



2019/2020 Edition

Fabulous  
1st issue!

Or 11th

# The Zine

Inside:

Naruto is  
worth  
watching?

Magical  
girls are  
cool?

Attack  
on Titan  
is about  
wombs?

And more...



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# A Brief

Adapted from 'I love war' from Hellsing

# Introduction

By Michael Goaten



My friends, it has often been said that we like anime. My friends, we like anime...

No, friends, we love anime! We love shonen. We love isekai. We love magical girls. We love martial arts, mecha, We love slice of life, and romance. Anime set in schools, in fantasy, in harems, in space, in other worlds, through histories, on cels, in digital, We love every type of anime that can occur upon this earth. We love analysing the series to smithereens with interpretations that thunder across the scenes of episodes. My heart leaps with joy whenever a character is tossed high into the air and cut to pieces by emotional sniper rounds. And there is nothing like a hero using an attack to destroy enemy villain. And the feeling that comes when a character runs screaming from his situation, only to be mowed down by comedic fire, is such an exquisite feeling. Like when ranks of members brandish new series rushing into the voting line. It moves me deep within my heart to watch a new member watching over and over the series shown in the society. The sight of quality anime being projected up on a screen is an irresistible pleasure. And there is nothing more arousing than the sounds made by tears dropping like flies, dropping in agony as they're drawn out by emotional moments! When a band of non weebz make their final stand with nothing but vague points, only to have their reasoning smashed to atoms block by block by quality animation, I'm in ecstasy. I love it when shows are ravaged by insightful commentary. It's so sad to see series and films that were supposed to be enjoyed at all costs, being laid to waste, their animation and ideas being made fun of. I love to be squashed under the quality of Japanese animation. The humiliation as my series get laughed at, ducking the jokes flying overhead.

Gentlemen... All I ask for is a zine, a zine so grand as to make Nottingham itself tremble. Gentlemen, I ask you as fellow brothers in arms what is it that you really want? Do you wish for further zines as I do? Do you wish for an insightful, bright zine? A zine whose content is built with your ideas? Do you ask for a zine to sweep in like a tempest, leaving not even ravens to scavenge content!...Very well. Then a zine is what you shall have. We are a clenched fist, ready to strike down all keyboards who make articles with our might. But... After enduring over five months wallowing in the darkness, for us, a simple "ordinary" anime will no longer be sufficient. We need a great anime! An anime beyond any other that man's history has ever known! We are but a single society... The lovers of a unique medium numbering less than a thousand strong. However, I believe that each of your articles is equal to a thousand of their sickly soft writings! We represent a force that could easily out quality an army of a million and one movies! It is time for them to awake the ones who sent us willingly to this society and who now lie sleeping. Let's drag them out of bed by the hair and remind them of what we are! We will remind them of what it feels like to watch animation. We will remind them of the feeling of our subtitles make against their eyes. We will remind them that there are more things between live action and cartoon than are dreamt of in their philosophy. Our Anime Society of 111 weebz is going to show this world some anime. Yes, my friends! Soon, A41's screen will illuminate the night sky! I have brought you all a zine just as I promised I would. Back to our favourite read. Back to our beloved anime!

...At last, the pages have crossed the internet and are heading up the screen. Attention, all members of the anime society! This is a message from your comms officer.

...Friends... let's watch some anime.



# The Waifu that can Sail a Thousand Ships

By Nick Stathakis

The power of the waifu is strong. A strong enlivening force, whose fire bellows up from the chthonic depths of the soul. Such vivification is a powerful energy which has shaped nations, carved futures and turned the tides of history.

Our first study in the power of the waifu across history is Helen of Troy. Born from the wife of the King of Sparta, Leda, and Zeus in swan form, Helen was said to have been laid as an egg, hatching into most beautiful woman the world had ever known. Word got around that Helen was a demi-god of divine beauty and once she was of age, flocks of rich and powerful men came to vie for the beautiful princess of Sparta's hand in marriage. A waifu war emerged between the men, however the King of Sparta came up with a smart strategy – each man who wants a chance at being the husband of Helen must sign an oath that they must defend whichever man was chosen. The suitors who weren't chosen didn't need the bond of marriage for they have pledged to protect their waifu to the grave. The winner, Menelaus, was a wealthy older gentleman and a somewhat loveless marriage ensued.

Disguised as a diplomat, the Trojan prince Paris arrived in Sparta, determined to elope with his waifu, Helen. Paris seduced Helen and they eloped back to Troy. Understandably, Helen's fanbase were furious – how could their wonderful waifu be deceived by such a man. The oath came into effect and all the potential suitors brought together one thousand ships in the city of Aulis to begin their attack, starting the ten year Trojan war.

There is a spark inside man. A spark which, once ignited, becomes the raging flame of *moe*. The Japanese colloquialism *moe* can be approximated to cuteness, however the idea itself is far further reaching. The word is derived from the word *moeru* meaning to burn up. *Moe* is, after all, the volcanoes of the soul, the overflowing passion, a feeling which can't be contained by one's physical form. A feeling which certainly can't be contained by the word cuteness. The feeling of *moe* wasn't invented upon the invention of the word – such emotions have existed in man since time immemorial. The power of *moe* is eternal and worldwide – present, as seen here, even in Western civilisation's oldest literature.



Now let's move on to our second study, the power of the waifu within anime. Here we'll be looking at Log Horizon, specifically episode 17 and 18 (spoilers ahead). Its episode 17, and all hope is lost for the NPC kingdom. The nobility don't want to turn to the Adventurers to help fight the hordes of goblins, in fear of forever being in their debt. During a meeting, the noblemen and the heads of the Adventurer's guild start arguing over how the crisis should be dealt with when all of a sudden the princess of the kingdom bursts through the door revealing the kingdom's Achilles heel and promising to go to the Adventurers herself to convince them to take up arms. Shiroe sets the stage for the princess to give a touching speech (at the beginning of episode 18 if you want to enjoy it once more) to rouse the Adventurers for battle. And rouse she did through the power of *moe*. The legion of roughly a thousand men cheered and chanted for the princess. Calls in the audience name her as a goddess with her radiant platinum blonde hair glowing in the night – much like the moon. The moon goddess as an archetypal theme spans all of history: from Artemis of ancient Greece; to the triple moon goddesses of Africa; to the aforementioned Helen as well, whose name is derived from Selene, another Greek moon goddess. Even in Japan you have *Tsukihime* (literally moon princess), however its veracity is uncertain.

Your waifu is your moon goddess. Just as the lunatic stares at the moon all night, so do you at your waifu. There is something beautiful about the unattainability and distance of the waifu, alongside the closeness in one's heart. The infernal sun raging in your heart, the flames of passion, want to be united with the goddess of the moon. Such a unity, known in alchemy as the *hieros gamos* (divine marriage) between your moon goddess and the infernal sun inside of you is known as love. *Moe* isn't love. *Moe* is the brightness of your flames, fanned with the moon's petrol. The raging inferno of your soul which needn't be quelled since it's the energy that gets you out of bed every day come rain or shine, the power that drives you to great things, the power to become someone. That is the power of the waifu. Just as Helen of Troy's many suitors couldn't take Helen's hand in marriage, they were still willing to die for her sake. Her *moe* was enough to bring them into the heart of battle and live on the edge of life. *Moe* doesn't want a requited love; it doesn't matter if your waifu is real. The moon goddess strikes the chord in a man's heart and that is plenty. Your waifu needn't be real. Let her drive you to great things.



# Why Bunny Girl Senpai is better than you think

By Cameron Johnson

Rascal does not dream of bunny girl senpai or just bunny girl senpai for short is not about bunny girls. One is featured in episode 1 but that's it so don't let the title fool you. The story follows Sakuta Azusagawa, a delinquent student, and Mai Sakurajima, a child actress, as they help other people effected by puberty syndrome. Puberty syndrome is a supernatural disease that only effects teenagers.

The first 3 episodes are about Sakuta trying to solve Mai's puberty syndrome which makes her invisible to everyone but Sakuta. The first arc is good because it feels like a condensed version of a whole series, character development included. You could watch only the first 3 episodes and it would be a good story on its own but at the end of it, you just want to see more of Mai and Sakuta's relationship which keeps you watching.

Mai and Sakuta's relationship is really cute because they actually feel like real people and you can see the chemistry between the 2 develop naturally over the first 3 episodes unlike a lot of anime where they just fall in love because the protagonist helped the girl once. Another thing I like about the show is the dialogue because it doesn't feel clunky or unnatural. The script is well written and the characters respond in ways that fit their personality well whereas a lot of shows just have characters repeat what the other character has just said but as a question.

The other characters in the show are well written too. Rio Futuba is the scientist girl who is the exposition character but she feels human too and has her own problems such as having a crush on her friend who has a girlfriend. This makes her arc interesting because we get to see the duality of her when another version of her appears who isn't the science type and is more outgoing. The arc ends with two versions merging and she accepts her feelings instead of bottling them up which makes her friendship stronger.

The music in Bunny Girl Senpai is great because it really knows when to hit home when a revalation occurs. The opening is really catchy and gets stuck in your head easily and the visuals are pretty to look at and are misleading which means you don't get spoiled by the opening. There are a total of 6 endings in Bunny Girl Senpai which is a lot for a 13

episode series. This is because each of the girls get to sing the ending song which makes the endings much harder to skip if you really like the girls.

The Bunny Girl Senpai movie is an enjoyable watch because it just feels like another 3 episode arc but as a movie. The movie feels like a natural continuation of the story as well and there isn't a transition period where you have to get use to it being a movie. Since the movie just feels like the anime series, all the same points above apply to it and more. Without spoiling it, it is a really interesting movie because grief is the problem Sakuta needs to solve and not puberty syndrome.

To end off on, Bunny Girl Senpai is a fun and cute series and you should give it a watch, just watch the anime and the movie together to get a more rewarding experience.

# ARKNIGHTS

明日方舟

By James Frost

I have recently had my first foray into the world of gacha-hell mobile games with Arknights, and despite my reservations going in, it has been a pleasant surprise. Arknights is a free-to-play mobile game set in a disaster ravaged world with tower defence and resource management as its primary mechanics. You play as the Doctor and your role is to command a variety of combatants (called Operators) as they do battle with the various forces at work in the world of Arknights.

Initially the free-to-play nature of the game worried me, as I have heard tale of many a mobile game charging ludicrous amounts for a core part of the game. Arknights takes a more relaxed approach to making money, relying on building up player engagement with a good gameplay loop to get the player to fork out for cosmetics such as skins for their Operators and furniture to decorate their bases. The final way you can spend your money is on acquiring more Operators through gacha rolls.

Operators come with a wide variety of personalities and designs. They are acquired in one of two ways: from story missions, or from gacha rolls. The gacha rolls involve spending one of the in-game currencies in exchange for a random Operator. Notably you can get repeats, making it very hard to collect everyone, but getting repeats serves a purpose as well, allowing you to upgrade the potential of that operator, improving their abilities in battle. While this gacha mechanic may sound frustrating, and can be at times, it is also not too harsh, as you gain the currency at a reasonable rate just playing the game, and the starter rolls give you nice perks such as guaranteed rare Operators. Gacha rolls like this also exist in certain full price J-RPGs such as Xenoblade Chronicles 2.



The gameplay is fun and a significant step up from the tower defence flash games of my youth. For starters you have to manage your base, assigning Operators to factories, power plants, and any other rooms to generate the resources needed for progression, all the while managing your Operators moral, which slowly declines as they get tired over time. Once you get into the tower defence segment of the game, there are several things to consider in Operator placement, as all of the Operators have different abilities and ranges and are differently suited to the various enemy types. There are also missions which add interesting elements such as terrain hazards or changing how you gain the deployment points which are needed to place down operators. Overall this creates a solid and entertaining basis for this game which is supported by an interesting story, detailing the struggle of the pharmaceutical/paramilitary organisation Rhodes Island in researching and treating a deadly disease called Oripathy, all the while raising questions about morality and intolerance in a harsh situation, something I think will always be relevant.

I have been enjoying playing Arknights, and will continue to do so, even if only a couple of rounds a day; I would suggest you give it a go yourself.





# The Archetypical Mahou Shoujo

By James Thackway

One of titan genres of anime, magical girls have been a staple of Japanese animation for over fifty years. In Japanese it's Mahou-Shoujo (魔法少女) and is core to both the identity of anime and otaku in general. The genre however is mysterious. Despite its universal seeming ubiquity, many otaku will only have a couple (or none) under their belt. Instead it acts as a metastory, one that everyone has a vivid image of in their head; but not necessarily an image of a specific show, rather the general idea and aesthetic of it.

To analyse the genre and find the core of what it is, I will run through the outline of a general magical girl show. This isn't any one show but an amalgamation of all my experiences with the genre. To build a picture of this story, I will go over the two pivotal elements: character and story.

Just to address one elephant, while in recent years mahou-shoujo there has been a push for more adult-oriented mahou-shoujo, the backbone of the genre remains the classic long-running kids show, and that is where you will find the very best of the genre. If that turns you off then all I can say is that you're missing out on some of the best contemporary storytelling, however if you have seen one of these more adult-aimed shows (think Madoka or Tutu), then you may be surprised to hear that the difference between them and true-mahou-shoujo is not a lot. Mahou-shoujo is a genre full of thrilling action and dark twists, you just need to take the dive. If you're interested I've put a small "getting started" guide at the bottom of this article.

## The Characters

The main character for our story will be a middle-school girl (~14 years old). It's almost certain this will be the case, since the majority of fiction will try to mirror it's primary audience in its protagonist. She's a "genuine" person who is bright and cheerful but not confident in her abilities, over the narrative she will overcome her emotional vices, be that anxiety, rashness or something else, and mature as a person. The most important property of the main protagonist will be her childish innocence and naivety towards the world and the concept of good and bad. While she may already have a sense of right and wrong, her journey will force her to understand the reasoning behind those impulses and bring her true justice.

There will also be a collection of friends that join her and form a "magical girl team" of girls. These can come in many flavours, and colours, literally. To clearly differentiate between the characters and their roles, girls are usually given a primary colour to be symbolised by, and these colours have themselves manifested archetypal versions of themselves. It's basically the narrative shorthand that super sentai shows do, think the spectrum of coloured power rangers.

Here's a run-down of the generalisations for the coloured magical girls:

- Red: The passionate soul. Her brash nature is both her strength and weakness.



*Kyouko from Madoka Magica is a good example; she is hot-headed but brave.*

- Yellow: The joyful soul. Her happy nature is core to the team's morale, but her naivety often gets her into tricky situations.



*Minako from Sailor Moon is a good example; she's a bubbly genki girl who's friendly to everyone.*

- Green: The odd soul. She doesn't fit in with other girls and is socially distant. She may underestimate or misunderstand her own strengths.



*Lala from Star Twinkle Precure is a good example, she is literally an alien so her social skills aren't great.*

- Blue: The faithful soul. She will act with purpose and style, she is someone that the others can always have trust in and rely on.



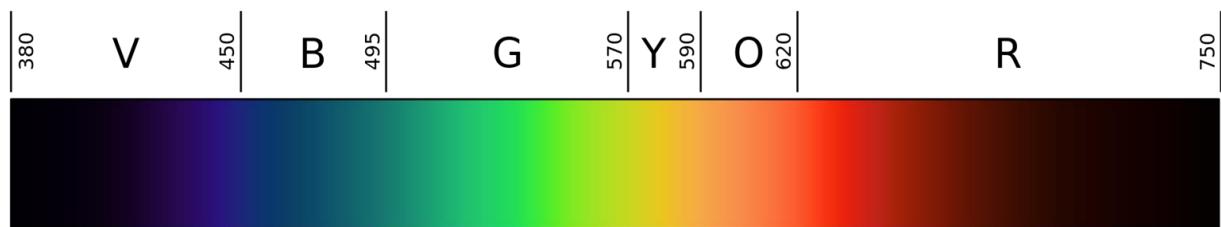
*Honoka from Futari wa Precure is a good example; she is smart and pretty but not prideful.*

- Purple: The graceful soul. She is looked up to and admired by the other girls, she may be even be older than them and act as their senpai.

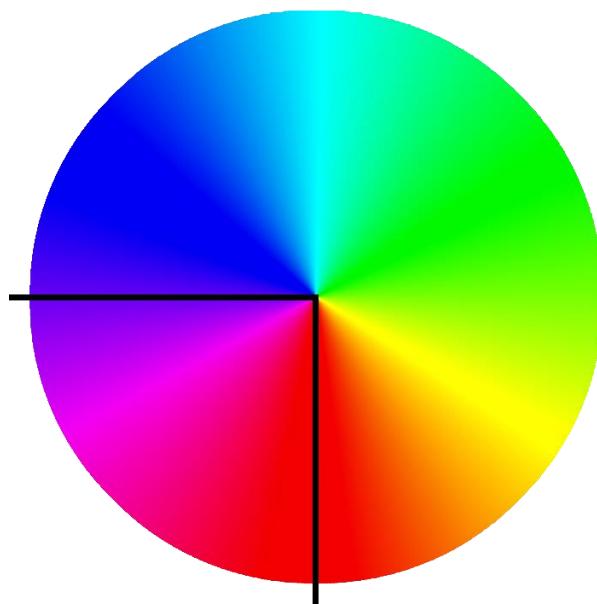


*Zakuro from Tokyo Mew Mew is a good example; she is stylish, older, and is looked up to by the other Mew Mews.*

While this covers the entire rainbow of colours, there exist more colours than lie on a rainbow. Look here at the graph of hue over wavelength of visible light:



This is the linear way of looking at the colour spectrum, and the one that is truest in nature. But as humans we've created the colour wheel instead:



I have placed markers to show the lowest and highest wavelength of pure, visible light. The area in between the red and purple actually cannot be created with just one wavelength of light and thus must be a combination of multiple different wavelengths. This reveals the last, and most prevalent coloured magical girl: pink.

- Pink: The heroine soul. Usually the main character and viewer surrogate. Characterised by her innocence and weakness at first, she will change dramatically over the course of the story. Her personality combines aspects of both red and blue/purple archetypes, the colours that combine to produce pink,



*Doremi from Ojamajo Doremi is a good example; she's the main character and is naive to a fault. She isn't intelligent or strong at first but improves over the series.*

meaning she is both passionate and trustworthy.

As a rule of thumb, if you plotted the members of any magical girl team onto this diagram, then they would have an even spread across the board. For example: a team with only two members might choose one pink and one blue to give a balanced palette, while a team of three would probably introduce a yellow girl to keep the colours balanced. It would be very rare for a three girl team to consist of pink, red and yellow girls, since this would bunch their palette's structure into one area of the wheel.



*A classic magical team from Tokyo Mew Mew*

There are also three extra common types of magical girls. These are usually separate from the main team, or play a special role within the team.

- White: The good soul. Immaculate in character and moral, her feminine innocence makes her an unstoppable force for good.



*Ahiru from Princess Tutu is a good example; she is an innocent but tenacious girl who can do no wrong.*

- Black: The evil soul. The opposite of white, she stands for the forces of evil and darkness, but may still be a protagonistic character



*Rue, also from Princess Tutu is a good example; she is a corrupted girl who is being twisted by a dark force.*

- Rainbow: The god soul. A rare type, usually manifests from some divine or magical creation, or acts as a mediator between the heavenly and earthly realms.



*Ciel (Cure Parfait) from KiraKira Precure is a good example; originally a faerie herself, she is transformed into a girl part way through the series.*

One note to take is that not all mahou-shoujo shows contain teams of girls, some only having one or two. In this case it is very likely that the protagonist will be white while her antagonist or rival is black.

Another set of characters are the faeries. Traditionally taking the form of animate plush dolls or cute animals, they will give the girls their power and act as side kicks and tools. Sometimes there will be one great faerie that gives all the girls power simultaneously, but more often is that each girl will have their own personal faerie that reflects their personality.

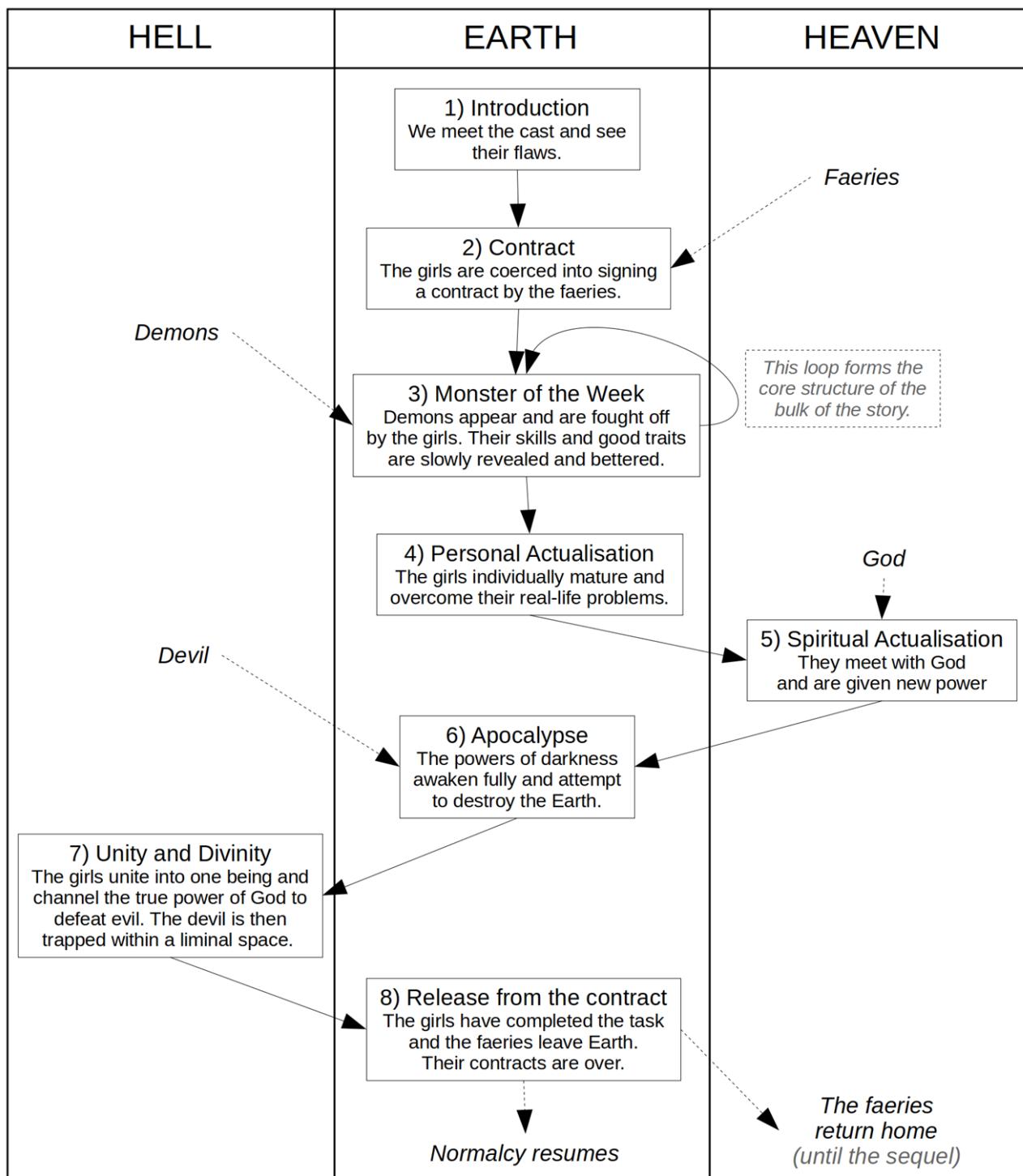


*The faeries from Mewkledreamy and Futari wa Precure*

This structure of a colour-based cast is a powerful and quick way to communicate a set of characters and their dynamic. It is of course not limited to use in magical shows, and can be found across all media from sitcoms to superhero films, but it can most clearly be seen in the more metaphorical and flashy medium of kids anime. Many anime can be fit into this pattern. Think of Kill la Kill. Who are Ryuuko and Satsuki but red/pink and blue magical girls?

## The Story

Obviously the story will shift drastically for different shows, especially in earlier examples. However there are common tropes that appear and signify a mahou-shoujo story. Since everyone liked my flowchart I've made another one this year



If it is not clear, time progresses vertically down, with the boxed and numbered points making up the different acts of the story. The arrows show movement of either characters or the plot through the various worlds and through time.



*Unity and Divinity: the girls have merged into one being of “infinite power, infinite love and eyes full of stars” to defeat the big bad in the Gurren Lagann-esque finale of Heartcatch Precure.*

An important facet of mahou-shoujo is the contract. The method by which the protagonists will gain their powers is almost invariably through some divine messengers that bring channel the power of heaven into them, in return for the girls protecting Earth. Understanding the contract is key to understanding the genre, and so I will try to explain their significance. The most important point is that the girls usually do not sign the contract fully of their free will. This can range from pure naivety or misunderstanding, to full on blackmail and forcible coercion. You didn't think Madoka Magica made up the concept, did you? In Tokyo Mew Mew, for example, Ichigo is chosen by a global intelligence agency that her body was suitable for the Mew Mew powers and so they forcibly splice her genes with that of a cat in an untested experiment. They then later tell her that she must now save the world (and also work without pay in a cafe), and this show was a rather generic kids magical girl show.

The signing of the contract can be paralleled with signing a deal with the devil, as is explored in Madoka. This Faustian interpretation of the story makes sense, the innocent girls are tricked by greater powers into swapping their soul for magical power. Luckily, in most shows, the girls end up fully embracing their new role, if often trepidacious at first.

I parallel this method of storytelling with another, “The Hero’s Journey”. In this classical “monomyth”, the hero will slowly gain power over time, through trial and tribulation he will amass the power and prestige of a hero and eventually defeat evil. In magical girl shows,

however, the girls are suddenly thrust into a position of great power without their consent and must deal with the consequences thereof. They must make mental progress to match their physical power, and once they do they can fully wield their true power. In my mind this is undoubtedly a feminine interpretation of the monomyth: reaching maturity through trust in others and mutual trade, rather than brute force and personal quest.

## Guide

If you aren't already a magical girl fan, then I hope my article has painted a picture of what the genre is truly about. If you can find the bravery to look past the fact that they're "made for kids" then there are truly amazing stories to be found. The storytelling is alike to other otaku media, and the aesthetic is one that many have come to love including myself. Here are just a few that I recommend for newcomers:

- Heartcatch Precure: Precure is one of the biggest franchises in the world with nearly a thousand episodes, but I recommend starting with this amazing entry. It's gorgeously animated and depicts a story close to the ideal mahou-shoujo, a story of epic proportions in emotion and action.
- Princess Tutu: Aimed at older audiences than most, Tutu tells a metastory adaptation of Ballet classics with a magical girls twist. It takes itself seriously and it is suited if you are wary of watching childrens shows since this isn't one.
- Ojamajo Doremi: On the contrary, this one is definitely a kids show. With adorable aesthetics and a great OST, Doremi tackles important themes of maturity with an unparalleled finesse. Its a show that makes children laugh but grown men cry.



*Magical Girls are cooler than you*



# A Naruto Experience

By Cameron Johnson

For starters, I'll say this, don't watch the filler. Filler is gross and adds nothing of substance to the story and the story flows better without it. This means you're watching about 420 episodes out of the 720 that there are but it is worth it.

## Heroes

Naruto at the start of the anime is kind of annoying because he tries to get people's attention by pulling pranks and just irritates people but as the anime progresses, I began to root for him and want to see him succeed. He puts in so much effort and trains so hard that it felt rewarding to see him become the 'hero of the village' at the end of the pain arc. I also sympathised with him a lot because he had such a difficult upbringing and he could have become a villain as well if it wasn't for his strong will and his friends to help him. Sasuke Uchiha goes from an asshole to an asshole with cool powers over the course of the anime. This all boils down to his stubbornness and his inferiority complex which makes him unlikable but he was Naruto's goal so without Sasuke, Naruto may have become a different person entirely. Sasuke's power of the sharingan is kind of broken and it just kept evolving into more and more broken powers like amaterasu, the highest level of fire release. Sasuke's fights are cool especially against Itachi because there was so much riding on that fight and we later found out that Itachi was actually a good guy all along. Sakura is a character that is pretty useless at the start but becomes less useless as the anime goes on. Her character is one dimensional at the start because her personality is just 'I like Sasuke' and her 'inner Sakura' isn't funny but by the end of Shippuden, she becomes reliable and is helpful on the battlefield even if she doesn't do much fighting. The fact that she still likes Sasuke even after all the crimes he has committed makes me wonder if there is something wrong with her but at least she didn't fall for Naruto because they would have been a bad match together.

My favourite non-main characters are Shikamaru and Tsunade. Shikamaru proves himself to be competent and actually makes a good leader and it's always fun to see him fight because he's intelligent and can calmly analyse a situation which helps Naruto out

more than once. His powers of shadow manipulation are also unique because they are able to restrain people and I really liked his fight in the chunin exam because it just went to show how intelligent he is. Tsunade, the fifth Hokage, is a fun character because she is kind of like Naruto's grandmother and she looks out for him like a pseudo-grandson almost. She is also one of the three legendary sannin which means she is crazy powerful but she only shows it off in very few situations. It's also very fun seeing Jiraiya tease her when they go out drinking.

### Villains

My favourite villain has to be Pain because his arc is so good and is probably the peak of Shippuden. His motivations for world peace through suffering pain seems like an achievable goal and his backstory is compelling. Pain being Nagato pulling the strings behind the scenes is a good twist and it also gives us a good show of how the rinnegan actually works even if it is broken when used later. Nagato being a war orphan and a student of Jiraiya means that Naruto can relate to him and understand his pain. Nagato's decision to save everyone in Konoha feels genuine and deserved because Naruto has shown him that there is another way to achieve peace if your will is strong enough and don't stray from the path. Itachi Uchiha, older brother of Sasuke, is another villain I like because his motivations aren't clear at the start but then after he dies we find out he did it all for Konoha. This makes for an interesting story because everyone thinks he is a villain but he only killed his clan to stop a greater conflict that would have destroyed Konoha. When he is revived, it is also cool to see Sasuke and Itachi team up because Sasuke gets to find out the truth and believes in his brother again. Madara Uchiha is a bad villain who is too powerful, so powerful that even Masashi Kishimoto, the author of Naruto, said he made him too powerful. This means that his motivations are kind of lost as he goes from 'doing it to make a peaceful world' to 'getting rid of chakra' which aren't the same thing. He also just does become a god in the end which is kind of ridiculous.

### Fights

In the original Naruto, my favourite fight has to be Naruto vs Neji because it demonstrates the message of the original Naruto that 'even hard work can beat a genius' well. Everyone expects this to be an easy victory for Neji because he possesses the Byakugan and all Naruto can do is make clones but a training arc to control his chakra before the fight and some quick thinking make this fight entertaining. This is also a pivotal point for Konoha as the people start to recognise Naruto more and the effort he puts in.

In Shippuden there are two fights which got me very hyped; the pain fight and the 9 tailed beast vs obito fight. The Pain fight was good because Naruto had just done a training arc to learn how to use frog powers and sage mode so we got to see his newly trained abilities in action. We also got to see Hinata do something for once during this fight by standing up to Pain to try and save Naruto which was good to set up their future relationship. The animation of the fight is different to all the previous fights because it's more simplistic but more fluid meaning we get memes like 'my pain is greater than yours'.



However, this meant that the fight felt more grand and epic as Naruto and Pain kept moving to different battle fields. This was also the fight where Naruto got to speak to his dad in chakra form which I thought was a beautiful moment as it allowed Naruto to connect with his dad that he never met. Naruto's nine tail form having 8 tails and a skeleton on it was also quite cool to see as we got to see Naruto fight in a more animalistic way since the 9 tailed fox took over from the rage Naruto was feeling. The 9 tailed beast vs Obito fight was incredible as well because we finally got to learn the fox inside Naruto's name; Kurama. This was also the fight where Naruto and Kurama became partners and had mutual trust in one another as Naruto turned into a Chakra fox to fight. It was so epic seeing Kurama fight the other tailed beasts to save them from Obito especially when they fired two tailed beast bombs at each other which caused a nuke like explosion from the raw power.

The Madara fight was fun but bloated. The fight took so long to come to a conclusion but we got to see Naruto's powers evolve as he gained the powers of the sage of the six paths and basically became a god himself. When Madara sucked up all of the chakra and transformed into Kaguya, I thought 'what the f\*\*\*' because it came out of nowhere and felt unnatural. The fight against Kaguya was kinda bulls\*\*\* because she was more powerful than Madara but that somehow meant she was more beatable which devalued Madara since he probably would have won if he didn't become Kaguya. One good thing about the fight though was that we got to see Kakashi use Susano which was so great that I was hyped when he used it, it's just a shame that Kakashi didn't get to keep the Sharingan eyes after the fight.

### Music

The music in Naruto is so good that I could listen to it for hours. The original Naruto has better music in my opinion because it always knew when to get hyped and whenever I heard the battle music, I knew I was in for a good time. Shippuden's music was slightly different from the original Naruto's but it was still good. However, when they used the original Naruto's music in Shippuden, that just made the fights so much better.

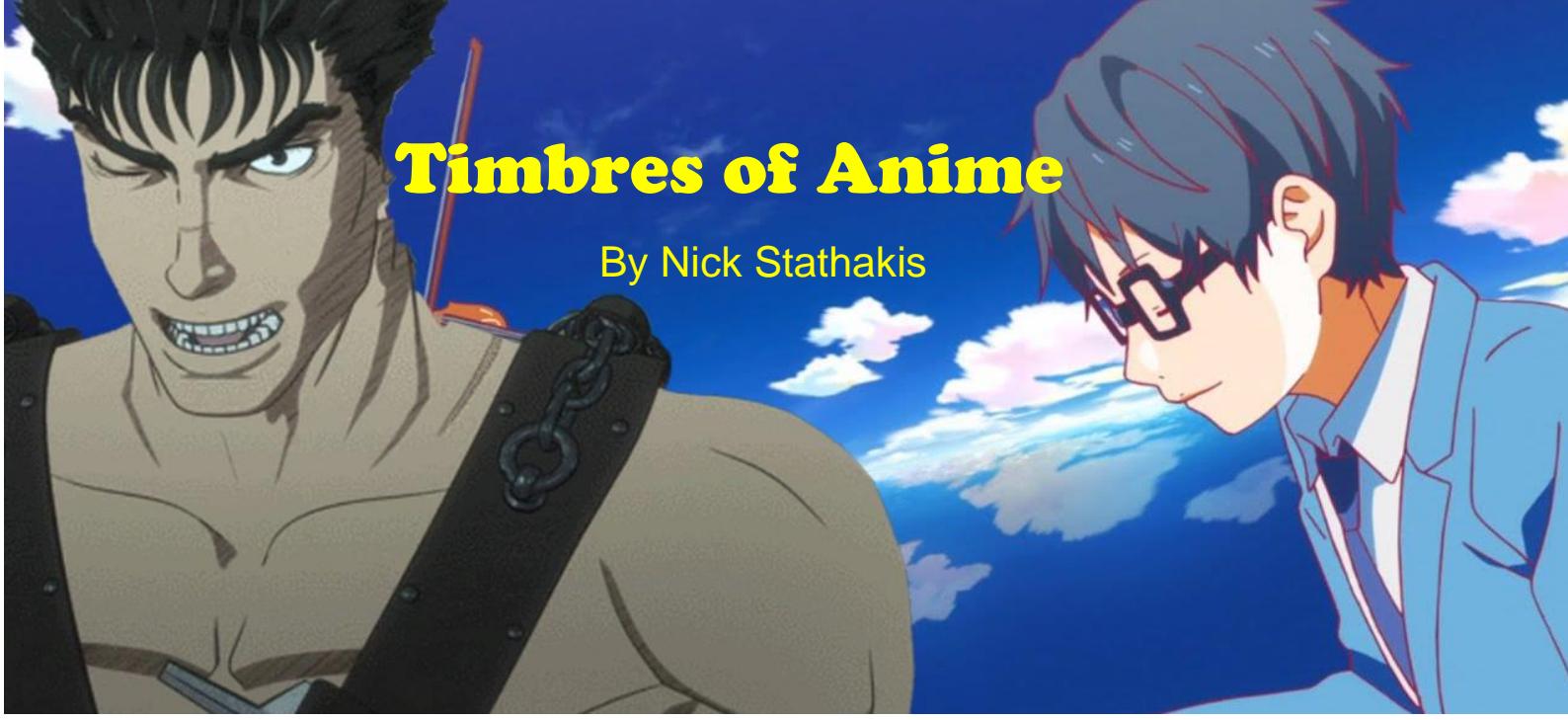
All the Naruto openings were good (except the filler ones) but there were some really epic ones that I will always love such as 'GO!!!', the 4th opening of the original naruto, because it is just so catchy and easy for anime karaoke. In Shippuden, there are 7 great openings which I had recognised before I watched Naruto through other stuff and I thought 'wait, I've heard this before' and they are openings 1,2,6,7,9,13 & 16. My favourite one though has to be opening 1 because it got me the right amount of pumped for seeing all the characters again and I won't forget 'make some noise' for a while now.

The endings of any anime are kind of not memorable unless they really stand out and the only ending that stood out was the very 1st one of the original Naruto 'wind by akeboshi' because it's lyrics are 'don't try to live so wise' which is funny when sung in engrish and it's so clunky that it makes me think 'hmm, what does living so wise feel like'

### Conclusion

Naruto is a fantastic joy to watch and I am glad I undertook the task of watching it all in 6 weeks. However, you really do need a lot of free time to watch it because it's such a bingeable show and watching it week by week must have been painful especially with the filler included. I would like to say that I'll rewatch it again in the future but it's so huge that I don't know if I will but I will always rewatch my favourite parts like the fights.





# Timbres of Anime

By Nick Stathakis

Animation is much like an instrument. Every anime has a rhythm in its pacing, a melody, in its plot, and dynamics as the plot crescendos up to its climax. And, much like music, animation has a timbre too – a feel, an effect, a quality derived from the medium of choice. Many different techniques are at the animator's disposal such as cel animation, digital animation, CG, real-life images, and novel medium's like *Mob Psycho*'s paint-on-glass. Forming a symphony, juxtaposed mediums of animation can contrast or complement, be concordant or dissonant, creating a beautiful or hideous product. Today we'll be going over anime's many instruments looking at both their successes and failures.

Let's first have a small history lesson in animation. Before the digital age, animation was done on cels – artists drew on paper, carbon copied their art onto celluloid, and painted each cel of the animation by hand. Celluloid, or cels for short, are pieces of transparent plastic onto which the frames of animation are painted. For a single shot, several cels (layers of plastic sheet) are used, so that each character or moving object can be animated independently. In other words, the entire shot didn't have to be redrawn – only the parts which moved. These cels were then filmed using big machines with high definition cameras. As one could imagine, this was a costly and lengthy process compared to modern digital animation. Besides using physical equipment like cels, using complex camera machinery and having to paint each cel with acrylic, you also didn't have the many shortcuts which come along with computer editing which streamline the process. It's no wonder that once computer technology improved, animation studios flocked to digital animation. However, that is not, of course, to say that the shows of the 70s through to the late 90s when cel was used looked worse. Shows like *Evangelion* and *Cowboy Bebop* of the 90s, *Akira* of the 80s and even *Future Boy Conan* of the 70s are all beautifully crafted shows whose animation is second to none even today in terms of quality and smoothness. Instead of *improving* animation with computers, simply the timbre of animation changed. Cel gives a show a beautiful, warm feel which modern computer's struggle to emulate – much like listening to a record compared to a CD. The CD may have better quality and consistency, but analog has a warmth about it that's nigh impossible to recreate on digital. Their timbres are different, the quality of their music is different, much like with the different styles of animation.

Before the Millennium, before the age of digital animation, the timbre of anime was defined by cel. Like the timbre of a trumpet or a saxophone, which gives the music that instrument plays its special richness and feel, cel gave the anime of yonder year its timbre, its warm, rich feeling. But using cel, as mentioned above, is a costly and time consuming technique. Particularly in the early days, in the 70s, for instance, animators had to get creative with the medium to keep costs down and deadlines met. After all, through necessity comes the greatest innovation. For example, the first season of *Lupin III* (1971) uses directing cleverly to obfuscate parts which were harder to animate like when there's an explosion or a fire, they pan to the characters on the ground looking at the incident, instead of the harder to animate incident itself. Such techniques devised in this period live on as cost-cutting techniques today. Yet without a doubt the most insane example of the flexibility of cel in this period, whilst also experimenting with new timbres in animation, is the godfather of anime Osamu Tezuka's, *100-man-nen Chikyuu no Tabi: Bander Book* – a straight to TV movie which is truly unrestrained and well worth a watch. Instead of animating fire, they burnt the cell. They burnt the cell and recorded it. They sure were lucky they got it to work first time around. An ingenious use of timbre in anime – I'll certainly never forget it. But it goes to show how restriction in budget, ability or technology can lead to innovations. Understandably, however, some timbres, like of actual fire, never catch on.

The need for innovation in techniques, in anime's timbres, was identified as far back as 1988 by Miyazaki. Hayao Miyazaki, Studio Ghibli's famous director behind works such as *Mononoke-hime* and *Spirited Away*, laments that "innumerable techniques" for animation can be used "but it would not be an exaggeration to say that all popular Japanese animation is still based on cel animation."<sup>1</sup> Miyazaki goes on to show the breadth of animation's potential, giving the example of taking a shot of a suburb of Tokyo from the same location every month for 10 years to string together to form a fifteen second animation. Of course, this wouldn't be an example used in everyday animation which you and I consume, but it goes to show the sheer versatility of animation as a medium. Miyazaki goes on to say how cel isn't too great a medium since "even poorly rendered drawings start to look fairly good as cel" whilst "when something well-drawn is turned into cel illustrations, it starts to look diluted and weak". In other words, cel as a medium makes art mediocre – not befitting of great animation. Yet it's hard to find new fertile fields of animation for an animation studio to venture in to. There's always plenty of financial risk involved in whether or not the incorporation of a new timbre of animation will be a success. Not to mention the cost of training artists from other fields in how to animate – which may, of course, all be for naught if your fans don't like it.

There have however been great successes in using new art forms. First and foremost is *Mob Psycho 100*. In the picture to your right, there is the highly acclaimed "paint-on-glass" work by Miyo Sato<sup>3</sup>, a young paint-on-glass painter, who uses her technique to full effect in the show. Paint on glass has an inherently unsettling feel – the solid, discrete, ordered lines of reality are instead impressionistic, fuzzy and unrepresentable, to coin a word. It is as if the minds of the characters can't understand the contents of what the spirits who emerge are. The paint-on-glass, a new timbre/artistic technique, produces an uncanny feeling – an excellent example of how timbre gives an extra depth of feeling to the final product. A duet between two different forms of art, if you will. Yet this duet is only harmonious when you play into each instrument's strengths

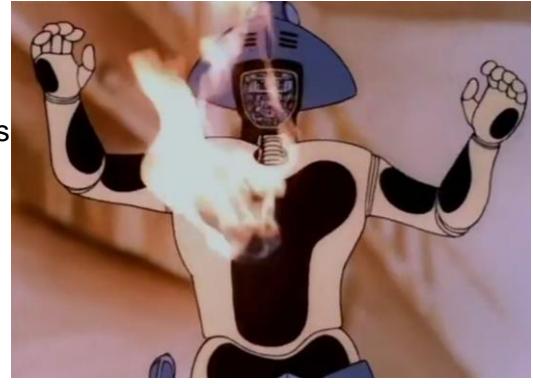


Figure 1: *Bander Book*: They just went and burnt the cel

and inherent feeling. The paint-on-glass technique has an inherent spookiness about it, which is brought out in its juxtaposition to digital animation, producing a harmonious, yet contrasting, duet wherein each animation technique's strengths are played into. As Miyazaki said above, normal animation techniques are a happy average – much like the piano, highly versatile and beautiful. Piano music is lovely but so too are duets, since the contrast in timbre cannot be achieved with just one instrument, affording so much more potential to the art.

Another great example is *Puella Magi Madoka Magica*. *Madoka* uses disorienting surrealist messes of real pictures for the witches' labyrinths, accentuating the alienness of the abode and the idea that our protagonists don't belong there. This sense of otherworldliness is also found in the west in the film *the Terminator 2*, where the new, mercurial terminator from the future has a terrifying uncanniness about him, as emphasised by the CG, giving an alien horror about the enemy. The effect is only strengthened by early 90s CG quality, hence why the movie still stands today.

It's not as if all contrasts in timbre necessarily give a spookiness to the piece either. Ufotable's *Fate* installments, use CG to great effect for special effects to differentiate the fantastical from the everyday, to single out the otherworldly with a unique timbre.

Talk of CG brings us onto the dark underbelly of timbres – the overuse of CG. As stated above CG can be used to make a beautiful duet, when the art's timbres gel well with one another and the timbres suit the melodies each form of animation plays. Yet CG today is often used as a cost-cutting technique – hurting the final product and adding a sense of discordance in the art. Bad CG is awfully common and anime fans are bloodhound, sniffing out CG however they try to dress it up. Vehicles are where the bulk of CG work goes. Jarring looking cars driving down roads and mechs who look like they don't belong in the world they live. Is this the effect that the anime wants to give of these cars and mechs? As if they're in some way different to the world in which they live? The argument can be made for a mech, depending on the intent of the show, but certainly not for cars. But even in mech shows where the CG is done to the best of modern capabilities, like in *Full Metal Panic! Invisible Victory*, the mechs don't gel well with their surroundings – their timbres are dissonant, not consonant. The tragedy is that the very talents to draw mechs and vehicles are dying since CG is taking over these fields. Mech shows like *Listeners* which is airing this season, for example, only has CG mechs. A show close to my heart, *Detective Conan*, has also fallen prey to the scourge of badly utilised CG. In *Detective Conan*, it isn't too much of a surprise, especially

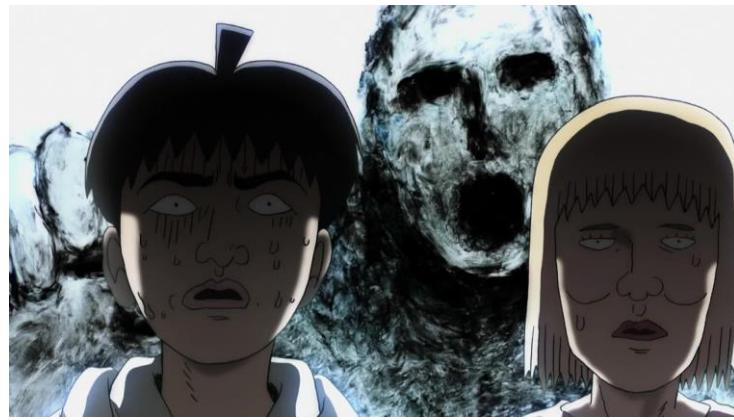


Figure 2: *Mob Psycho 100: Spooky ghost*



Figure 3: *Madoka: ooo scary*



Figure 4: *Detective Conan: just try to imagine these paper thin amulets tumbling and falling onto the floor below*

given the weekly release schedule of the show. The disgusting paper thin gold amulets on the image to the right flew out of the treasure chest in repulsive fashion.

Some shows, popular shows like *Re: Zero* and *The Boy and the Beast*, even use CG for background characters! The people in the picture here waddle back and forth like Unity assets. I recommend you rewatch the first episode of *Re: Zero* paying close attention to the CG background characters. It's not as if it's done for effect either, since when a character is closer up, they suddenly become fully animated. CG crowdsmen have become a growing phenomenon in anime. Sure, it enables anime studios to create full crowds of people, but plenty of anime succeeded in resolving the issue in the past by using clever directing to avoid showing characters or simplified art for background characters. CG has given anime studios, I would argue, an easy way to make screen compositions which would otherwise have been tricky, possible. The many restrictions of the cel and pre-CG age have been pried off with CG's ability to create anything at a fraction of the cost (and quality). However, without that restriction, the anime produced loses some of its inventiveness, some of the unique innovative quality found in past directing. Using different timbres should be for delivering a certain effect – often one of another world amongst our own. To use it as a cost-cutting technique only creates a jarring experience, as the frequent use of CG has demonstrated.



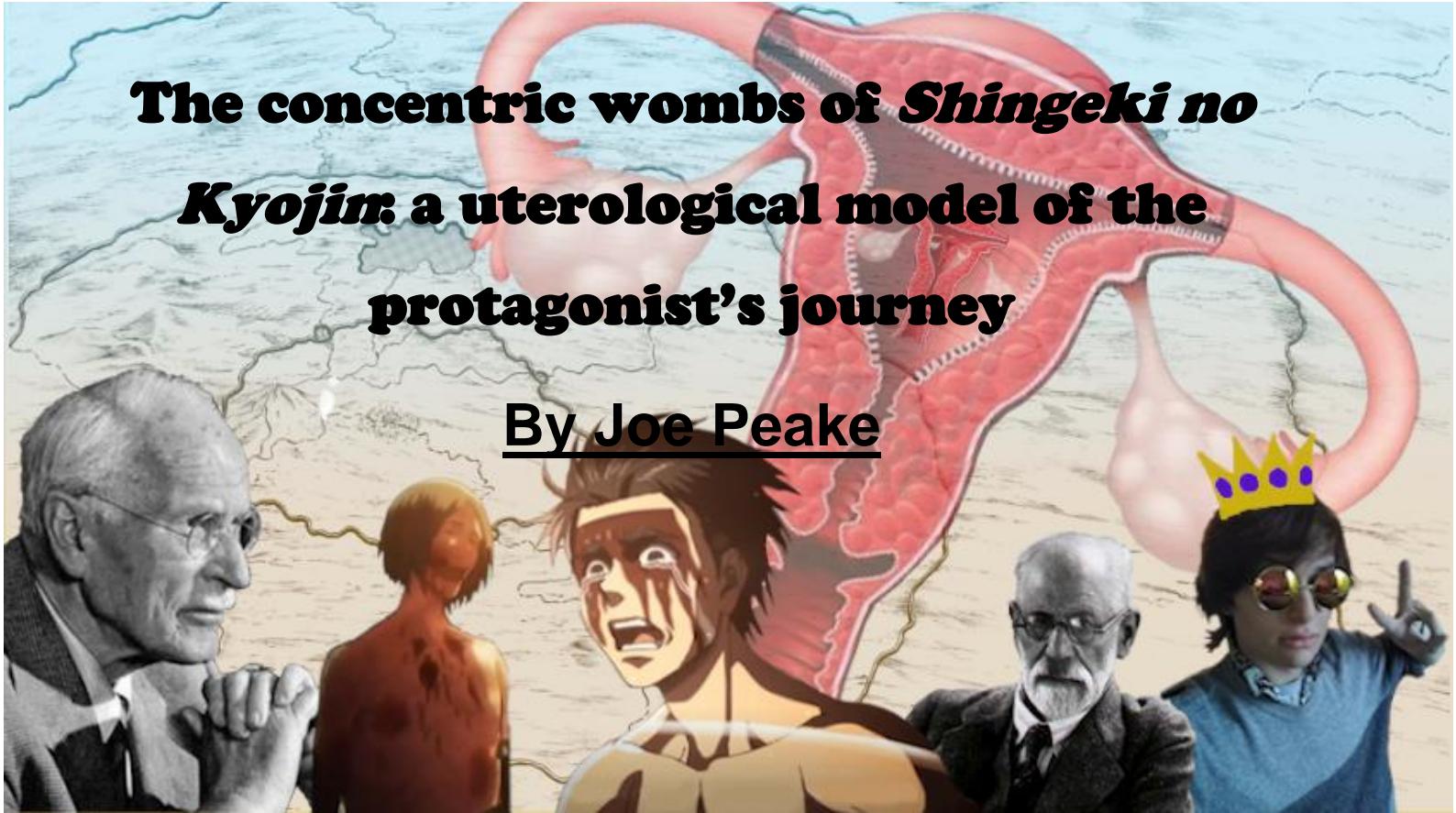
Figure 5: *Re: Zero*: these people are waddling back and forth

We've seen the good and the bad, now on to the bizarre. But a good kind of bizarre. A bizarre which isn't trying to achieve anything other than look cool. The anime studio *Shaft* is the best known proponent of this kind of bizarre. The best example is in the cute girls doing cute things show *Hidamari Sketch* where all the food is photographed. Here, there is no argument to be made that it enhances the idea of food in the show, or whatever else. It's just kind of cool looking.

And that's the end of our whistle-stop tour of the timbres of anime. We've seen both the sublime, in shows like *Mob Psycho 100*, and the downright hideous in *Re: Zero*. Like any tool, it can be used both for good and for evil depending on the wielder. And whether we're aware of the techniques being used or not, the use of different timbres has an effect on us. In the same way that we don't consider chemical compositions and changes in energy in our day to day lives, neither do we consider the complex work that goes into directing, animating, character designing, etc in the anime we watch. And hopefully, after reading this article, you'll begin to notice the many interesting uses of timbre and, like myself, hope that anime will continue to innovate with new ideas and new timbres.



Figure 6: *Hidamari Sketch*: Lettuce.



# The concentric wombs of *Shingeki no Kyojin*: a uterological model of the protagonist's journey

By Joe Peake

## Introduction/Conception

The ideas that birthed this essay came together during a recent conversation with our new President-Elect over discord, a conversation which, as shall be of no surprise to some of you, turned to the topic of 20<sup>th</sup> century western analytical psychology. The vastly different cultural contexts between that subject and the anime medium may lead some fans of the latter to scoff at attempts to draw direct links between them, while readers of the former may regard the medium of anime as unworthy of analysis in obscure jargon-encumbered academic journals whose readership can be counted on one hand. Such people are welcome to their prejudices, thought they are welcome to join us on this journey if they wish to expand their horizons. For it is in the experimental, chaotic, and at times counter-intuitive, combining of eclectic source material that the most exciting and fertile ideas are spawned.

Therefore, this essay will put to the test a theory based in large part on the ideas of Carl Jung and developed by our President-Elect: Stathakis' Theory of Concentric Wombs. Using this theory as a framework I have conceived a novel way of interpreting the narrative structure of the popular *shonen* series *Shingeki no Kyojin*, better known in the English-speaking world as *Attack on Titan*. Using this model, Eren Yeager's heroic journey can be characterised as one in which he passes out of a succession of

metaphorical wombs or womb-like states, a succession of rebirths that are partly induced, and partly of his own volition. This choice of series might not strike the astute reader as the most appropriate; the *shonen* genre is hardly renowned for philosophical depth or introspection, while there exist several examples of anime that have explicitly made use of western sociological, psychological and psychoanalytical theory, such as the Freudian influence upon *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Psycho Pass*'s reinterpretation of the *Panopticon* as described by Bentham and Foucault. However, mythologies and symbols are rarely confined by geographic and cultural boundaries, and we often find ourselves reproducing them without being consciously aware of it. Isayama may never have heard of Concentric Womb Theory, but, as this paper shall argue, the same unconscious associations which germinated and guided psychoanalytical interpretations of the womb can also be glimpsed beneath the surface of *Shingeki no Kyojin*'s own amniotic membrane.

There are many other logical reasons to conjoin this particular model with this particular anime: in part due to the unique applicability of Concentric Womb Theory to the design of the fictional world in which *Shingeki no Kyojin*'s narrative takes place; in part because this series is not one that our newly-elected weab-king cares for, and therefore offers a virgin staging-ground to put his theory to the test; and in part, probably, out of a (no doubt futile) attempt to out-do him at his own game. But before I deliver my uterological analysis of *Shingeki no Kyojin*, it is worth giving a very brief overview of the significance of the womb in the western psychoanalytical canon, in order to provide the context for understanding Concentric Womb Theory (hereby abbreviated to CWT). I must also forewarn readers that spoilers will follow for the entirety of the first three seasons of the show, although I have taken care to avoid giving away details of the plot of the manga. However, manga-readers may note that some of this essay's conclusions are applicable to events that take place beyond the point at which the anime has currently reached.

### The symbolic and psychological significance of Wombs

Womb symbolism has proven an enduring and fertile source of creative inspiration within the Western canon. It should come as no surprise that wombs have primarily been associated with fertility and the birth of new life. The key example from the Abrahamic

tradition is the Garden Eden, which the first-century Gnostic priest Simon Magus regarded as an allegory of the uterus (Manuel and Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (1979), p. 43). As our archetypal paradise, Eden is a land where the physical nourishment required by humans can be obtained without conflict or toil. However, the fruits or nourishment offered by these wombs were not always physical. Another notable example of a womb from the ancient world is Delphi, the site of the famous cave and oracle. The name derives from the Ancient Greek word for womb, *delphús*, and was believed to be the navel of a great mother-goddess (Graves, *The Greek Myths* (1960), p. 75). The cave of Delphi served as a fertile source of knowledge rather than life, with petitioners receiving the oracle's wisdom from the orifice of the cave in exchange for money and gifts.

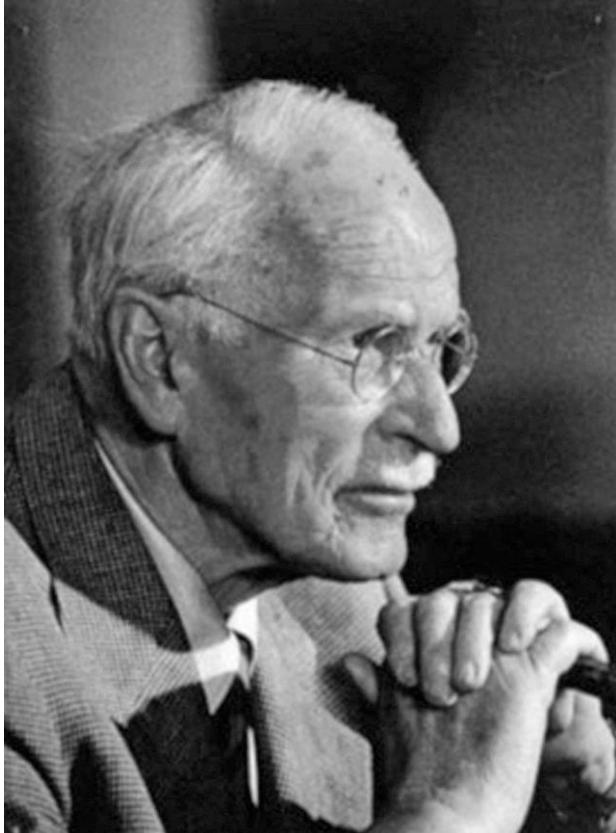
These uterine associations were adopted and re-interpreted by both Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Freud regarded the experience within the womb as a place of protection where one is free from the dangers and anxieties of the world outside (Freud, *Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety* (1926), trans. A. Strachey (1949), p. 89). Jung meanwhile noted that in the womb of the mother 'dwells the wisdom of the father' (Jung, 'Letter to Walter Lewino', 21 April 1948). If the womb represented tranquillity, protection, nourishment and innocence, then birth represented trauma, danger, deprivation, and the loss of innocence. In the second edition of his *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud called the act of birth 'the first experience of anxiety, and thus the source and prototype of the effect of anxiety.' (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (2010), p. 411). For Freud, our relation to the world around us is characterised by an inability 'to tolerate it uninterruptedly', causing us to 'withdraw into the premundane state' of the womb, arranging our conditions to be 'very like what they were then: warm, dark and free from stimuli.' (Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1923). Trans. J. Strachey, ed. J. Strachey and A. Richards (1982), p. 117). Freud's disciple Otto Rank went further in characterising the psychic and physical separation from our mothers during birth as the root of all mental instability, and the desire to return to a state of 'intrauterine primal pleasure' as the root of all pleasure (Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* (1924), ed. Ogden, trans. Unknown (1929), pp.11-17). Strange though these interpretations may seem, they were supported both by observable experience (childbirth being the most common cause of death among women) and by the religious milieu these men grew up in. Birth is

effectively an exile from the womb, and exile is a powerful and enduring motif in the biblical canon, as seen in Adam and Eve's expulsion from paradise, and in the Jews' flight from Egypt and centuries spent wandering in the desert. The connection of exile and childbirth is made clear by Yahweh himself in the book of Genesis, as he informs the disobedient Eve: "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children" (Genesis, 3:16).

You will note that each of the theories described above posit a highly dualistic, binary model of human development: we are happy and safe, until we are not, and then we wish we were again. Such models are insufficient for the purposes of understanding Eren Yeager's journey. For Carl Jung however, the traumatic birth was not an event endured once and which then overshadowed the rest of one's life; instead, the traumas we experience throughout our lives force us through continual 'rebirths,' each of which leads to the 'death' of our old selves. However traumatic the experiences of rebirth may be, they are necessary for our continued personal development. From the *Liber Novus*:

'Frightful things must happen until men grow ripe. But anything else will not ripen humanity. Hence all this that takes place in these days must also be, so that the renewal can come. Since the source of blood that follows the shrouding of the sun is also the source of the new life.' (Jung, *Liber Novus (The Red Book)*, ed. and trans. S. Shamdasani (2009), p. 239)

Jung acknowledged many different forms of rebirth and many different experiences that bring about rebirth, each of which is discussed in his 1939 essay 'Concerning Rebirth.' For the purposes of this present study and for understanding Concentric Womb Theory, the key point is that by doing away with the binary of Edenic womb-state vs traumatic postnatal-state favoured by the Freudians, Jung



Carl Gustav Jung

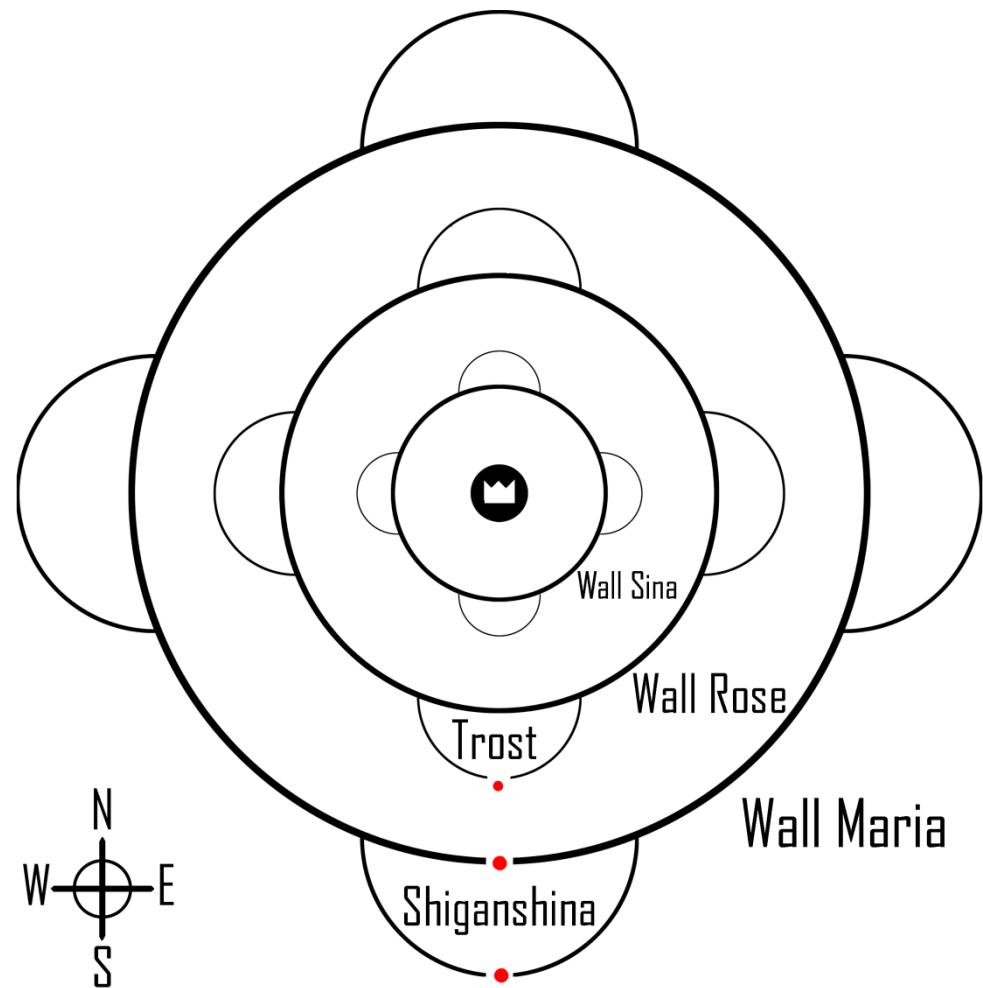
### Concentric Womb Theory and the necessity of rebirth

While Concentric Womb Theory (CWT) recognises the historical importance of Freudian womb theories, it takes its cue from Jungian rather than Freudian interpretations of human experience. However, while Jungian ideas of rebirth focus on the experience of the subject undergoing rebirth, CWT emphasises the propensity of womb-states or womblike entities to generate more wombs within and outside of their own boundaries, and the journey of the subject as they travel between said wombs and womb-states.

Wombs beget wombs beget wombs. A cell through mitosis begets new cells, a process which destroys the integrity of the original whole and which always carries inherent risk (of mutation, of failure, of death). However, this process of rebirth is essential to the creation of a body, which in turn must be birthed into the world (again resulting in a traumatic split and the potential for the danger). Similarly, a mind acts as a womb for one's ideas, birthing them into consciousness, while the social constraints of society effectively provide us with comfortable walls or borders within which to orient our lives, shaping and developing us *in utero*. The nation-states we belong to similarly nurture and protect us to some degree or another, and to be exiled from it is a particularly traumatic form of rebirth, as seen in the Ancient Greek ritual of *ostrakismos* (the root of *ostracism*) or the plight of modern refugees.

CWT also rejects the Freudian idea of the womb as a safe, Edenic, protected state: death can occur in the uterus, just as the body's cells and organs can malfunction, and the mind's demons can destroy it from within. A foetus cannot remain in the womb forever without killing itself and the mother, while a restless mind with no outlet or focus for its energy goes as mad as a wild animal locked in a cage. The processes of birth and rebirth are thereby necessary to escape the dangers inherent in stagnancy. The womb-state is also vulnerable to dangers from without as much as from within: the safety and comfort of the home is gone the moment that home catches fire, just as the safety and comfort of the nation is lost during a time of war, famine, or sudden invasion by enormous man-eating zombies.

### **Analysis, Trimester 1: Journey into the Centre of the Womb**



Shiganshina: An imperfect mirror of the Edenic womb

The most visually obvious reason for applying CWT to *Shingeki no Kyojin* is the tripartite division of the protagonist's home nation via the means of three concentric walls, each of which symbolise the different layers of consciousness occupied by members of its populace as much as they do their differing standards of physical confinement. There are also several semi-circular enclosures on the outer sides of the walls, called 'districts', which contain the urban centres. The areas between the outer and innermost walls are largely rural and forested, with most of the inhabitants being hunters and subsistence farmers. The inner wall contains the wealthy urban districts as well as the nation's secretive and authoritarian government, a regime determined to prevent any of its subjects from escaping the walls or from learning their nation's true history. We later discover that the walled nation rests upon an island, and that the people who live beyond the sea (the existence of whom is unknown to both the viewer and the protagonists at the start of the series) refer to this island by the mocking nickname of 'Paradise,' further cementing the series' setting as a dark mirror of Eden.

The protagonist of *Shingeki no Kyojin*, Eren Yeager, lives with his mother, father, and childhood friend Mikasa in Shiganshina District on the southernmost part of the outer wall. A womb within a womb, Shiganshina as depicted in the first episode is the closest thing to an Eden that Eren, Mikasa and Armin will experience throughout the series. Enclosed by a semi-circular protrusion extending from the outermost wall, the rustic and sleepy town appears at first glance to be relatively free from poverty and other social ills. However, in that same episode we learn that the town had suffered an outbreak of disease many years previously, and witness residents learning of the deaths of loved ones in the jaws of the titans while on scouting expeditions, this reminder of the outside threat regularly rupturing their bubble of safety and comfort. Furthermore, life within the walls is not without violence. Episode 6 of the first season reveals that Mikasa's parents were killed by three men in a botched effort to kidnap her, only for Eren to take the would-be kidnappers by surprise. Mikasa and Eren's subsequent slaying of the three men prompts a psychic awakening in Mikasa, a rebirth that binds her to Eren as his protector for the remainder of the series thus far. This occasion does not however provoke any form of rebirth within Eren; the implications of this are pertinent to part 3 of this analysis. Others within Shiganshina feel less threatened by physical danger and more constrained by the censorship and restrictions imposed by the government. Eren's

friend Armin distrusts the official narrative, having heard rumours of a great body of water called ‘the ocean’ further afield, and longs to travel beyond the walls to see it for himself; we later discover that the head of the Scouting Legion harbours similar desires.

### Titanic Caesarians and Progressive Penetrations

The rupturing of the walls of his hometown by the Colossal and Armoured Titans destroys this state of inertia, as the horrors of the world outside spill into Shiganshina and the once-headstrong and obstreperous boy has whatever remains of his childhood innocence snatched away. The key moment in this rebirth occurs in the closing moments of episode 1 as his mother is lifted into the air and devoured by a titan, the focus on her raining blood a clear symbol of the ‘traumatic separation’ of birth. This permanent and bloody separation, in conjunction with the separation from his elusive father, implants within Eren his sole *raison d’être* for the greater part of his on-screen adolescence: to exterminate all the Titans in the world.

Along with the rest of the Shiganshina refugees, Eren is forced to flee into the confines of the middle wall along with Armin and Mikasa, and from here the narrative of *Shingeki no Kyojin* can be regarded as an (unconscious, or sub-conscious?) inversion of Concentric Womb Theory. In the CWT model, the subject travels outward from the centre as they break out of the confines of each womb. During the first three seasons of *Shingeki no Kyojin*, this pattern is reversed: as Eren penetrates further into the walled kingdom, he faces ever more difficult challenges, discovers ever more shocking truths, and encounters greater depths of human suffering. Within the enclosure of the second wall, the refugee crisis caused by the titans’ breach of the outermost wall has put a heavy strain on resources, leading to rising hunger and inequality. It is within the second layer that Eren undergoes his gruelling training to be a member of the Scouting Legion. It is also here that he learns that he himself possesses the ability to summon and puppeteer a titan body which itself encloses his own, a phenomenon which in its initial materialisation causes Eren to become enclosed within a womb of his own rage; it is only after he emerges from this womb of immaturity that he is able to begin the process of getting his powers under control. During this process, he also learns that several other members of his squadron also possess the ability to summon titan bodies, and that some of those ‘titan-shifters’ were responsible for the breach of the outermost wall and the death of his mother which resulted from it. However, these revelations do not lead to a turning point in

Eren's internal state; he continues to approach every problem in a hot-headed and imprudent manner, to loudly verbalise every strongly-felt emotion or animated thought, and to see the world in black and white. Upon realising that some friends are actually his enemies, he loudly declares them traitors and evil and adds them to his hit-list without any questioning of their motives or real allegiances.



### Eren's Arrested Development and the Induction of Rebirth through Knowledge

Eren Yeager is a remarkably stubborn young man, and his lack of self-awareness and self-reflection are an impediment to rebirth. Whereas killing another human being would traumatisise most children, the young Eren Yeager was able to cope with this experience by denying his victim's humanity. He is no more fazed by these deaths as he is by killing scores of mindless titans, and it is this single-mindedness that enables his personality to remain largely static in the face of severe physical and emotional trials. It is not until the narrative of Attack on Titan begins to enter the innermost geographic and political layer of the walled nation that Eren is forced into his second moment of rebirth, one brought about by the insemination of new knowledge into his worldview, knowledge that cuts to the core of his sense of self. Time and time again in *Shingeki no Kyojin*, the viewer will

observe that it is knowledge – of himself, and of the world – that provokes the most profound shifts in Eren Yeager's character.

At the beginning of the third season of *Shingeki no Kyojin*, the narrative sharply shifts focus from the Scouting Legion's battle against the titans and titan-shifters to the political struggle with their enemies within the walls: the King, his agents and co-conspirators, and the womb of ignorance that prevents them from learning about the titans' origins and the nature of the outside world. To overcome this internal enemy, the soldiers of the Scouting Legion are forced out of their favoured terrain of the woods and plains surrounding the walls and into the treacherous belly of the capital city: into the centre of the womb, you could say. Through the course of this journey they discover that the man sitting on the throne is a senile puppet, and that the true monarch and centre of power lie within a hidden compound north-east of the capital. But as the spider at the centre of the web, the real King is the final monster *within* the womb that must be confronted and defeated before they can go forth to slay the monsters *outside* of it. The capital, the physical centre, thereby serves as the locus of the revolution which topples the king's government, while Eren Yeager faces off against the King himself, the psychic centre, of the royal dynasty's womb of false consciousness. It is here that Eren experiences his penultimate (so far) death and rebirth in the Jungian-CWT sense.

### Analysis, Trimester 2: Leaving the Womb-Cave



## The King's Platonic Noble Lie

Before we address the events that bring about this rebirth and the consequences thereof, it is worth identifying specifically the nature of the malevolent womb that Eren and his allies must tear through. The false history put forward by the King bears considerable similarity to a concept outlined the Greek philosopher Plato in Book III of his *Republic*. Plato puts the following words into the mouth of his fictionalised version of Socrates as he offers the suggestion of a false foundation myth for encouraging social harmony and acceptance of one's place in the social hierarchy among the citizens of the polis:

‘ “Could we,” I said, “somehow contrive one of those lies that come into being in case of need, of which we were just now speaking, some one noble lie to persuade, in the best case, even the rulers, but if not them, the rest of the city? ... ‘All of you in the city are certainly brothers,’ we shall say to them in telling the tale, ‘but the god, in fashioning those of you who are competent to rule, mixed gold in at their birth; this is why they are most honored; in auxiliaries, silver; and iron and bronze in the farmers and the other craftsmen...’ ” (Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, Book III/414b-415a, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., ed. and trans. A Bloom (1991), pp. 93-4)

Within our uterological framework, the Platonic view of the function of the state or polis is to ‘birth’ good citizens, regardless of whether this involves telling them the truth. This idea is usually referred to as Plato’s ‘noble lie about origin’ (*gennaion pseudos*), although Lee has argued that this is an uncharitable reading based on mistranslation, and that the term should instead be translated as ‘magnificent myth’ (H. D. P. Lee, Note on translation, in Plato, *The Republic*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., ed. and trans. H. D. P. Lee (1987), p.177). Regardless of which sense one favours, its relevance to our present uterological analysis should be clear: in true Platonic fashion, the King in *Shingeki no Kyojin* has created an artificial womb around his subjects, made manifest not only by the physical walls that surround their bodies but also by the ideological walls that constrain their mentalities, and enforced by secrecy, censorship, and thuggery. He believes that by these methods, he is protecting them from the terrors and corrupting influences of the outside world.

He is mistaken: not only have the walls been breached by the mindless, rampaging titans, but so has the population been infiltrated by titan shifters with various ulterior

motives. Moreover, several of his own senior military personnel, including the head of the Scouting Legion and even the highest-ranking officer of the entire military, have become disillusioned with the façade his dynasty have created and spent a century perpetuating; the former rebels out of a desire to see the outside world, while the latter does so out of petty resentment and personal ambition.

### Plato's Cave and the Escape into Truth

Though Plato believed that the polis' role is to produce citizens, his idea of the philosopher's role was different. In the opening of Book VII of the *Republic*, Plato introduces his analogy of the cave, in which he asks the reader to imagine human beings:

‘... as though they were in an underground cave-like dwelling with its entrance, a long one, open to the light across the whole width of the cave. They are in it from childhood with their legs and necks in bonds so that they are fixed, seeing only in front of them, unable because of the bond to turn their heads all the way around. Their light is from a fire burning far above and behind them. Between the fire and the prisoners there is a road above, along which see a wall, built like the partitions puppet-handlers set in front of the human beings and over which they show the puppets... do you suppose such men would have seen anything of themselves and one another other than the shadows cast by the fire on the side of the cave facing them?’ (Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, Book VII/514a-515a, pp. 193)

The cave's uterine associations have been discussed in detail by feminist philosopher and Luce Ingaray (Ingaray, *Spéculum de l'autre femme*, trans. G. Gill (1985), pp. 243-97). For the purposes of this study, the key points here are as follows: that for Plato, the philosopher is one who has escaped his bonds and witnessed the outside world in its true three-dimensional aspect, rather than the shadow-puppet show projected onto the cave-wall (Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, Book VII/515c-515d, p. 194).



The Cave Allegory, from left: the prisoners and the shadows; the fire and puppeteers; the philosophers make their escape but are initially blinded by the light

It is fitting therefore that the revelations that Eren receives courtesy of the King occur within an actual cave, that perennial womb-allegory, hidden beneath the royal estate. It is here that the mystery of what happened to his father Grisha is finally solved, as the supernatural powers of the royal bloodline enable Eren to experience his father's memories as though they were his own. Through this process, Eren first learns that Grisha was the original vessel of Eren's own titan-shifter abilities; that Grisha used said titan-shifter abilities powers to wipe out the royal dynasty save the present king and his estranged daughter Historia; and that sometime between Eren's flight from Shiganshina and arrival at the middle wall, Grisha turned his son into a mindless titan and allowed himself to be eaten, in order to pass on his titan-shifter powers and ensure the rebirth of his nation.

The King's words within this womb-cave are intended to fulfil both the philosopher's function (to reveal truth) and that of the state (to keep it hidden for the greater good), and it is in this futile conjoining of cross-purposes that the fallacy of the King's plan is made manifest. In the context of *Shingeki no Kyojin*, these two impulses – the need to maintain artificial comfort and security at the expense of truth and freedom, and the need to escape the cave/ and liberate one's fellow prisoners – are completely at odds with one another. At various points in *Shingeki no Kyojin*, Eren states that his desire is to 'free' humanity from the terrors of the Titans. However, rather than providing security, the ignorance fostered upon the walled nation's populace by their king has instead left them vulnerable to an evolving threat. The King is the killed and his Cave – its physical and metaphysical forms – torn down.

However, the decision to reveal the truth of the regime is not one taken by Eren himself. This truth is learned after his kidnapping by the king's agents, the king wishing to feed

Eren to Historia and thereby pass his titan powers onto her, while the choice to reveal it is taken by Eren's companions and superiors in the scouting legion. Plato himself did not place much hope in the philosopher's ability to liberate his fellow man from the mental and physical confines of the cave, believing that the experience of such revelatory knowledge would so far alienate the philosopher from the average citizen as to make futile his efforts to communicate the danger (Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, Book VII/516a-517a, pp. 194-6). Eren is certainly no philosopher, nor a great communicator, and, as is the case with most forms of *coup d'état*, it is tactical savvy and old-fashioned co-opting of the military and media that enables the Scouting Legion to overthrow the King's government. Furthermore, while the previous revelations lead to a strengthening of Eren's resolve, the discovery of his father's murder of the king's family and of his own act of oedipal cannibalism comes close to crushing Eren's spirit, to the point that he initially relents to the king's will. It is instead Historia who frees Eren from the Cave and slays her father, completing her own rebirth in the process.

The revelations and the rebirth that occur within the King's cave do however provide Eren with knowledge and impetus needed to initiate his subsequent, and arguably most traumatic, death of the self and psychic rebirth. The King's cave thereby serves as a womb in the Delphic sense – that is, as a source of knowledge with which one can reorient the trajectory of one's journey and decision-making. Not only does Eren become more strategic and sober-minded in his thinking, but he also comes to realise the value of knowledge and the dangers of ignorance. This prompts a corresponding shift in his priorities, and sets the stage for his final and most fundamental rebirth of the series so far. Moreover, this rebirth is one that Eren himself chooses to subject himself to, and the consequences of which he integrates into his personality by his own free will.

## Analysis, Trimester 3: Grisha's Basement and the (Monstrous) Rebirth of Eren Yeager



### The Basement as anti-Womb

Tearing themselves free of the innermost womb of *Shingeki no Kyojin*'s narrative spatiality, Eren and the Scouting Legion are at last equipped with the knowledge and certainty of purpose necessary to begin the process of pushing the frontier of their known world outward. However, freedom and leadership both come with burdens of responsibility. Having rejected the King's comforting but false history, they must now fill the vacuum left behind with a history that is by necessity traumatic as it is truthful, by returning to the site of Eren's very first death and rebirth as seen in the first episode of the series. Nestled within its foundations, the basement can be thought of as the womb of the house, architecturally speaking; however, Eren's desire to return to it is the opposite of the regression to a comfortable or childlike state that Freud and Rank were referring to when they wrote of the 'return to the womb.' To begin with, in line with Jung's notion of rebirth requiring death, reaching the basement requires the mass sacrifice of life on behalf of the Scouting Legion at the hands of their titan-shifter enemies, along with the near-death of Armin and his transformation into a titan-shifter by means of involuntary cannibalism. Furthermore, the discovery within prompts a much more traumatic transformation of Eren's character than any that has come before, while at the same time

As a locus of forbidden knowledge, Grisha's basement is simultaneously the biblical tree of knowledge and birthing pool of the walled nation's new national mythology.

The rebirth that occurs in the basement is all the more important for Eren's character in that it is the first that is truly chosen by his own free will. Each of the rebirth processes that he has undergone previously are what Jung terms 'natural transformations': that is, 'processes which simply happen to us, whether we like it or not, and whether we know it or not. These processes develop considerable psychic effects, which would be sufficient in themselves to make any thoughtful person ask himself what really happened to him.' (Jung, 'Concerning Rebirth' (1939), *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 9, Part 1: Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., trans. R. F. C. Hull. (1968), p. 130). These transformations of Eren's character, like that of Mikasa in the flashback of episode 6, are brought on by the cruelties of the world they inhabit; Mikasa acknowledges this cruelty in her monologue during that same episode, her speech being accompanied by images of insects devouring one another and of animals being slaughtered for food. Recognising the world's harshness is necessary for these characters to take their first steps into adulthood, but it is a process that is forced upon them rather than freely chosen.

The basement's revelations are imparted via a combination of long-lost documents and the memories inherited through the titan-shifter transference, the most significant of which can be summed up as follows: that the inhabitants of the walled nation used to hold a monopoly over the titan-shifter powers and the ability to create mindless titans using the serum, and that they used these powers to subjugate their neighbours; that these thrall-nations eventually rose up in rebellion and stole several of the titan-shifter powers as well as the means of creating mindless titans; that the people who would become the walled nation were forced to flee to the island later known as Paradise, and that the walls were created using the titan powers at the behest of the then-king who wished to prevent the genocide of his own people; that the people of the walled nation are hated and feared by the rest of the world for the centuries they spent as their oppressive overlords; and finally, that an enemy nation has been creating and shipping titans to their island for decades in order to wipe out the inhabitants of the walled nation so that the enemy nation can steal the natural resources of the island.

The narrative framing of this event, from its early foreshadowing to its occupation of the final four episodes (the cataclysmic battle with Eren's former-friends-turned-enemies being relegated to the middle of the season), reinforces its status as a turning point in the series. Furthermore, it is only after this final rebirth that he and his friends first go beyond the outermost wall of the kingdom, thereby symbolising their escape from the womb-structures that had previously confined them.

### Walking Wombs and Embryonic Evil

The effect of this rebirth on Eren's personality can be observed in two scenes during the final episode of season 3, in each of which Eren shows an aspect of his personality that had hitherto been absent or dormant. Firstly, Eren shows a willingness to keep secrets in the interests of protecting his friends. This can be seen during the mission debrief in which the Scouting Legion report to the government the findings of the basement expedition. Recalling and realising the significance of a vital piece of information, Eren initially starts to exclaim this new discovery before the assembled senior leadership of the military. However, he realises in that moment that revealing said information would endanger the safety and wellbeing of Historia, and so decides instead to stay silent. The days of Eren's characteristic verbal incontinence are at last behind him.

The second and likely more consequential change in Eren's psychology is indicated in the final scene of the episode, indeed, in the final spoken line of the entire season (a clear indication of its importance to the narrative going forward). Having finally made it to the edge of the sea, the surviving members of Eren's regiment enjoy a brief moment of reverie as they paddle and play in the shallows. The lone exception is Eren, who points toward the horizon and utters the words: 'If we kill all our enemies over there, will we finally be free?' Eren understands now that his true enemies are not Titans, but human; that you cannot win a war by defending indefinitely; and that nothing short of total annihilation will ever ensure that an enemy will not threaten you again in the future. The implications of this are sinister, to say the least. Yet this premise need not lead inevitably to the same ruthless logic, as shown by the fearful look on the faces of Eren's friends as he voices his thoughts. Of a person having passed through a process of death and rebirth, in the Jungian sense, there can be no clearer signal. And yet as his brutal slaying

of the kidnappers showed, this aspect of Eren's personality had lain dormant in him the entire time, awaiting fertilisation in the follicles of the mind, ready for the insemination of knowledge needed to bring about its infernal conception, and eventual birth, into the totality of the being.

### **Afterbirth: The Monster in the Womb**

To conclude this essay, a question: who is Eren Yeager now? Is there anything left of the boy who watched his mother die in Shiganshina, who threw himself headlong into danger during the Battle of Trost, who was willing to be eaten upon learning the truth of his father's crimes, who argued so forcefully in favour of saving his friend over his commanding officer just prior to the long-awaited opening of the basement door? The answers to these questions are as much a mystery to me as the sincerity of this essay. Instead, I would like to draw your attention to one final example which I believe sheds light on the questions that Isayama likely wanted us to consider when viewing the series with the benefit of hindsight.

When his status as a titan-shifter became apparent, Eren's survival depended on his convincing the military tribunal tasked with deciding his fate that he was an ally, and not an enemy, of humanity within the walls. The debate that occurs within this foray into courtroom drama is framed as a binary between the status of *monster* and that of *human*, with Eren arguing in typically passionate form that he is the latter. Observant viewers will note that the man entrusted with deciding Eren's fate is the same individual who becomes *de-facto* ruler following the overthrow of the King, a man whose gleeful monstrosity upon assuming command so horrifies the subordinates who once looked up to him. With this in mind the trial scene takes on a peculiar irony, as we come to understand that the boy accused of being a monster was being judged by a man who himself harboured a monster growing within him, a foetus of hatred waiting for the right moment to show itself. The word *monster* itself comes from the Latin *monstrare*, 'to show'. Scholars in the Middle Ages gave this name to various mythical or supernatural creatures because they were thought to be a demonstration (from the same root, i.e. *de-monstr-ation*) of God's awesome power on earth and a source religious truths (A. S. Mittman and S. M. Kim, 'Monstrous Iconography', *The Routledge Companion to Medieval*

*Iconography*, ed. C. Hourihane (2017), pp. 518-9). We are not privy to the experiences of rebirth that created this particular monster, besides his own excuses of feeling belittled and undervalued by those he had risked his life to protect. But this example, like many others in the series, raises questions as to what constitutes a monster, the extent to which they are born or made, and to which the transformations we endure are the product of our surroundings as opposed to how we choose to interpret them.



You really don't want to see where that pipe is leading.

In the case of Eren however, it is not the 'monster' that 'shows', but the 'showing' that makes the monster. Eren's apparent monstrous turn comes not as a result of his monstrous biology as a titan, a condition he was unaware of for most of his time spent between devouring his father and the discovery in the basement. It is a transformation brought on by new knowledge: of the world he inhabits, of his and his friends' precarious place within it, and of the enemies that threaten them. Furthermore, this knowledge is not something that was given to him unknowingly or unwillingly. This final rebirth is his own choice, and one he seems to embrace. From the *Liber Novus*:

'It is our chameleon nature that forces us through these transformations. So long as we are chameleons, we need an annual journey in the bath of rebirth.'

Therefore I looked at the outdating of my ideals with horror, since I loved my natural greenness and mistrusted my chameleon skin, which changed colors according to the environment. The chameleon does this cleverly. One calls this change a progress through rebirth.' (Jung, *Liber Novus*, p. 277, Note 94)

It remains to be seen how Eren will regard his various transformations come the final season, whether he will regard his journey with nostalgia or fondness or horror, and what future transformations await. The last image of the episode, and of the season, is of a sea-shell clutched in Armin's hands, having fallen limply in front of him as Eren's foreboding words leave his friend dumbstruck. This shell, beautiful, dead, and empty, perhaps symbolises the hollow womb of the childhood dreams from which Eren has irreversibly departed, and which Armin still clings to on some level. As for answers to these questions, the due date on that is still some way off.





# *A Magical School Adventure in:* *Little Witch Academia*



**CAMERON**

To me, Little Witch Academia is a great anime about how hard work can achieve anything if you believe in yourself. My favourite part of LWA was Akko & Diana's relationship as it went from Diana looking down on Akko to seeing her as a friend and equal. Episodes 19 & 20 were my favourite because they were the episodes where Diana recognises Akko and accepts her help in her time of need. Little Witch Academia will have a special place in my heart and I hope I get to rewatch it for years to come.



**JAMES**

I am a big fan of You Yoshinari's previous work, and so I was glad that he finally got a chance to write and direct his own show. I got to attend a talk by him in 2017 where he described his travels across England to learn of our folktales as inspiration for Little Witch Academia. I found it fascinating to see his interpretation of these old stories from a very Japanese perspective. The show both respects the tradition of the legends and of the Gainax-Trigger lineage it comes from, while not being stuck in its ways. This same message is core to the show narratively too, and is an important lesson to take away.



**NICK**

Little Witch is an archetypally rich Trigger show. The story is one of Akko's attempt to become her hero - her destined self - with sheer determination in spite of her magical impotence. The slice-of-life first half of the show shines thanks to the characters who have great depth of personality and synergy producing comedic moments which really hit. Each of these intial episodic narratives touches on a nuanced moral motif which is both interesting and doesn't demand your attention. However, like with many shows which transform into stronger over-arching narratives, the transition is rocky. Nevertheless, the show manages to get back into gear for a finale with a refreshing twist. I very much recommend you give Little Witch a go!



**HANNAH**

Little Witch Academia, though different from most other Studio Trigger shows, still has its stellar animation quality, with bright colours and smooth action the show's a joy to watch. The full and imaginative world holds many fun and extremely likeable characters who (nearly) all get their time to shine and the slice-of-life plots of the early series make it easy to get to know the characters and root for their later journeys and personal growth. Overall Little Witch Academia is an extremely cute and fun show I would recommend to any magical girl fans or lovers of great animation.

# Anime Films With Mum

By Nick Stathakis



Akira has become a running joke in my family. Being my favourite movie, I recommended it to my mum to watch whilst I was at Uni quite a few months ago. 'Boring', she called it. 'Nothing happened'. 'It looked bad'. After twenty minutes of watching it, she gave up. Now, whenever I talk about an anime I like, Akira is brought up. 'Is it as bad as Akira?', my mother and younger brother twitter to themselves. 'I hope it's better than Akira' they jest. Now that I'm stuck at home in lockdown, this ribbing has become too much. Akira occupies such a dear place in my heart, after all – it's a masterpiece. So, after some discussion, we came up with a plan. Five anime movies, we shall watch over the course of the next week. Five movies which I believe will redeem anime. Five movies which I hope will prove that philistinism doesn't run in my blood.

Now for a little background. My mum has watched a few anime movies before. She's enjoyed the Ghibli films we have watched together for the most part, so for the sake of the competition I won't litter the list with Ghibli films. Doing so would almost be cheating, I'm sure you'd agree. My aim with the competition is to experiment with a wide variety of films, discovering which my family, and perhaps your family, would like to watch. Hence, I'll pick from a broad variety of genres and time periods, from the comedic to the gritty, from the 1980s to the 2010s. My aim is to show my mum that great anime films are out there. And even if she doesn't like Akira, so many amazing films are waiting to be watched. So, let's get the ball rolling.

## Day 1 – Tuesday – Princess Mononoke

For day 1 I want to start with a safe choice. Princess Mononoke is a brilliant Ghibli film, directed by Miyazaki, with themes of the environment (like many Miyazaki films). I'm quite confident she'll enjoy Princess Mononoke given that she's liked other Ghibli films like Spirited Away and Howl's Moving Castle in the past. My only worry going forward is that Princess Mononoke specifically doesn't possess much character development for the protagonist which could, potentially, be a somewhat jarring for her since such protagonists are rarer in the West. Anyways I'd like to start off our journey with a confident choice to get the ball rolling and hopefully begin to convince my mum of the multitude of good anime films.

And we're back from the film. Overall, my mum very much enjoyed Princess Mononoke. She found it thematically interesting as an allegory rather than a narrative. In our post-watch discussion, we talked about how the characters have a certain eternity about them. They never doubt their path nor change as the show progresses, as they'd likely do in a typical narrative. My mum also opined that such a film would never work in a live action setting since such a film would focus far too much on the monsters, who would be huge CG beasts, drawing away from the allegorical nature of the film. Here I'd agree – the very fact that the artistic timbre, which I talk about in another article, is identical between the monsters and the protagonists, gives a sense of unity between man and the monster creating a homogeneous idea of the forest, operating in unison. However, insofar as Princess Mononoke as an allegorical story worked *because* it was an anime, my mum claimed the converse was also true – that a more character driven story filled with inner conflict wouldn't work as an anime. The gauntlet had been set for round two. And my chosen fighter is Wolf Children.

## Day 2 – Wednesday – Wolf Children

Today is day 2 and on the menu is Wolf Children by Mamoru Hosoda. Hosoda is one of the big anime directors of our modern age, and I hope that a more modern anime movie will appeal to our modern sensibilities and desires from a movie. The pick was also inspired by the gauntlet which my mum threw yesterday, claiming that a more emotional anime about inner conflict would be harder to win her over with. What's more my mum is a mum – and Wolf Children is all about mums. So hopefully she'll identify with the mum-ness. This is a riskier pick than before – unlike Ghibli's work, Hosoda's films have some of the trappings of anime-ness about them, but, fingers crossed, she'll enjoy it nonetheless, or hopefully because of that.

Time for an analysis. My mum enjoyed the movie but for surprising reasons. Unlike what I predicted, she didn't identify with the idea of motherliness in the show, stating that the mother character was too idealised. Instead, she identified with the children and saw the idealised mother character as the children's vision of their mother growing up. On both occasion of watching, this being the second, this idea never occurred to me. I was always content with the idea of the all good mother, yet my mum claimed that she couldn't relate to her because she wasn't realistic. A mother would get angry at her children and struggle – the protagonist never struggles nor has internal strife, she states. My mum again said that this movie was primarily thematically driven instead of character driven, wherein the themes of the show, motherhood, decisions, sacrifice, etc, were more important than the plot events. The similarities between Wolf Children and the Ghibli film didn't end there either; she noticed a parallel in the use of wolves, which she noticed was very different to the western depiction of the animal. The two animals do, after all, have far different symbology between West and East – the West with the 'big bad wolf' and the East with mountain gods. Like before, the use of the wolves as characters meant that the film wouldn't work in live-action – it would simply be too off-putting to see a boy turn into a CG wolf, and would detract from its fluidity and naturalness of the double nature of the child. My mum also wasn't a fan of the soundtrack which she found saccharine – yet when I mentioned parallels in Hollywood with over-amplified action themes she would have none of it. Perhaps the kinds of over the top soundtracks differ between West and East? I was also proud of my mum for complaining about the CG cars in the background looking jarring – it doesn't take a seasoned anime fan for something to feel off about them. As I said, overall, my mum enjoyed the show. She found it fascinating and beautiful – both

feelings one would expect with the show – but she never found it *emotional*. *Wolf Children*, I think, is a profoundly *emotional* show, yet my mum claims that, because the faces weren't expressive enough, and because she struggled to become emotionally attached to a cartoon, she didn't feel the emotion of the show. Unlike myself, she didn't tear up, or even feel as if she ever would tear up, watching the film's touching moments. I've tried positive emotion; now let's try some psychological terror.

### Day 3 – Thursday – Perfect Blue

Next on the agenda is *Perfect Blue*, a movie which, in my opinion, is nearly perfect. 'Exploring psychological horror' is the only description I'll give for the film without spoiling it for any readers. It's a masterpiece by the late Satoshi Kon who was Madhouse's main man in film production until his death when the aforementioned Hosoda took the reigns. I'm very curious as to what my mum will think – I can't say I know. Tonally, *Perfect Blue* is miles away from what we've seen thus far, so it'll be interesting to see if she'll enjoy this also. It's certainly a show which uses the medium to its full potential but, yet again, is thematically driven. I'm starting to think that anime films in general are more thematically driven...

My mum did enjoy *Perfect Blue*, but she admitted to me afterwards that she didn't understand it in full. Which is fair enough – the film's direction is designed to engender a feeling of confusion. Again, she found it a fascinating movie. Compared to my brother and I whose hearts were pumping away through the climax of the film, my mum didn't feel the *tension* of the show. However, compared to the past two movies, *Perfect Blue* was a different kind of film. Thankfully, she proclaimed that this film was not thematic but rather plot-driven (day by day I become more confused as to which is which). And, of course, the film deals with more adult themes, which, my mum found interesting for she was shown the extent of what anime was capable beyond the friendly and fantastical. One stumbling block, was what my mum described as 'the various codices of action' which the characters perform – anime specific body language, if you will. The example she gave, was when the protagonist, Mima, flops down on her bed face first with a sigh. To us anime connoisseurs, we've seen this scene one hundred and one times from a plethora of different characters, and we, by referencing our mental database of events, immediately understand the emotion being portrayed. But my mum, without that experience, found those scenes jarring and hard to connect with. It's like talking to a group of friends who know all the in-jokes but you don't – you get lost in their conversations. The real stumbling block seems to be this lack of emotion for characters – she appreciates the films on a thinking level, but not on a feeling level. Part of the issue, she says, is that she's constantly having to read subtitles, and that the character's facial expressions aren't emotive enough. I refuse to watch a dub, and the facial expression are unlikely to be any more detailed in another anime, so I suppose a change of tactics is in order. My mum has always been emotional about war stories. With what can I best make my mum cry...

## Day 4 – Friday – Barefoot Gen

Barefoot Gen is a much older anime movie, dating to the early 1980s, depicting the immediate effects of the atom bombs dropped on Japan. If ever seen grotesque animation of people melting and their eyes falling out, it is most likely from this classic by Madhouse. The lower quality of animation may be a bit of a stumbling block, but it may also be informative as to whether older classics are watchable with one's mum. Also, I want to make my mum feel something from an anime and, given my mum's capacity for tears surrounding war stories, this is probably a good bet. Also, many of the most emotional scenes don't require her to read the subtitles, since you are *shown* the atrocities rather than *told*. Let's see if this will work.

A great surprise! This film was my mum's favourite thus far. She found the narrative powerful, the characters endearing and the film very accessible. I did see her tear up a little during the movie, succeeding in my goal of making my mother cry. Before we started watching, my main concerns were the look and feel of the show. For sure, there are some very beautifully animated sequences, but the show does come across somewhat dated. But an important takeaway is that, for a new watcher, that's virtually irrelevant. Without existing expectations of what an anime ought to look like, an anime being old is no hindrance to enjoyment. In some respects, it can enhance the experience. Unlike with Perfect Blue, there were no stylised anime insider knowledge – no body language which only an anime fan would get. Over time, anime has developed these 'codices of action' as my mum called it, but, with older anime, those codices aren't as common. My mum's favourite scene was the scene of the atomic blast. Not necessarily for the gripping animation, where you see people melt, but rather for the direction. You see the protagonist, Gen, drops a rock and, as he bends down to pick it up, the many shots of people melting are played, ending again with Gen picking up the rock, with the girl he was just talking to melted beside him. In our post-watch conversation, she mentioned this scene several times, going as far as to say that that kind of direction wouldn't have been possible with a live action film. My mum went on to say that the shockingness of the explosion was tempered somewhat by the fact it was done in animation but this was to its benefit – instead of being left in shock, the viewer could feel other, more complex emotions, of the event. For her this film was the first time she saw an anime film which could've been done with live action but she believes has been pulled off better using the capabilities of animation. A great success!

## Day 5 – Saturday – Penguin Highway

For the last pick, I chose Penguin Highway. Compared to the films so far, Penguin Highway came out far more recently, in 2019, and I figured it will be interesting to watch something current. Also I fancy rewatching it which is, in truth, the greatest motive. The story is one of coming of age, about solving a great mystery as a precocious young boy. I don't expect the film to be a favourite for my mum, but I think she'll enjoy it nonetheless.

Indeed, I was right, my mum did prefer yesterday's film. Again, like with the first two films, the fantastical elements could've only been achieved with anime – seeing CG penguins in a live-action film would've been both terrifying and would lose the emotion of the film. But, overall, my mum's reaction was that the film was good, but nothing much more. The film is fun, the aesthetic was sweet, but the feeling didn't shine out – eclipsed, somewhat, by yesterday's Barefoot Gen. One point she did mention of interest was the use of CG.

We agreed that you can see an evolution of the use of CG between Wolf Children and Penguin Highway. In Wolf Children, there is a jarring dichotomy between the CG cars with the animated characters, whereas in Penguin Highway, CG's capabilities have improved, there is a greater synergy, a greater unity, between the animation and the CG, producing a more integrated, complete aesthetic. Another more practical concern that came up, was that my mum struggled to read the white subtitles on pale backgrounds. When finding anime to watch with the family, ensure to check that the subtitles are readable.

### The round-up

1. Barefoot Gen
2. Princess Mononoke
3. Wolf Children
4. Penguin Highway
5. Perfect Blue

### Conclusion

There are two main takeaways from our investigation: which anime films resonate best with those who don't watch anime and the nature of anime from an outsider's perspective. Firstly, which anime films work the best. My mum summed up her feelings in a phrase: *anime has more potential for fantastical stories, and less potential for emotional stories*. For her, essentially a first time watcher of anime, she struggled to become emotionally invested in characters by virtue of them not being expressive enough – simply not being human. In a live-action film, she says, she gets much of the emotion from seeing the facial expressions, from seeing small gestures and actions, which aren't as present in anime – or at least not as obviously so. Character designs, facial expressions, etc, do possess plenty of depth to them but, like a lot of art, it requires you to learn them. Not from study, but rather just from watching a lot of it and beginning to get a feel for how certain emotional expression in the medium look. Linked to this is the idea of the 'codices of action' my mum talked about in Perfect Blue – the secret, anime specific, body language which portrays that emotion. Without this esoteric knowledge, anime which isn't explicitly aimed at a wider audience will be harder to watch and feel something from. Those kinds of anime, I wouldn't recommend for family viewing.

Overall, the experiment was a fun one. If your mother, father, sibling, is curious about anime, find five movies to show them and see which stick. The enjoyment of anime isn't as esoteric as we like to believe – given you find the right film, your family member is bound to enjoy it. Unfortunately, my mum didn't enjoy Akira. But she has enjoyed many of these other shows which I've shown her. And hopefully, for her, anime has been redeemed.



## This Year in the Society

Even though it got cut short, it sure has been a busy and memorable year in the society. The rebirth of the society into its new self with the loss of sci fi has been a somewhat rocky one, as is par for the course with pilot episodes, but I feel we've come out of it stronger and ready to move into next year. I mean this is the longest zine to date. Even though the loss of sci fi reduced the number of meetings overall, there was now room for far more different events across the year. Including.....

### Semester 1

- Summer wars viewing
- Meet and Greet at the Johnson Arms
- Nottingham tour
- Bad Anime descriptions
- Quiz
- MCM London Trip
- Halloween Party
- FLCL Viewing
- Perfect Blue Viewing
- Boardgame Soc crossover
- Akira Viewing
- Christmas meal at the Rose and Crown

### Semester 2

- Meet and Greet 2
- Ghibli night 1: Porco Rosso
- Quiz 2: Kahoot Edition
- Committee Choice Night
- Cardboard Cosplay Workshop
- Ghibli Night 2: Nausicaa
- Macross: Do You Remember Love Viewing
- AGM

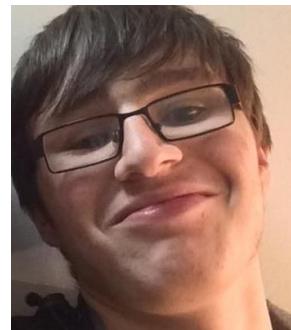
Semester 2 seems significantly shorter here due the obvious circumstances and that meant that everyone missed out on some events that were planned for the rest of the semester. This of course included a lot of the more personal handover events for the committee due to the somewhat rushed end of the year. But the years committee still did a great job with an unstable situation. So lets remember the weirdos who made this year possible:



Nick Stathakis  
Treasurer  
Did money



James Thackway  
President  
Ran things



Cameron Johnson  
General Secretary  
Got elected



Hannah Scullion  
Also General  
Secretary  
Did Cameron's job



Alastair Davis  
Anime Rep  
Did some events then  
vanished



Jospeh Fagan  
Social Secretary  
Got us to Comic Con



Michael Goaten  
Communications  
Officer  
Broke the Email  
system



Matthew Thomas  
MASCOT  
Was around from time  
to time

And now there is next year's committee, some of which are returning, who I'm sure will drag the society kicking and screaming to greater heights than ever before.

President: Nick Stathakis

Communications Officer: James Frost

General Secretary: Joe Fagan

Social Secretary: Dominique Gomez

Treasurer: Hannah Scullion

MASCOT: Miles Roberts



**And that's the end.  
Hope you all reading this  
have found any sort of  
enjoyment from this and  
thank you to all those  
who submitted articles.**

**All works are entirely the  
writers own and do not  
represent the opinions of  
the Anime Society itself.**

**The zine will return.....**