,500 yen (18,000 yen during the three-month training period).

First film worked on as an in-between artist was *Wanwan chūshingura* (Woof Woof Chushingura, 1963, directed by Daisaku Shirakawa). After this, worked as in-between artist on TV series *Ōkami shōnen Ken* (*Wolf Boy Ken*).

1964

Worked as in-between artist on theatrical film *Gulliver's Space Travels* (1965, directed by Yoshio Kuroda). Assisted as key animator on TV series *Shōnen Ninja Kaze no Fujimaru* (Boy Ninja Fujimaru of the Wind). Was union general secretary (Isao Takahata was vice chairman at the same time).

1965

Key animator for TV series *Hustle Punch.* In autumn voluntarily participated in preproduction work for feature-length theatrical film *Little Norse Prince Valiant.* Other members of the project included director Isao Takahata and key animators Yasuo Ōtsuka and Seiichi Hayashi.

October: Married colleague Akemi Ōta. Established new residence in Higashimurayama City, Tokyo.

Started participation in *Little Norse Prince Valiant* by drawing the character Iwaotoko while recovering in the hospital from an appendectomy. Key influences on the

production were a sense of crisis regarding the possibility that it might no longer be possible to make feature-length films and also the solidarity among the main staff that had built up during their union activism.

1966

Participated in making *Little Norse Prince Valiant.* Worked on scene design and key animation. Production began in April, but due to postponements was suspended in October. Spent this time as key animator for TV series *Rainbow Sentai Robin.*

1967

January: Resumption of production on *Little Norse Prince Valiant.* Birth of first son.

Worked on *Little Norse Prince Valiant* for the entire year. Purchased 1954 model Citroen 2CV.

1968

March: Screening of first version of *Little Norse Prince Valiant.*

July: Released as *Little Norse Prince Valiant: Hols' Great Adventure.* Key animator for several episodes of *Sally the Witch.* Later, started work as key animator on feature-length theatrical film *Puss 'n Boots* (1969, directed by Kimio Yabuki).

1969

April: Birth of second son. Moved residence to Ōizumigakuen, Nerima Ward, Tokyo. Key animator for *Flying Phantom Ship* (1969, directed by Hiroshi Ikeda) and for several episodes of TV series *Himitsu no Akko-chan* (The Secrets of Akko-chan).

September until March 1970: Wrote original manga serialization *Sabaku no tami* (*People in the Desert)* in *Shōnen shōjo shinbun* (Boys and Girls Newspaper), under pen name "Saburō Akitsu."

1970

Key animator for *Himitsu no Akko-chan.* Participated in preproduction group for feature-length theatrical film *Animal Treasure Island* (1971, directed by Hiroshi Ikeda), working on scene design and key animation. Moved residence to current location in Tokorozawa City, Saitama Prefecture.

1971–1978:
To Nippon Animation

1971

Finished work as key animator for feature-length theatrical film *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* (1971, directed by Hiroshi Shidara), then left Toei Animation. Moved to A Production with Isao Takahata and Yōichi Kotabe. Worked on preproduction for new project *Pippi Longstocking* as part of the main staff.

August: Went to Sweden with Yutaka Fujioka, President of Tokyo Movie corporation, on first trip abroad. Purpose was to meet *Pippi* creator Astrid Lindgren, and do location scouting on Gotland Island, the setting of *Pippi*, and where the live-action film had been shot. Was greatly impressed by castle town Visby and its medieval-style buildings, but was unable to meet with original author. Visited Skansen Outdoor Museum on the outskirts of Stockholm. Ultimately, *Pippi* never made it beyond preparation stage.

Later, participated partway through in *Lupin III* (the first TV series). Directed along with Takahata. Research for *Pippi* later utilized in *Panda! Go Panda!* and *Heidi, Girl of the Alps.* Images of Visby and Stockholm appear in later work as scene setting for *Kiki's Delivery Service.*

1972

After completion of *Lupin III*, made pilot film of *Yuki no taiyō* (*Yuki's Sun*) from original work by Tetsuya Chiba, but film not realized. Drew several storyboard images for TV series *Akadō Suzunosuke.* Also drew storyboard images for TV series *Dokonjō gaeru* (*The Gutsy Frog*), but not utilized.

Participated in mid-length theatrical film *Panda! Go Panda!* (1972, directed by Isao Takahata, key animation directors Yasuo Ōtsuka and Yōichi Kotabe). Taking a topical idea and

turning it on its head, this work featuring the appearance of a father-and-child panda family in a girl's daily life was fun and thrilling, and seems to be a precursor to *My Neighbor Totoro.*

1973

With the success of the first film, a sequel was made with more of Hayao Miyazaki's touch. Worked as screenwriter, scene designer, layout artist, key animator for mid-length theatrical film *Panda! Go Panda! Rainy-Day Circus* (1973, main staff same as first film). Later, key animator for several episodes of TV series *Kōya no shōnen Isamu* (The Rough and Ready Cowboy/Isamu of the Plains) and *Samurai Giants.*

June: Moved to Zuiyō Eizō along with Takahata and Kotabe; started preproduction on *Heidi, Girl of the Alps.*

July: Traveled to Switzerland for location scouting.

1974

Worked as scene designer and layout artist on *Heidi* TV series. This series established the popularity of classics of literature as animated series on television, and was well-received not only in Japan but around the world. Miyazaki worked as part of a powerful trio, with Takahata (director), and Kotabe (animation director). Role was mainly to handle what is called the "layout" work, which links the direction with the animation and art work. Involved not only in determining the composition of the overall screen, but what is called the "screen design"—taking into account movement, similar to the work done by camera operators in live-action films. In effect became the arms, legs, and eyes of Takahata ("the director who doesn't draw") and handled the layout for the shots in all fifty-two episodes of the show.

1975

After helping out as key animator on the TV series *A Dog of Flanders*, began preparing for the TV series *From the Apennines to the Andes* scheduled for the following year.

July: Went location scouting in Italy and Argentina. Moved to Nippon Animation, which was newly formed from the studio and staff of Zuiyō Eizō.

1976

Worked as scene designer and layout artist on *From the Apennines to the Andes*, with the trio of Takahata, Kotabe, and Miyazaki forming its primary staff.

1977

After working as key animator on the TV series *Araiguma rasukaru* (*Rascal Racoon*), in June began preparing for the *Future Boy Conan* TV series. First work directed by Miyazaki. Asked Yasuo Ōtsuka, who was working for A Pro, to help out.

1978

Directed the *Future Boy Conan* TV series, NHK's first animated series with thirty-minute episodes.

1979–1982:
Until beginning the manga serialization of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*

1979

Handled both scene and screen design and layout for episodes 1–15 of TV series *Anne of Green Gables* (1979, directed by Isao Takahata). Joined Telecom Animation Film Co., in order to make new *Lupin* film.

December 15: *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro* opened in theaters. This was Miyazaki's first time directing an animated feature film; he was also in charge of storyboards and screenplay. Although not a box office success, the film was noticed and acclaimed by both anime fans and people in the film world. Yasuo Ōtsuka, who directed the animation, had created the first *Lupin* TV series. Among the core animators were young artists like Kazuhide Tomonaga, who helped create a new image of Lupin with well-timed movements.

1980:

Helped train second wave of new employees entering Telecom Animation. Telecom essentially functioned as the animation studio for Tokyo Movie Shinsha; starting in 1979 it had begun hiring new people on a regular basis. Many of these young animators participated in the production of *The Castle of Cagliostro*; working with them, Miyazaki handled both direction and script writing for episodes 145 and 155 of *Lupin III* (the second *Lupin* TV series). Used pen name of Terekomu, written with the characters 照樹務, a pun on the company name. During this time, also began drawing image boards, including some for the work that later became *Princess Mononoke.* Also created several image boards for what he called *Tokorozawa no obake* (The Goblin of Tokorozawa) which later became *My Neighbor Totoro* (although the original

idea for the story actually came to him during the production of the *Heidi* series).

1981

Involved in planning film projects such as *Little Nemo* and *Rowlf*, and preparing for the joint production with Italy's R.A.I. of the *Sherlock Hound the Detective* TV series. As part of his involvement, traveled to both America and Italy.

Little Nemo was eventually released in July 1989 as a theatrical feature titled *Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland.* A film project long nurtured by Yutaka Fujioka —the president of Tokyo Movie Shinsha—Miyazaki and Yoshifumi Kondō were both involved in preparing for the film. (Later, Takahata would take over from Miyazaki and briefly work as director, but then would also leave the production.)

In its August issue *Animage* magazine published its first issue devoted to Miyazaki. This helped forge a tight link between Miyazaki and Tokuma Shoten, the publisher.

1982

Began serializing the *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* manga in the February issue of *Animage* magazine. At nearly the same time, also began directing *Sherlock Hound the Detective* TV series. The *Nausicaä* manga was conceived of by Miyazaki as an attempt "to do something that can only be done with manga." Many people, both in the industry and outside it, were shocked and amazed by the manga's unique style, its detailed drawings, and the depth of the fictional world depicted. Unfortunately, the demands of other work and the time-consuming, detailed nature of the drawings meant that the serialization proceeded very slowly.

Worked with Telecom animators and directing staff to create four episodes of *Sherlock Hound the Detective.* Miyazaki was involved in six episodes as co-production.

November: Resigned from Telecom Animation Film.

From 1983 to the present: Up until *Gake no ue no Ponyo (Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea,* released in the U.S. as *Ponyo*)

1983

Began work on the animated *Nausicaä* theatrical feature. With Takahata acting as producer, the decision was made to have the production done at Top Craft, where Tōru Hara was serving as president. These were people that Miyazaki had worked with on *Little Norse Prince Valiant* back in his days at Toei Animation. After establishing a planning office at Asagaya, in Tokyo's Suginami ward, in August key animation work commenced. Miyazaki was in charge of direction, screenplay, and storyboards.

Serialization of the *Nausicaä* manga was temporarily put on hold at *Animage* magazine with its June issue, but that same month *Animage bunko* published an illustrated story by Miyazaki titled *Shuna no tabi* (Shuna's Journey) in paperback form.

1984

March: Completed work on *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* theatrical feature. (Released for screening by distributor, Toei, on March 11, along with two episodes of the *Sherlock Hound the Detective* TV series—"Treasure Under the Sea" and "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle.")

April: Miyazaki opened own office in Suginami Ward, calling it "Nibariki" [meaning two-horsepower—*deux chevaux* —the nickname for the Citroen 2CV].

While trying to think of what to make next, came up with the idea of creating a documentary set in Yanagawa City, in Fukuoka Prefecture, and began production on it with Takahata as director. (In April 1987, this would be screened as *The Story of Yanagawa Waterways.*)

August: Once more began serializing the *Nausicaä* manga in *Animage* magazine.

1985

Started preproduction of *Castle in the Sky.* Stopped drawing the *Nausicaä* manga again after the May issue of *Animage* and established Studio Ghibli in Kichijōji, Musashino City, Tokyo.

May: Went location scouting in England and Wales.

1986

August 2: Toei released the animated theatrical feature, *Castle in the Sky*, with Miyazaki credited for direction, screenplay, and storyboards. Along with the film, two episodes of *Sherlock Hound the Detective*—"Mrs. Hudson Is Taken Hostage" and "The White Cliffs of Dover"—were shown.

Resumed serialization of the *Nausicaä* manga again in December issue of *Animage* magazine.

1987

Stopped serialization of *Nausicaä* with June issue of *Animage.* Started preparing for production of *My Neighbor Totoro* feature. (Produced by Studio Ghibli at the same time as *Grave of the Fireflies.*)

1988

April 16: *My Neighbor Totoro* released, with distribution by Tōhō, and Miyazaki credited for original story, screenplay, and direction. Film acclaimed by *Kinema junpō* magazine and others as "best last film of the Shōwa era." Released in theaters simultaneously with *Grave of the Fireflies* (screenplay and direction by Isao Takahata).

1989

July 29: *Kiki's Delivery Service* released by Toei. Miyazaki credited as producer, screenplay writer, and director.

1990

Resumed serialization of *Nausicaä* manga in April issue of *Animage* magazine.

1991

Produced animated theatrical feature, *Only Yesterday*, with Isao Takahata directing. Stopped serialization of *Nausicaä* manga in *Animage* with May issue. Began preparation for *Porco Rosso* feature.

December: Issued an illustrated collection of essays published by Asahi Shimbun Sha, titled *Totoro no sumu ie* (The House Where Totoro Lives), focusing on folk houses in modern Japan.

1992

July 18: *Porco Rosso* theatrical feature released, distributed by Tōhō. Original story, screenplay, and direction by Miyazaki.

August: Construction of new studio for Studio Ghibli completed in Koganei City, Tokyo, based on basic

architectural plans drawn by Miyazaki.

Directed short film titled *Sora iro no tane* (A Sky-Blue Seed) for Nippon Network Television Corporation (NTV). Also in charge of direction and key animation for NTV spot titled *Nandarō* (What Is This?). Both produced by Studio Ghibli.

November: Three-way discussion among Miyazaki, Ryōtaro Shiba, and Yoshie Hotta published as a book titled *Jidai no kazaoto* (The Sound of the Winds of These Times) by U.P.U.

1993

Began serializing *Nausicaä* manga again in March issue of *Animage.*

August: Tokuma Shoten published a collection of Miyazaki's conversations with Akira Kurosawa, titled *Nani ga eigaka: "Shichinin no samurai" to "Mada da yo!" wo meggutte* (What Is a Film?: *Seven Samurai* and *Not Yet*).

1994

Worked on planning for *Heisei tanuki gassen ponpoko* (*Pom Poko*), to be directed by Isao Takahata. Final episode of *Nausicaä* manga ran in March issue of *Animage.*

August: Began preparing alone for production of *Princess Mononoke.*

1995

April: Finalized plans and proposals for *Princess Mononoke*, and began drawing storyboards in May. Traveled with staff to Yakushima Island for location scouting.

July 15: *Whisper of the Heart* (directed by Yoshifumi Kondō) released, with Miyazaki credited as screenwriter, storyboard artist, and general producer.

Also worked as director, screenwriter, and original story creator for the short film *On Your Mark*, released at the same time.

1996

June: Studio Ghibli merged with parent company Tokuma Shoten, becoming the Studio Ghibli Company/Tokuma Shoten Co., Ltd.

July: Tokuma Shoten published a collection of Miyazaki's essays, interviews, and conversations under the title of *Shuppatsuten 1979–1996* (*Starting Point: 1979–1996*).

1997

July 12: *Princess Mononoke* released, with distribution by Tōhō, and Miyazaki credited for original story, screenplay, and as director. Established new box office record for Japanese films.

1998

February: Traveled to Germany to attend Berlin Film Festival.

March: Traveled to Sahara Desert via France, as part of a TV production tracing the footsteps of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

June: Created office and own studio space called "Nibariki" in Koganei City.

Starting in September and continuing for the next six months, formed and headed the *Higashi Koganei Sonjuku II* (Higashi Koganei Workshop II), where he taught budding animation directors. Plans for construction of an art museum in Tokyo's Inokashira Onshi Park rapidly started to take shape around the same time.

1999

July: Began production of a short for the museum.

September: Traveled to the United States for the release of *Princess Mononoke.*

November: Finished proposal and project planning for *Spirited Away* and began preparing for production.

2000

March: Groundbreaking ceremony for Ghibli Museum in Mitaka in Inokashira Onshi Park.

September: Death of Yasuyoshi Tokuma, President of Tokuma Shoten. Miyazaki served as head of the funeral committee.

2001

July 20: *Spirited Away* opened in theaters in Japan, distributed by Tōhō, with direction, original story, and screenplay by Miyazaki. Set new box office records for both domestic and foreign films in Japan.

End of July: Miyazaki traveled to South Korea to screen *Spirited Away* for the Korean staff that had assisted with both in-between animation and finishing work. Simultaneously worked on a mini-promotional campaign for *Totoro* in conjunction with its South Korean release.

October 1: Ghibli Museum, Mitaka, officially opened, with Miyazaki serving as executive director of the museum, and credited for original concept, planning, and as producer. At the same time, began preparing for a special *Spirited Away* exhibit. A Ghibli Museum special short, *Kujira tori* (The Whale Hunt), began screening, with script and direction by Miyazaki.

December: Traveled to France for a *Spirited Away* promotional campaign.

2002

January: Screening original short film *Koro no Ōsanpo* (Koro's Big Day Out). Miyazaki credited with original story, and as screenwriter and director.

February: *Spirited Away* awarded Golden Bear (top award) at 52nd Berlin International Film Festival.

July: *The Cat Returns* (directed by Hiroyuki Morita), which Miyazaki had proposed, released. *Mushime to Anime* (Insect Eye and Animation Eye; published by Tokuma Shoten) collection of dialogues with Takeshi Yōrō, and *Kaze no Kaeru Basho: Nausicaä kara Chihiro made no Kiseki* (The Place Where the Wind Returns: The Path from Nausicaä to Chihiro; published by Rockin'on Inc.), an interview collection, issued.

September: To the U.S. for release publicity campaign for *Spirited Away.* When in San Francisco, visited Pixar Animation Studios.

October: Opening of special exhibition at Ghibli Museum, "*Castle in the Sky* and Imaginary Science and Its Machinery." Planning, original idea, and supervision. Short film *Kūsō no sora tobu kikaitachi* (Imaginary Flying Machinery) screened at exhibit. Narrator, original author, script writer, director. Original short film *Mei to koneko basu* (*Mei & the Baby Cat Bus*) screened. Original author, script writer, director. Around this time started preparations for *Howl's Moving Castle.*

2003

March: *Spirited Away* awarded best animated feature film at 75th Academy Awards.

2004

September: *Howl's Moving Castle* awarded Osella Award at 61st Venice International Film Festival. Miyazaki credited as screenwriter and director.

November 20: *Howl's Moving Castle* released through Tōhō Film Company.

Production work began on three original short films for Ghibli Museum.

November–December: Visited France and Britain. Publicity campaign for release of *Howl's Moving Castle* in France. In Britain visited Aardman Animations in Bristol. Screened

Howl's Moving Castle for original author Diana Wynne Jones and Aardman staff.

2005

As of March 31, Studio Ghibli became independent from Tokuma Shoten and established as Studio Ghibli Inc. Became corporate director. Listed among *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people in the world in its April 18 issue.

May: Opening of special exhibit "*Heidi, Girl of the Alps*" at Ghibli Museum. Supervised and wrote most of the explanatory notes.

June: Visited U.S. on publicity campaign for *Howl's Moving Castle.* Met with Ursula Le Guin, author of *Earthsea* series of novels.

September: Attended the 62nd Venice International Film Festival. Awarded Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement.

October: Awarded Japan Foundation Award.

2006

January: Began to screen three original short films: *Yadosagashi* ("House Hunting") and *Mizugumo Mon Mon* (*Mon Mon the Water Spider*) (original author, screenwriter, director), and *Hoshi wo katta hi* (*The Day I Bought a Star*) (screenwriter, director).

February: Visited Britain to research illustrated essay to be included in Robert Westall's *Blackham's Wimpy* (*Burakkamu no Bakugeki Ki*; published by Iwanami Shoten). Book published in October.

April: Began preproduction work for *Ponyo.*

June: Production memorandum completed.

2007

May: Opening of special exhibit "The Three Bears" at Ghibli Museum. Worked on planning and design.

2008

April: Founded Home of the Three Bears, the Ghibli company preschool for children of employees. Proposed idea and worked on basic architectural plans.

July 19: Release of *Ponyo* by Tōhō Film Company. Miyazaki credited as original author, screenwriter, director.

July: *Orikaeshiten: 1997–2008* (*Turning Point: 1997–2008*), sequel to *Shuppatsuten: 1979–1996* (*Starting Point: 1979–1996*), published by Iwanami Shoten.

October: Presented a lecture called "Hōjōki Shiki and I" at the Yoshie Hotta Exhibition held at the Kanagawa Museum of Modern Literature.

2009

April: Opened Ghibli West at the Toyota Motor Corporation headquarters in Toyota, Aichi. The studio houses a short-term training program for new hires. Miyazaki travels to Ghibli West regularly to give lectures.

May: Opened *Ponyo* exhibit at Ghibli Museum.

▶ AFTERWORD

The Fireworks of Eros

Isao Takahata
Animation Director

1.

Hayao Miyazaki is an incredibly hard worker. And according to him I am "descended from a giant sloth." Many good friends have helped me by prying my three toes from the tree branches to which they often cling, but among them Miya-san has always been special. And how has he helped? First, with his fierce dedication to work and his boundless talents. Second, these qualities have themselves created a necessary but formidable tension and power. It is through Hayao Miyazaki's very existence that I have always felt scolded for my slothlike tendencies, been made to feel guilty, been cornered into doing work, and had something greater than whatever limited talents I might possess squeezed out of me. This was especially true in our younger days when—had I not had the opportunity to witness his selfless devotion to work—I probably would only have done compromised, mediocre work. And I suspect this is true not only of me, but of all staff members who have ever had the opportunity to work with him.

Hayao Miyazaki has a big head. In fact, any hat he wears has to be especially large simply to cover the top of his skull. I don't know how his father was able to anticipate the speed at which his son's brain circuitry would work, but he did name him "Hayao," which means "fast" in Japanese—despite the fact that his legs are far from fast. Now, it does not necessarily follow that someone with a big head also thinks fast, but Miya-san is fortunate in that he also has very good blood circulation. So he tends to easily overheat. He is a truly hot-blooded fellow, and in the summer he always needs the air conditioner set on high. In fact, until a while ago, fierce struggles inevitably occurred in the company between Miya-san and our female employees over the air conditioner settings. In the prewar *Shōnen kurabu* (Boys' Club) magazine, I once saw an advertisement for what was called an "Edison Band"; it was a metal device designed to be worn on the head to cool the brain, and had it remained available after the war,

I'm quite sure that it would have been a godsend for Miya-san. He would, of course, have required an extra-large size. That is, if they had ever offered such a thing.

It is truly difficult to play catch with Hayao Miyazaki. At lunchtime, the Ghibli staff like to toss baseballs back and forth in the company's front yard for exercise, and he of course likes to participate. But those who play catch with him soon find themselves out of breath, afterwards returning to work and plopping down in their chairs, exclaiming, "Jeez, playing with Miya-san's exhausting!" He's like a second baseman trying make a double play because he catches and returns so fast. In other words, the ball comes back the instant you throw it to him. And since he looks like he's playing for keeps from the get-go, a leisurely activity originally designed to loosen up stiff shoulders becomes hardly leisurely at all. I'm sure that even people who never had the opportunity to see him play catch in his younger days—people whose only contact with him has been in casual conversations and discussions—can easily imagine what this is like. For those of us closest to him, the phrase, "playing catch with Miya-san" has become shorthand for all sorts of interactions with Hayao Miyazaki.

Hayao Miyazaki's brain is always busy. Even when he has a moment to spare, you won't find him idly relaxing. Similar to how he plays catch at lunchtime, for him rest and relaxation means taking a break from being busy with one sort of work only to plunge into another. And it is precisely because he is able to effectively exploit this unique quirk in his character that he is able to be simultaneously not only a writer, director, and artist, but also the powerful head of a studio. When he is mentally and physically tired from creative work, he can rest by switching to working hard at managing the company and leading his troops. He has recently been resting by planning, designing, and supervising construction of rooftop gardens and special toilets to be used in case of earthquakes and other disasters. There are stories how—while serializing the *Nausicaä* manga and staying up all night to make his

bimonthly deadlines—he would suddenly announce that it was "time to go see some movies," take off for town full of energy, and watch back-to-back films at two or three different theaters. He doesn't mind watching movies that have already started, and he'll immediately leave the theater if they're not interesting. Since he always needs to be inspired and have his imagination stimulated, he can argue about a film based on ten ideas that have emerged in his brain from one thing he has seen, and can also watch the same TV documentary over and over again without ever getting tired.

2.

Hayao Miyazaki is a man who struggles. He has powerful likes and dislikes, and is extremely loving and compassionate; he weeps, is playful, loves people, expects too much of their talents, howls at his broken dreams, becomes enraged, can't bear to watch what others are doing, worries, interferes verbally and physically, becomes irritated, gives up easily, takes the hardest things upon himself, hates weak-willed and self-indulgent men and those who have no ambition, needles people but looks out for them, is often said to be a bothersomely helpful old geezer behind his back, and is generally exceedingly kind to females. Like people who dote on their beloved children, Hayao Miyazaki dotes on his beloved company, on his employees, and on his friends.

I once asked a new hire what sort of questions Miya-san had asked during the interview. The smiling response was, "Miyazaki-san saved me because he did nearly all the talking. He just warned me about lots of stuff. He seems like an awfully nice person …"

Hayao Miyazaki has sometimes been described as "a man with no need for the production process." Even on the *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* animated feature, when I served as producer, he never needed anyone to whip his behind to get him to do any of his work. He participated as a member of our animation staff as if he weren't worried about the production schedule at all, and this is an extremely rare thing. It of course shows that he has a strong sense of responsibility, but it also shows that he is able—during the panics and worst-case situations that occur when things don't go according to schedule—to come up with extremely visual and imaginative solutions. He is also someone who always struggles by nature, who worries about others, and can't help but try to help them. And I suspect this is precisely because his

powers of imagination work too concretely, causing him to envision their futures too clearly.

When Hayao Miyazaki leaves his desk during work, he always leaves his desk lamp on and his music tapes playing. This is because he has a compulsion (stemming from his strong sense of responsibility and obligation) to return to work right away.

Hayao Miyazaki is extremely shy. He is fundamentally childlike in his innocence, purity of spirit, selfishness, and impulsiveness, and so whatever he desires is revealed in his face. But his spirit of self-control and self-denial, and his sense of shame and embarrassment also far exceed that of most people, so that he sometimes tries to hide them, with the result that his way of expressing himself may occasionally come out twisted and tangled up. One must never jump to the conclusion, just because he is cursing something all over the place, that he is against something. For him, cursing may in fact simply be an overly aggressive behavior, necessary to restrain the accompanying emotions and passions he feels. As long as he has enough excuses available, his passions will dissipate when he reluctantly accepts the situation and forgives himself and others.

He is sometimes as embarrassed by the behavior of those close to him as if it were his own. It used to be that he couldn't bear to look at the mistakes made by characters in Sadao Shōji's manga, or by the young hero of the *Tora-san* movie series. Not only that, unable to understand, he would get angry at those who *did* laugh at their pratfalls. Whenever he travels overseas, he feels that he represents Japan, so he is always tense and compelled to criticize the actions and attitudes of those traveling with him. He can never get used to, or stand, being addressed as *sensei* [the Japanese honorific given to learned and accomplished people], and he will always tell people not to use it.

Hayao Miyazaki has no qualms about making reckless statements and using abusive language, at least among friends. He will talk this way about his friends, about the work and art of others, about society, and about the future of the world. Sometimes he will seem to delight in doing so; other times he will seem indignant. Often he will spew forth destructively nihilistic language. And when arguing with people he will never hesitate to take the most extreme positions and browbeat his opponents into total submission. But this is just his unique way of engaging in a fierce dialectic process. Even when his language is offensive, people around him will often burst out laughing, or grin to themselves at how on-target his pronouncements or comical sketches are—but he will also sometimes use words that seem merely dogmatic or prejudiced. Even so, this is just Miya-san's way of engaging people in conversation and answering his own questions; his rants are a warm-up exercise for him that—though they may make others uncomfortable—serve to limber up his brain. Those around him are usually aware of this, and they may ignore him without worrying much about it. Or they may fall silent out of fear of his dogmatic pronouncements or threatening looks. But just as when he is playing catch, he merely needs an opponent who can keep up with him, who can act as a proper antagonist and help escalate the dialectic. Some people grumble, saying, "Miya-san accepts arguments that he denounced when I stated them a minute ago," but that's just another manifestation of the dialectical process that he likes to use. I suspect the biggest problem for him now—especially given that he presides over our production studio and is in fact always at the top of the organization—is that it's hard to find a worthy opponent for his arguments. He hates authority and power-worshipping, but now he is the authority.

In Miya-san's younger days, when working on an animated TV series and pouring everything he had into tough work that seemed to go on forever, he occasionally terrified the new employees who didn't know him by suddenly screaming, "Let

this damned studio burn down!" It's a joke, of course, but given the reported inevitability of another giant earthquake hitting the Tokyo/Kantō area, and given the production schedules under which we worked, it was a joke he simply couldn't resist. For Miya-san—who never runs from or slacks off at work, who hates defeatism and who is always optimistic—the only thing that would allow him to run from the tough reality he confronts would probably be something that he can't control, like a huge earthquake or conflagration.

3.

Hayao Miyazaki is a person with deep feelings. You can easily sense this in the works he creates. Those close to him all know that he feels things in an unusually powerful way. In fact, I even heard that once, while drawing storyboards, he was so overcome by emotion that he began shedding tears on the artwork. For that matter, when people who know him see the characters he has created—especially the funny gestures of the earnest males, or the high-pitched giggle of the bad guys—they invariably see his image superimposed on them, too. But the relationship he has with his characters is more complicated than most usually suspect.

Whether drawing good guys or bad guys, beautiful young women or beasts, towns or forests, Miya-san draws them all passionately, hoping to depict them in a very specific way, in the way he believes they should exist, or that is to him ideal. He wants to save beautiful young females from trouble, he wants a middle-aged "pig" to act cool, and he wants a young woman character to be so beautiful, sensible, action-oriented, and noble that he would like to suddenly embrace her … And his feelings about his characters grow stronger and stronger, to the point where he finally becomes possessed by this or that young woman or monster that doesn't resemble him in the least. The terrifying realism his characters possess is not the result of any calculated or objective observation. Even if he does incorporate his astute observations into his artwork, he remains possessed by, and fuses with, his characters—to the point where the heightened fireworks of Eros that result actually transform his ideals into flesh and blood.

Miya-san therefore empathizes with each character designed to play a specific role in the overall drama, gives that character its appeal and its problems, and lets it have its say. And one result is that even his "bad guys" tend to suddenly stop being bad guys. Now, I realize that this may be a tendency of all

good authors who create characters of complex depth, or fascinating human portraits, but it may be amplified in Miya-san's case. He has to work with his characters for such a long time during productions, and he can't stand the idea of creating any with whom he cannot identify emotionally.

Hayao Miyazaki always stresses the absolute importance of being concrete. In his daily life, he is usually intensely opposed to idealism that lacks in concreteness, but when he is himself inspired by something, he often fluffs up his fantasies using his powers of visual imagination, sees all sorts of illusions, thrills to the idea that they might actually come true, and is beside himself with anticipation. When he was much, much younger, this was true of his emotional attachment to China, among other things, but even in his management of Studio Ghibli, he keeps coming up with one interesting and concrete proposal after another. The people around him find themselves unable to keep up and are turned into a tizzy by him, yet at the same time they are also flabbergasted by the fact that—for what was apparently made on the spur of the moment—these proposals are concrete down to the most trifling details. The construction of Studio Ghibli is an example. It has a deluxe women's restroom, a huge room with a wood floor called the "bar," and a roof garden. And everyone shares in the benefits of what has been built. (And speaking of benefits, I personally think the greatest benefit Hayao Miyazaki has bestowed upon us is Totoro, for Totoro is definitely not your ordinary celebrity-mascot character. Totoro's popularity has resulted in totoros not only in Tokorozawa, but in forests and woods throughout Japan. Totoro lives in the hearts of all children throughout Japan, and when they see trees now, they sense Totoro hidden in them. And this is a truly wonderful and indeed rare thing).

Hayao Miyazaki takes animated works that appear to be headed toward bankruptcy, and then manages to visually pull them into shape, to do the heavy lifting needed to give them the perfect ending. But in reality the reverse is true, for there is

a resolute idealism and a sense of balance that exists in him, and these qualities have already selected the desired ending—at least on a subconscious level. The problem is whether it is really possible to reach the desired ending or not. It is not enough to get there through some sort of conceptual expediency. Instead, one must know whether it is possible to arrive there by building layer upon layer of believable actions and decisive moments in a realistic and concrete way; whether it is possible to get there by overcoming all the problems that will be thrown in one's way. And Miya-san gets there by exploiting his visual powers of imagination to the fullest, by concretely anticipating and imagining the obstacles in his way and then slicing a path through them.

In this truly exciting adventure, Miya-san has thus been able to create very successful works. It is all well and good to layer realistic and concrete elements into a work, but the one at the center of all this, the one who actually constructs and controls this body of work, is none other than Hayao Miyazaki, creator. With his talents it is possible to overcome obstacles, to depict something that is fundamentally unrealistic with profoundly realistic powers of persuasion.

But the real world is, of course, different. In the real world Hayao Miyazaki is just one powerless individual. And in this context it becomes easy to understand why he sometimes becomes so disillusioned with the masses, yells destructively nihilistic things, and blurts out statements that make him sound as though he aspires to become a dictator. Moreover, despite the fact that the works he creates are so magnanimous in spirit and so refreshing, there are those who are shocked by the way he is so finicky and complains so vociferously about everything related to the operation of the studio, from the toilets to the need to save electricity. But this becomes easier to understand when one considers that the works he creates ultimately achieve an ideal, and that to pull off this achievement requires an extraordinary attention to concrete and realistic detail.

Hayao Miyazaki stopped writing screenplays some time ago. He doesn't even bother to first finalize the storyboards. As long as he has a revelatory idea for a world structure, and as long as he has a clear image of the appealing protagonists who will be crossing swords with each other in that world, he can plunge into building that world, relying solely on the images and plots he has in mind. After diving into the process, he then begins creating the storyboards while doing all his other work, from key animation on down. Using his powers of continuous concentration, the production starts to take on the elements of an endlessly improvised performance. Unable to stand normal animation production methods—which require a long time lag between the design and actual implementation of various elements—he throws himself into the one-time, multilayered form of combustion that production itself represents, almost as though he were trying to turn the creative process into an erotic adventure. This is a somewhat scary undertaking; he relies on his superb intuition and can only accomplish what he does when propelled by Eros, but no one around him can help him if he struggles, grabs at thin air, and begins to drown. They will simply be bathed in the splash that he creates.

Hayao Miyazaki's recent works have emphasized the depiction of a revelatory and symbolic world structure in a concrete and realistic way, and they have become increasingly elaborate and precise in nature. If he continues in this direction, even though he is dealing in animation, I suspect that the stories he creates (including the characters and the actions they take) will be tripped-up by the structure of the world he designs. He will be forced to go beyond the idealism and the sense of balance that he has thus far always maintained in his work.

4.

Hayao Miyazaki is emotional and passionate, has a fiercely undulating human nature, is strongly self-assertive and tends to prompt action, has a bountiful expressiveness and curiosity, and possesses an imagination so vivid it verges on a hallucinatory vision. And it goes without saying that all these characteristics are in constant conflict with the sense of idealism and justice, the fastidiousness, the self-denial, the self-control, and the self-abnegation that have characterized him since his youth. One might even say that this conflict is what creates his own complicated yet appealing character. In fact, one way people who know Hayao Miyazaki forgive some of his statements is by saying, "Well, he is, after all, a bundle of contradictions." One of our veteran staff members once told a new hire that the secret to getting along with Miya-san was as follows: "You'd better not swallow everything that he tells you today as is. Tomorrow he might well tell you the exact opposite."

In talking about various matters with others who also know Hayao Miyazaki, I have been surprised to see how frequently the subject turns to him. This in itself shows how individualistic and interesting he is, and how he is always a good subject of conversation; even though people may badmouth him, they nonetheless rely on him, and genuinely like him. There are even those—joking of course—who take the extreme position of saying that they find Miya-san the individual more compelling than the works he creates. For those of us who know him, Miya-san continues to be the same old Miya-san we have always known, but it does seem to me that something about him is gradually changing. I therefore decided to write this afterword before he ages and transforms completely to fit the gentle character at which his white hair and beard hint (a truly boring idea that he is apparently trying to achieve). I have attempted to describe the Hayao Miyazaki we all know from our daily interactions with him, and to do so

in a way that will probably bring his wrath down upon my head.

Postscript:

Miya-san has always aggressively tried to assume responsibility for various things, but at some unknown point I —the giant sloth—began to sneakily avoid responsibility. And since Miya-san is responsible for Studio Ghibli, whenever I do any work I have tended to create a great deal of trouble for him by, among other things, causing delays in production schedules. Indeed, when I reflect on how he has put up with and even forgiven my very selfish conduct despite his volatile character, I appreciate his friendship and admire his self-restraint even more. I shall not write about it in detail, but I still recall fondly how—even when we were both young and, aided by curiosity, tended to fall victim to easy temptation—he was nonetheless always resolutely self-disciplined. Hayao Miyazaki is the very epitome of self-control.

Toshio Suzuki, the well-known producer who, as an editor, brought the *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* manga series into this world, currently oversees the daily affairs of Studio Ghibli. He has steadfastly supported Hayao Miyazaki and continues the dialectic with him. Without Suzuki-san, there would be no Studio Ghibli today. So in that sense, Suzuki-san, rather than I, would actually have been the perfect person to discuss Hayao Miyazaki in this afterword. I can also say that Suzuki-san also bears a large responsibility for the fact that Miya-san and I have been able to remain friends over all these years without fighting.

Furthermore, I think it truly wonderful that Hayao Miyazaki, ever a man of this world, was able to meet such literary luminaries as Ryōtarō Shiba and Yoshie Hotta in the flesh. In his discussions with them in this book, I sense an innocent humility and resonance of feelings, not the formal courtesy and bashfulness that he showed, for example, when he first met Akira Kurosawa. I was also extremely gratified to

see how, when he sent the *Asahi* newspaper a statement mourning the passing of Ryōtarō Shiba, that it was filled with his characteristically pure feelings. In fact, I heard later that he had wept uncontrollably at the funeral. Several of my most respected seniors told me afterward that they felt Miya-san was probably in a state of spiritual crisis, or that he was in the process of developing a new and different type of idealism. It is not altogether impossible, at this juncture, to imagine Miya-san as an observer of the world who is aware of social decorum, enjoys nature, warmly encourages young people, raises his grandchildren, places his hopes in the future, and ages in an upright and proper fashion, all the while lamenting, "Ah, humans are such irredeemable creatures." And come to think of it, when I see Miya-san these days, he tends to quietly tell me, almost in a meditative essay form, about such things as the American bullfrogs that have taken up residence in the pond in the yard, or his visit to the Zenshōen sanitarium for leprosy patients.

HAYAO MIYAZAKI was born in 1941 in Tokyo. After graduating from Gakushuin University in 1963 with a degree in Political Science and Economics, he joined Toei Animation Company as an animator. Miyazaki directed the TV series *Future Boy Conan* in 1978 and the feature film *The Castle of Cagliostro* in 1979. In 1984, Miyazaki wrote and directed his feature *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, based on his original graphic novel which had been serialized in the monthly animation magazine *Animage*.

Miyazaki co-founded Studio Ghibli in 1985 with Isao Takahata, and has directed feature films including *Castle in the Sky* (1986), *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), *Porco Rosso* (1992), *Princess Mononoke* (1997), *Spirited Away* (2001), *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), *Ponyo* (2008), and *The Wind Rises* (2013).

His film *Spirited Away* broke every box office record in Japan, and garnered many awards, including the Golden Bear at the 2002 Berlin International Film Festival and the 2002 U.S. Academy Award® for Best Animated Feature Film. *Howl's Moving Castle* received the Osella Award at the 2004 Venice International Film Festival. Miyazaki was also awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 2005 Venice International Film Festival. In 2012, Miyazaki was named a "Person of Cultural Merit" by the government of Japan. In July 2014, he was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards Hall of Fame. *The Wind Rises* was nominated

for the 2013 Academy Award® for Best Animated Feature. In 2014, the Board of Governors for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented him with an Honorary Award for lifetime achievement.

Miyazaki has published a number of books of essays, drawings, and poems, including *Starting Point: 1979–1996*, which is published in English by VIZ Media. He has designed several buildings, including the Ghibli Museum, Mitaka, which opened in 2001, for which he serves as Executive Director.

Miyazaki is currently working on the feature film *How Will You Live?*, based on the best-selling juvenile novel by Genzaburo Yoshino.