

J-Horror and Ghibli: Ideology in Japan's Two Global Cinemas

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J-Horror and Ghibli: Ideology in Japan's Two Global Cinemas

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Abstract

This research project is an articulation of the links between ideology and contemporary Japanese popular cinema in both an international and domestic setting. Its foci are what are argued to be the two most critically and financially successful bodies of Japanese films on an international scale since the globalization of Japanese popular culture in the late 1980s: the animated Studio Ghibli-produced films and the 1990s-2000s wave of horror films known as “J-Horror”. The aim of this project is to reveal how these two apparently unrelated groups of films both interact with and reinforce certain hegemonic narratives of Japan, both domestically and abroad. The primary methodology undertaken is the application to Japanese cinema of concepts relevant in the field of Cultural Studies – more specifically, the concepts of “assemblage” (as articulated by Gilles Deleuze) and “transpacific complicity” (as articulated by Naoki Sakai) are employed as frameworks to explore the interrelated nature of various ideological concerns, especially those developed in the immediate postwar period, which have accommodated the material processes of globalization within the industries and images of J-Horror and Ghibli. This thesis analyses journalistic and academic responses in addition to the filmic texts themselves, as well as merchandise and non-filmic visual media (such as video games that were produced as part of the cinema-led J-Horror boom). From the results of these case studies this thesis considers the domestic and international impact of Japanese popular cinema and its role in identity formation in various contexts.

The first chapter outlines the contextual knowledge that informs this study. It begins by summarizing the historical friction between area studies and cultural studies, and ends with a summary of Sakai’s articulation of the postwar arrangement between Japan and the United States as the advent of a new ideological apparatus. The next chapters outline the emergence of J-horror, with Chapter Two applying the concept of extensive multiplicity to explore new iterations of Orientalist ideology, and Chapter Three applying the concept of intensive multiplicity to explore new iterations of gender ideology. Both chapters also highlight the role of genre in these changes. Chapter Four applies Sakai’s transpacific complicity to articulate the new relationship between the Japanese

and American film industry that emerged from the J-horror boom, and Chapter Five continues this approach with regards to the rise of Studio Ghibli. Chapter Six shifts the focus from industry to images and reception as it considers the Ghibli films in relation to the ideology of victims' consciousness. The seventh chapter is a comparative analysis between J-horror and Ghibli drawing on what has been discussed so far, and arguing that despite their differences they are uniquely representative of what can be termed Japan's two global cinemas.

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Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis has two major aims: the first is to argue for the classification of two groupings of popular films, “J-horror” films and “Ghibli” films, as Japan’s two “global cinemas” – a status gained through various transformative processes of globalization that took place within these cinemas around the turn of the millennium, connecting them both to the global culture industry in unprecedented forms for Japanese cinema. An in-depth study of these cultural phenomena will illustrate the broader concerns of certain disciplinary tensions that I believe are frequently left unaddressed in studies of Japanese popular culture – broadly speaking, these tensions result from the regionalizing imperative of Area Studies and the deconstructive imperative of Cultural Studies. Despite the recent turn in academia towards positioning Japanese popular culture in global contexts, I will argue that many “global” frameworks for criticism nonetheless fail to address the politics at work in regional designations such as “Japanese culture” and “global culture”. Therefore, the argument for a special status for the two assemblages of J-horror and Ghibli is developed through an interrogation of their relation to hegemonic ideology.

This brings us to the second major aim of the thesis: identifying certain ideological imperatives in the J-horror and Ghibli assemblages of cultural texts, and showing how they have developed alongside these assemblages’ transformation into global cinemas. I will identify these ideological imperatives as having been largely inherited from Japan’s postwar period, and as having given rise to specific variants of Orientalism, nationalism, and other ideological phenomena. Previous commentators have linked these contemporary ideological issues to historical origins, often hybridizing or updating them using nuanced concepts such as Iwabuchi Koichi’s articulation of “self-Orientalism” or Tessa Morris Suzuki’s “cosmetic multiculturalism”. In the case of J-horror and Ghibli, I find Naoki Sakai’s description of “transpacific complicity” between Japan and the U.S.A. the most relevant and instructive way of accounting for these various ideological phenomena, and so I will draw on it extensively in my analysis. The specific focus on two popular cinemas will therefore be a way in which to chart the persistence of postwar ideology through a recent period of change in filmmaking as it adapted to new global markets. By

filmmaking I refer not only to the creation of filmic content and images, but also the processes of production, distribution, and reception – key organizing frameworks within the assemblages of J-horror and Ghibli.

In this chapter, I will begin by outlining the critical tension that has been inherited by Japanese popular culture as a result of its dual heritage in area studies and cultural studies. In the next two sections I will discuss the role of film studies before narrowing my focus onto J-horror and Ghibli, and providing working definitions for both. After identifying both the contextual theory and focus of study, I will detail my methodology: firstly by outlining the benefits of analyzing bodies of films using the Deleuzian concept of the assemblage, and secondly by outlining the work of Sakai in relation to the persistence of Japanese postwar ideology and how I aim to adapt and build on this work. As will become clear, I believe the assemblage, in its disruption of static and content-based categorisations implied by concepts such as “Japanese cinema”, lends itself to drawing out the productive and affective connections between texts, creators, and audiences, as well as the power relations that influence these connections – which is to say I believe the assemblage draws out the politics of culture. In this sense I believe the assemblage is the ideal unit of analysis with which to connect Japanese popular cinema to Sakai’s geopolitical theory of postwar ideology.

I. Cultural Studies and Area Studies

Popular culture has long been viewed as a political terrain, and its study has been in many ways tied to the development of Marxist theory. In the 1940s and 1950s, Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School were some of the first theorists to take mass or “low” culture seriously, critiquing the advent of leisure time and activities as products of a capitalist ideology aimed at dulling minds and distracting the masses from the workings of the system that oppressed them. Although less concerned with what Adorno called the “culture industry”, Henri Lefebvre’s contemporary and influential critique of everyday life took a much less pessimistic approach, arguing that everyday consumerist reality was less an unfortunate effect of capitalism, but rather the space in which capitalist ideology reproduced itself, and what was required

was therefore not a denunciation but a revolution of the everyday.¹ While more known for adapting linguistic theory, the structuralists of the 1950s and 1960s drew on Lefebvre and the pre-existing Marxist discourse around popular culture when they radically elevated individual objects of popular culture to the status of cultural “texts”, which could be read and analysed to reveal their position within a web of signs – a web including ideological relations. So too did the academic work of the structuralists and poststructuralists draw on and contribute to the revolutionary climate of the late 1960s. Around this time the Birmingham school institutionalized the study of popular culture within academia as “cultural studies” for the first time, and later galvanized the field with Antonio Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony in the 1980s. Despite the fact that this Italian revolutionary was long since dead, once again Marxist thought had caused a monumental shift and further politicization of the discourse around popular culture, and once again the political context of the time was related to this shift: Gramsci’s focus on the question of why the working class would vote for right-wing leaders seemed especially relevant to Stuart Hall and other members of the Birmingham school in the context of Margaret Thatcher’s Britain and the global turn to neoliberalism. As well as a “return” of Marxist influence to cultural studies, this shift in theory had the effect of further establishing the practice of cultural theory as a political act in itself. As Tony Bennett puts it, the theoretical transformations in the field since the 1980s “have been accompanied by a sureness of political purpose as the study of popular culture has been defined as a site of *positive* political engagement by both socialists and feminists”.²

A few years after this Gramsci-oriented paradigm shift in cultural studies, an altogether different kind of cultural shift took place – the mass global dissemination and consumption of Japanese popular culture, and subsequently, the birth of Japanese popular culture studies within the Western tradition. Studies of Japanese “high culture” had long been a fascination for certain Western scholars, following in the tradition of area studies. Unlike cultural studies, area studies had found its moments of impetus not through Marxist theories but through historical moments of Western fascination with “the East” connected at some level to colonialist activities, as described by

¹ Lefebvre, Henri (1991). *Critique of Everyday Life*. Trans. John Moore. London: Verso.

² Bennett, T. (1998). “Popular Culture and the Turn to Gramsci”. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. Ed. John Storey. London: Prentice Hall. 218.

Edward Said.³ For example, the “Japonisme” art boom in late 19th-century Europe was instrumental in reconfiguring the recently formed nation-state of Japan in the European colonial imaginary.⁴ Later, Ruth Benedict’s state-commissioned *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) and the following boom of U. S. books (both academic and popular)⁵ depicted Japanese culture for a presumed Western readership in the wake of World War II and the subsequent occupation of Japan. Theory produced at this time was inexorably linked to a state project: the Allies’ wartime propaganda aimed at depicting Japanese people as distinctly malicious due to their unique culture and “race”⁶ had to be hastily rewritten to generate public backing for a new and pivotal ally in the approaching Cold War.⁷

As a result, when Western academic interest in Japanese popular culture blossomed in the late 1980s, it had two separate traditions from which it could draw: cultural studies and area studies. Also around this time, Said’s theory of Orientalism was instigating the post-colonialist critique within cultural studies, which explicitly targeted the field of area studies (including history, anthropology, and so on) as being complicit with colonialist ideological aims. This repositioned cultural studies and area studies from being distinct fields with overlapping objects of study to being more or less in opposition to each other. Given this context, it would be natural to assume that the birth of the study of Japanese popular culture would embody the tensions between its disciplinary forebears to some degree.

Despite its complex inheritance, however, from its conception to the present-day Japanese popular culture studies has largely managed to gloss over these theoretical tensions. In the early 1990s, Rey Chow described this dynamic with regard to Chinese cultural studies like so: “Confined to a discursive space that is theoretically at odds with the comparative tenets of contemporary cultural studies, the sinologist

³ Said, Edward (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books. 2, 26.

⁴ Kim, Chae Ryung (2012). “East Meets West: Japonisme in the discourse of colonialism in the development of modern art”. Buffalo: State University of New York, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

⁵ Glazer, Nathan (1975). “From Ruth Benedict to Herman Kahn: The Postwar Japanese Image in the American Mind”. *Mutual Images: Essays in American Japanese Relations*. Ed. Akira Irie. Cambridge: Harvard University Publishing.

⁶ Dower, John W. (1986) *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. New York: Pantheon. 118-146.

⁷ Sakai, Naoki. (2010b). “Transpacific Complicity and Comparatist Strategy”. *Globalizing American Studies*. Brian T. Edwards and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, eds. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

holds on to the language of the nation-state as his weapon of combat”.⁸ If the clash of area studies and cultural studies has resulted in combat, though, then it is largely invisible within individual studies of Japanese popular culture, which tend to incorporate the methodologies and lexicon of cultural studies within an overarching framework of area studies.⁹ Ironically, the accommodation of cultural studies in such a way that its direct challenges to area studies become invisible is a prime example of Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony, which states that an ideology can only become hegemonic through the negotiation and containment, rather than the domination, of competing ideologies.¹⁰

In the case of Japanese popular culture studies, this negotiation has led to a prevalence of culturalist methodologies. By “culturalism” I mean to say firstly that researchers tend to limit the context of their investigations to other aspects of Japan (history, culture, society, and so on) and secondly that, when researchers identify ideological apparatuses (whether they be associated with gender norms, historical trauma, etc.), these are understood to be derivative of Japanese culture. In other words, ideology is often depicted as emanating from an originary “Japanese culture”, and Japanese culture is rarely interrogated as an ideological – and political – construct itself.

Of course, aligning the borders of a critical investigation with national boundaries implies a degree of complicity with a political project (that of maintaining the conceptual space of the nation, to begin with). More recent interventions in area studies have challenged these assumptions – for example, Tessa Morris-Suzuki’s *Re-Inventing Japan: Time Space Nation*¹¹ focuses on ways in which the idea of the Japanese nation has historically been utilized to achieve political aims of the state, and Naoki Sakai has provided us with a comprehensive critique of the ways in which the field of area studies has been complicit with the political aims of both the

⁸ Chow, Rey (1993). *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Indiana University Press. 5.

⁹ E.g. Keene, Donald (1995). “Japanese Aesthetics.” *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture*. Ed. Nancy G. Hume. New York: State University of New York Press. 27-42.

¹⁰ Bennett (1998), 220.

¹¹ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa (1998). *Re-Inventing Japan: Time Space Nation*. London: M. E. Sharpe.

American state and the Japanese state.¹² It should be noted that not only area studies, but cultural studies, with its history of Eurocentricity and Orientalism, has also been the target of postcolonialist critiques. Despite many key figures of post-structuralism drawing on “Eastern thought” to challenge Western intellectual traditions,¹³ on the rare occasions that their theoretical lens turned to Asian countries like Japan, it was to depict it as a definitive Other of Western civilization.¹⁴ Perhaps the writers’ understanding and declaration that they were mobilizing a pre-existing imaginary of “the East” in this oppositional way¹⁵ gives their work better standing in this regard than those studies of East Asian culture that are oblivious to their own construction of the East as Other, but in both cultural studies and area studies the complicity of academic and colonial discourse has remained invisible for most of their history. Even after Foucault’s articulation of power/knowledge linked the production of knowledge within theoretical disciplines to discourses of power, it is only since the 1980s that cultural studies has come to terms with its own complicity in colonial projects, and more recently that area studies has begun to do the same. Far from being a revolutionary moment, this re-politicisation of theory has taken the form of a laboured and uneven process, which perhaps explains why certain sub-disciplines, such as Japanese popular culture studies, lag behind these broader theoretical advancements.

When it comes to Japanese popular culture, it sometimes feels as though criticism has fallen into a rut between the advances of cultural studies and area studies: either general or “universal” theories that ignore cultural context entirely, or analyses of Japanese culture which rely on unchallenged culturalist assumptions. I find that Thomas Lamarre’s characterization of criticism on anime is indicative of the state of Japanese popular culture studies in general: he describes three general types of analysis, which he calls “textual description, metatextual speculation, [and]

¹² Sakai, Naoki (2010a). “Civilizational Difference and Area Studies: Pan-Asianism and the West”. In *Whither Japanese Philosophy? II: Reflections through other Eyes*, Nakajima, Takahiro, ed. Tokyo: UTCP (The University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy).

¹³ Chow (1993), 18.

¹⁴ Most notably in Barthes, Roland (1982), *Empire of Signs*, trans. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang.

¹⁵ Barthes (1982), 3. Barthes openly admits on the first page of his book on Japan to being uninterested in accurately representing Japanese culture, and more interested in using the image of “the Orient” as a means to imagine a new system of semiotics.

sociological analysis”.¹⁶ In the first case, “[a]nalysis is relegated to re-presenting anime narratives, almost in the manner of book reports or movie reviews”; in the second case, “anime stories serve as the point of departure for philosophical speculation”; and in the third case “anime is a source of information about Japan, especially about Japanese youth”.¹⁷ In the cases of description and speculation, cultural texts are usually read outside of the context of culture and in the context of universal or abstract concepts, such as those of psychoanalysis or philosophy. In the case of sociological analysis, texts are often seen as direct representations of an underlying culture, historical period, or identity. Lamarre’s complaint is that all three approaches tend to ignore “the materiality” of the texts they focus on,¹⁸ to which we can add a further complaint: the lack of cultural analysis informed by the re-politicization of theory and critiques of culturalism that have been slowly gathering pace since the 1980s.

As such, while it has made many advances and contributions on its own terms, Japanese popular culture studies is an area that stands to benefit from an analysis drawing on the re-politicization of both cultural studies and area studies. At the same time, such a focus would address limitations in both of the two general fields: the propensity derived from cultural studies to develop theory articulated as universal only from developments within Western cultures and contexts (e.g. Western philosophy), and the propensity derived from area studies to subsume ideological considerations under a culturalist framework. As I have implied, this division of academic labour is itself an expression of a certain ideology and power configuration. Sakai has perhaps gone the furthest in articulating the hegemonic order in academia of assigning universal and abstract theories to “the West”, and particularistic and culturalist theories to “the Rest”.¹⁹ His work has played a key role in the recent politicization of area studies by grounding the discipline in an ideological context, and the momentum of this turn towards inter- and trans-regional discourses of power has the potential to also politicize studies of Japanese popular culture, especially when combined with the theoretical resources of the Gramsci-derived contemporary form of

¹⁶ Lamarre, Thomas (2009). *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*. University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis. x.

¹⁷ Lamarre (2009), x.

¹⁸ Lamarre (2009), x.

¹⁹ Sakai, (2010 a), 27-42.

cultural studies. Such a transformation would figure politics and power not just as contextual backdrops to Japanese culture, but as creative forces that drive cultural production, dissemination, and reception.

In the introduction to their book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, published in 1985, Laclau and Mouffe illustrate the dissolution of Marxism into a plurality of Marxisms as follows:

The surpassing of a great intellectual tradition never takes place in the sudden form of a collapse, but in the way that river waters, having originated at a common source, spread in various directions and mingle with currents flowing from other sources.²⁰

The final words of this image suggest an inverse of its original trajectory: diverse strands of thought, originating in different theoretical traditions, connect and swell to become inextricable, a new river, so to speak. This is an appropriate way to figure the potential for Japanese popular culture studies. Too often it exists under the immobilizing structure of a dialectic between area studies and cultural studies, with the contradictions between the two erased by an all-too-easy synthesis that fails to challenge core power dynamics. Instead we must acknowledge the friction between disciplines and connect the anti-culturalist strands of both, as well as their respective conceptions of ideologies that, far from being contained by national boundaries, make use of the image of such boundaries as a means to hegemony.

II. Popular Cinema as International Mobile Assemblage

There is a certain danger of becoming lost when bringing theoretical disciplines into communication with each other. As Arthur Miller reminds us, a bridge is not only something that provides a removed view of the distinct territories it connects, it is also something that one can throw oneself off. The theoretical reconfiguration of Japanese popular culture studies has been developing for the most part through a collection of focused analyses that connect ideology to the material realities of popular culture. One way in which the hermeneutic values of culturalism

²⁰ Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe (2001). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. Verso. 4-5.

have been abandoned is the use of a “technological” approach: the technology of Japanese popular culture can be said to be not only the industrial and mechanical factors that enable its media, but also, following Foucault, the “techniques of power” that allow ideology to reproduce itself within individual consumers.²¹ These techniques manifest themselves at various levels in the circulation of popular culture texts: narrative, pictorial, distributive, etc. To identify the material context in which they operate, we must ask ourselves what limits we imply when we speak of “Japanese popular culture”. Increasingly, rather than a nationally-bounded effect of Japanese society and identity, “Japanese popular culture” is being recognized as a global and mobile assemblage, incorporating different products and meanings as it interacts with different systems around the world. This is a process taking place across East Asian studies, with books such as Koichi Iwabuchi’s *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (2002), Anthony Y. H. Fung’s *Asian Popular Culture: The global (dis)continuity* (2013), and Hong Kong University Press’s “TransAsia: Screen Cultures” (2007-2012) series of books all driving popular culture studies away from national or even regional frameworks. In 2015 Harvard University offered an undergraduate course called “Anime as Global Popular Culture”, and in 2016 a course called “Film and Popular Culture Flows Across East Asia”.²² Macquarie University in Sydney currently offers a course called “Global Circulation of Asian Popular Culture”.²³ Without knowing the content of these courses, their titles alone indicate a discursive re-contextualisation of the theoretical and regional limits of “Japanese popular culture” as an object of study.

At the same time, globalizing effects on culture and industry are still often subsumed under national frameworks. In addition, both soft power initiatives such as the “Cool Japan” brand promoted by the government since the 2000s and essentialising narratives of national style and so on work to totalize Japanese popular

²¹ Foucault, Michel (1995). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books. 24.

²² Harvard University Website, Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations. <<https://ealc.fas.harvard.edu/aesthetic-and-interpretive-understanding-53-anime-global-popular-culture>> [02/01/2018]; Harvard University Website, Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations. <<https://ealc.fas.harvard.edu/east-asian-film-and-media-studies-110>> [02/01/2018].

²³ Macquarie University Website, 2017 Handbook. <<http://handbook.mq.edu.au/2017/Units/UGUnit/INTS307>> [02/01/2018].

culture, denying its constantly shifting boundaries and regional differences, as well as the fact that the content it signifies depends largely on what becomes successful outside of Japan – by which I mean consumers’ expectations and images of Japanese popular culture depend on the content that is popular in their own regions and experience. For example, while popular domestically and in some Asian countries, Japanese television dramas (unlike their Korean counterparts) are not popular outside of Asia, and as such do not figure in many consumers’ image of (and demand for) Japanese popular culture. What does persist across regional expectations is, broadly speaking, the image of a certain national effervescent and kitsch aesthetic, as well as certain cultural texts and styles that belong especially to the overlapping categories of anime and manga, but also of music, fashion, video games, television, and cinema. Increasingly, this image of Japanese popular culture moves away from the region and people of Japan, as non-Japanese creators make use of “Japanese style” and so on (For example, thanks to the increased availability in recent years of video game-making systems to the general public, there has been a vast increase in the number of foreign-made “visual novels”, a genre of video game that employ manga and *kawaii* (cute) aesthetics associated with Japanese popular culture).²⁴

It should be pointed out that, of the media listed above, Japanese cinema is somewhat different from the other categories in that it has stronger links to critical theory from before the globalization period, as a result of Western interest in Japanese national cinema since the 1950s (related, of course, to the area studies boom mentioned above). The title of Barthes’ text on Japan, *Empire of Signs (L’Empire des Signes)*, for example, is a pun on the title of Oshima Nagisa’s notorious film *In the Realm of the Senses (L’Empire des Sens)*, a Japan-France coproduction, and among the auteurs singled out in Deleuze’s philosophical cinema project, the only non-Western directors are Japanese.²⁵ When the globalization of Japanese popular culture did begin, it was largely on the back of an anime film, *Akira* (1989) – this film also marked the moment a number of Western critics began to envision Japanese popular films as worthy of serious study, and the moment that non-Japanese industries began

²⁴ Brown, Fraser (2017). “Visual Novel Maker Is Coming to Steam on November 16”. *PC Gamer*. <<http://www.pcgamer.com/visual-novel-maker-is-coming-to-steam-on-november-16/>> [02/01/2018].

²⁵ Deleuze, Gilles (1986), *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Deleuze, Gilles (1989). *Cinema II: The Time-Image*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

to see the potential in marketing Japanese animation to adults.²⁶ The established discipline of film studies thus served as a gateway through which studies of anime and other forms of Japanese popular culture could proliferate. At the same time, previous writings that had considered Japanese culture from the perspective of area studies also laid the groundwork for the turn to popular culture. In other words, Japanese cinema studies suffers from similar restraints and is going through similar political transformations to those mentioned above in regards to Japanese popular culture studies. Despite its differences, the global status of Japanese popular cinema is in many ways a metonym as much as it is a key component for Japanese popular culture, making it a useful avenue for narrowing the theoretical lens onto specific material processes.

In what specific sense, then, can we say that Japanese popular cinema is a global and mobile assemblage? Or, how do scholars go about pinning down something that is both diffuse and in motion via flows of industry and ideology? For the word “assemblage” here connotes something vast indeed: the various parts and roles that come together in the production phase, for example, the agreements struck between producers in different countries, the financial and industrial limits that are decided upon, the gathering of a cast and crew, set-pieces, shooting locations, and so on. The film text itself, far from being a final product or effect of all these connections and exchanges, is no more than a concentration of yet more components: cuts, colours, sounds, pieces of a narrative, etc. When put into motion by the technology of projectors, televisions, and computers, these textual fragments then form new bonds with their audiences, as images act on viewers in cinemas or their own homes, making biological connections between screen and eye and brain, provoking emotional and visceral responses which are in themselves further links in an expanding chain.²⁷ Then there are the sub-texts: the reviews written, the book-based-on-the-film, the remake, the fan club, the academic paper, all feeding back into ways in which the film is received, the money it brings in, and the effects it has on viewers. With the coming of globalization, the assemblage of the film has only

²⁶ Napier, Susan. (2001). *Anime: From “Akira” to “Princess Mononoke”*: *Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*. New York: Palgrave. vii.

²⁷ Powell, Anna (2005). *Deleuze and Horror Film*, Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press. 79.

expanded further, transforming as it comes into contact with new industries and new audiences.

For my purposes, the mechanics of this assemblage is of interest insofar as it disseminates or embodies ideology: how the politics of production, for example, come to have visceral effects on the viewer, or how the narrative's moral universe in one context begins to fracture when shifted across national borders. Just as Butler describes the body as "not a 'being,' but a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated",²⁸ so too the filmic assemblage. The very concept of "Japanese cinema" generally signifies a static being, denying both its international flows and the "political regulation" of its borders. Rather than rein in this expansive network of technologies and affects by singling out the parts of the assemblage that connote "Japan", much is to be gained from focusing on how those parts change as they move from cultural form to cultural form, and from nation to nation.

The academic discussion of the globalization of popular culture tends to take one of two forms. The first focuses on the decentralization of power and the rise of either images produced by "peripheral regions" or images that have become non-regionalizable in their pervasive diffusion, such as in Vera Mackie's paper on the exportation of Japan's "gothic Lolita" fashion in her paper "Transnational Bricolage".²⁹ The second form of argument focuses on the ways in which the culturally dominant or "central region" of the West has had to make only minor concessions to further its hegemonic influence on the global stage, such as in Miller et al's discussion in their book *Global Hollywood*.³⁰ While both approaches are often interested in the weakening of bonds between images and their regions of origin, the conclusions they reach about how this modern transformation effects flows of power seem somewhat irreconcilable. Are the peripheries eroding the centre, or is the centre invading the peripheries? Writing about the rise of a global-Japanese cinema must be considered within the context of the tension between these two approaches. While I do not think there is a simple way to reconcile them, I believe that there is a

²⁸ Butler, Judith (2006). *Gender Trouble*. London: Routledge. 189.

²⁹ Mackie, Vera. (2009). "Transnational Bricolage: Gothic Lolita and the Political Economy of Fashion". *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*. Issue 20 (April 2009).

³⁰ Miller, Toby, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, and Richard Maxwell (2001). *Global Hollywood*. British Film Institute.

danger in depicting globalized popular culture as primarily a boundary-effacing force, as both of these approaches do. That is to say that whether globalization is depicted as a democratizing process in which various cinemas can flourish or a strategic manoeuvre in which Hollywood effects its hegemony by losing its foreignness and becoming a global norm, both cases take the disintegration of national boundaries as a given. I believe that introducing the work of Sakai into the study of Japanese popular culture is revelatory in its depiction of how globalization has the effect of consolidating old discourses of power between nations, thereby reinforcing rather than opposing the national.

Therefore, if “transnational” is the word that best describes the border-effacing modes of global production and consumption of Japanese popular culture, then this study is one that aims to be “international”, to a large extent, by observing the transformations that take place at the points of intersection within a global milieu, and whether or not these border-crossings have an effect on the hegemonic ideologies directing the various flows of the assemblage’s components. While the transnational is increasingly a focus of popular culture studies, a geopolitical approach to cultural texts is only interested in relations *beyond* (“trans”) politically-bounded regions insofar as they pertain to relations *between* (“inter”) politically-bounded regions. Due to the division of labour within academia that posits “particularist” (or nationally-bounded) theories of Japan and “universalist” theories from the West, Sakai believes a modern “critique of Japan necessarily entails the radical critique of the West”.³¹ Therefore, the use of terms such as “transnational” and “global” must be used in such a way that they illuminate rather than obscure border-crossings and inter-regional power dynamics. Indeed, without sacrificing the theoretical terrain that comes with discussions of transnational cinema, to better ensure that the hegemonic order between Japan and the West remains in clear view I consider my topic specifically as “international mobile assemblages of Japanese popular cinema in the era of globalization”.

III. J-Horror and Ghibli as Assemblages

³¹ Quoted in Chow (1993), 5.

With this framework in mind, I have chosen as my objects of focus the most internationally successful iterations of Japanese popular cinema since it globalized in the late 1980s: two separate bodies of films, commonly referred to under the labels of J-Horror and Studio Ghibli. As well as having had impressive impacts on industry and the popular imagination in Japan, these two bodies of texts have met with similar successes – financial, critical, and popular – in many regions around the world, as well as given rise to a number of sub-texts in the form of merchandise, journalistic and academic responses, fan communities, and so on. They have had transformative effects on filmmaking and storytelling all over the world – the figure of the iconic Japanese ghost and the accelerated turn towards sophisticated animation films (instead of “for kids” aesthetics) in Hollywood are two significant examples. As with other groupings of popular Japanese texts, like the *Pokemon* games or the manga and television anime series *One Piece*, J-Horror and Ghibli are distinct assemblages in their own right. Ghibli, for example, is a film studio and therefore the images and cultural material it produces stems from a centralized structure of power; while J-horror is an ambiguous term derived from peripheral fan groups and marketing strategies to label a group of films related by both aesthetics and national origin. However, as I will demonstrate, it is likely that these two assemblages have accumulated new texts and impacted global industries and discourse (journalistic/popular/academic) to a greater extent than any other Japanese franchise or subgenre.

A key factor in the wide reach and diversity of these assemblages is their profitability. In terms of impact at the box office, six of the top ten highest grossing anime films worldwide are Studio Ghibli films, with *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, 2001) holding the number one spot from 2002 to 2016.³² In 2002, the international releases of both *Spirited Away* and the Hollywood remake of the Japanese domestic hit *Ring* (*Ringu*, 1998) made them two of the most successful films of that year, with *Spirited Away* being the 16th and *The Ring* being the 18th highest grossing film worldwide.³³ At the time of writing, in the American market *The Ring* is

³² “Genres – Animation – Anime”. *Box Office Mojo*.

<<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=anime.htm>> [02/01/2018].

³³ “Yearly Box Office – 2002 Worldwide Grosses”. *Box Office Mojo*.

<<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?view2=worldwide&yr=2002>> [02/01/2018].

the 4th highest-grossing remake of an Asian film³⁴ and the number one highest grossing horror remake of all time.³⁵ Meanwhile the USA-Japan coproduction *The Grudge* (2004) is the second highest grossing horror remake of all time.³⁶ These successes were instrumental in the subsequent efforts made in the international DVD distribution of Ghibli and (domestically-made) J-horror films, and in the accumulation of further profits in the form of film sales, home video rental, television broadcasts, and merchandise.

In the context of Japanese cinema studies, the large amount of academic attention J-Horror and Ghibli receive does not particularly stand out – other bodies of Japanese films, such as postwar genre films, or the “Golden Age” films of the 1950s, or even the avant garde films of the 1960s and 1970s have generated more interest and discussion – partly due to the advantage of having existed for longer. Similarly, most undergraduate syllabi for courses in Japanese culture focus on stretches of time that begin long before the advent of Ghibli and J-Horror – some going as far back as the Tokugawa Period, often the postwar, and so on. In these cases, the “globalized Japanese popular culture” that gradually came into existence from the 1980s is either framed as a facet of “Japanese culture” which is bounded by national production and consumption, or as a recent transformation in a long tradition of national culture. In other words, it usually remains tethered to the boundaries set by area studies, rather than being articulated as a phenomenon in its own right that began in the 1980s.

However, if the context of national cinema is replaced with one of global dissemination, Ghibli and J-Horror are some of the most prominent films studied (even though much of the work concerning them also reproduces the same culturalist methodology of area studies and national cinemas).³⁷ While the globalized phase of

³⁴ “Genres – Remake – Asian”. *Box Office Mojo*.

<<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=asianremake.htm>> [02/01/2018].

³⁵ Not including the recent box office success *It* (2017), which grossed more than *The Ring* but was adapted from a source novel and television series rather than a prior film.

³⁶ “Genres – Horror Remake”. *Box Office Mojo*.

<<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=horrorremake.htm>> [02/01/2018].

³⁷ E.g. Balmain, Colette. (2008). *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; McRoy, Jay (2008), ed. *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema*. New York: Editions Rodopi B.V.; Yau

Japanese popular culture has been a fruitful avenue of research, the two most significant bodies of Japanese popular film in the global era, J-Horror and Ghibli, have never been paired as an object of study before. This is likely a result of their differences in production, content, and imagined audience. Yet while it would be normal to find them mentioned in the same breath as key examples of influential Japanese popular culture, no in-depth studies have brought the two into contact with each other thus far, comparatively or otherwise.

This dissertation will therefore summarise and build upon some of the key texts that have been written about each separate assemblage, as well as bringing these texts into conversation with each other in the conclusion. Regarding J-horror, key figures that I will draw on include Oliver Dew on marketing and Orientalism,³⁸ Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano on new media and technology,³⁹ and Chika Kinoshita on aesthetics.⁴⁰ Regarding Ghibli, I will largely draw on Susan Napier's work, building on the link she made between Studio Ghibli and the ideology of "victim's consciousness",⁴¹ and challenging her casting of Ghibli as "a cinema of de-assurance" in contrast to a Hollywood-derived cinema of reassurance.⁴² I also aim to build on the arguments of these academics by bringing them into contact with each other via the poststructuralist concept of the assemblage.

It is the concept of the assemblage as articulated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri that fundamentally organizes my analysis, and that allows me to categorize J-horror and Ghibli as a wide assortment of relevant cultural texts and processes

Shuk-ting, Kinnia (2011). "A 'Horrible' Legacy: *Noh* and J-horror". *East Asian Cinema and Cultural Heritage*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. 101-124.

³⁸ Dew, Oliver (2007). "'Asia Extreme': Japanese cinema and British hype". *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*. Volume 5 Number 1. Intellect Ltd.

³⁹ Wada-Marciano, Mitsuyo (2009). "J-horror: New Media's Impact on Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema". *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*. Eds. Jinhee Choi and Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. 15-38.

⁴⁰ Kinoshita, Chika (2009). "The Mummy Complex: Kurosawa Kiyoshi's *Loft* and J-horror". *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*. Eds. Jinhee Choi and Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. 103-122.

⁴¹ Napier, Susan. (2001). "No More Words: *Barefoot Gen*, *Grave of the Fireflies*, and 'Victim's History'". *Anime: From "Akira" to "Princess Mononoke": Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*. New York: Palgrave. 161 – 175.

⁴² Napier, Susan. (2001). "Confronting Master Narratives: History as Vision in Miyazaki Hayao's Cinema of Deassurance". *positions* 9:2, 467-493. Duke University Press (Fall 2001).

alongside the films and their images – which is to say, it allows me to imagine a J-horror assemblage and a Ghibli assemblage as two objects of study. For example, Chapters Two and Three are thematically divided according to the two sides of the assemblage as defined by Deleuze and Guattari: an extensive multiplicity in which the components form “a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject”; and an intensive multiplicity in which the components are “constantly dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate”.⁴³ This distinction between extending and dismantling also informs my discussions on the effects of J-horror and Ghibli as international brands in Chapters Four and Five.

Similarly, the Deleuzian emphasis on affect as a theoretical tool has greatly influenced my analyses of these assemblages, especially in Chapter Six. From the outset, the distinction between affect and aesthetics should be clearly understood. Affect can be defined as sensation before it is organised into meaning.⁴⁴ Affect “is not so much what *we* see but refers to the power of images themselves”.⁴⁵ As such, it is not the variable experience of any individual, but that power which is available to all before being organised into individual emotional and ideological responses.⁴⁶ On the other hand an aesthetic, by my understanding, is an organizational set of rules or categories applied after conscious reflections on art or sources of beauty. Therefore “Ghibli aesthetics” refers to the consensus on the subjective categorisation of the compositional and affective powers associated with “Ghibli”. In the coming chapters the relationship between assemblage, affect, and aesthetic will be illustrated in tandem with the discussion of films and ideology.

Deleuze’s conceptual framework and vocabulary have been put to use in various analyses of popular culture in recent years. Thomas Lamarre premises his book *The Anime Machine* on a Guattarian definition of “machine” that is almost

⁴³ Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari (1988). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Brian Massumi, trans. London: Bloomsbury. 4.

⁴⁴ Colebrook, Claire (2002). *Gilles Deleuze*. London: Routledge. 22, 34.

⁴⁵ Colebrook (2002), 147. In keeping with Deleuzian thought, it is more appropriate to understand an image as a part of the flow of experience, rather than a static representation of something else. In film, it pertains to all aspects of composition, rather than just the visual.

⁴⁶ For a more detailed discussion on the relation between emotion and affect, see Del Río, Elena (2008), *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 10, 24.

identical to the concept of “assemblage” that he developed with Deleuze (they also use the term “machinic assemblage”),⁴⁷ and Anna Powell’s book *Deleuze and Horror Film* develops each chapter around a different Deleuzian concept. In her book’s introduction, however, Powell acknowledges that her framework is limited to “Western” horror films, and invites scholars to consider horror films from other regions in a Deleuzian analysis.⁴⁸ While my focus on J-horror accepts this invitation to a degree, it also does so in a way which interrogates the discursive practice of building theory into the geopolitical framework of “the West and the rest” – a framework which is both disrupted and maintained in various ways by the two filmic assemblages I will describe here.

Ghibli and J-horror are, to an extent, emblematic of an international dual stereotype of Japan: cute, wistful, and child-oriented while at the same time repressing a perverse, “weird”, or unwholesome nature.⁴⁹ They are also, historically, both cultural moments that have passed (Ghibli in the 2010s and J-horror in the 2000s) or are in the process of passing (in terms of revenue, fans, production, and so on), and yet their recent impact is still a strong presence in industries and the popular imagination of people all over the world. They are therefore ideal subject matter for an investigation into how Japanese popular culture functions within the web of global and regional power dynamics. Not only will this investigation build on the work that has been done on each body of films, it will also connect disparate strands that stand to gain from coming into contact with each other: Ghibli and J-Horror, but also cultural studies, film studies, and area studies. As well as their recent impact, other benefits in isolating Ghibli and J-Horror rather than, say, anime or manga, include the relatively short history and small number of texts in each of the former, as opposed to the immense diversity of texts that stretch back beyond the age of globalization in the latter.

This allows more space to consider material beyond the core filmic texts as part of the Ghibli and J-Horror assemblages. While there is already a significant overlap between journalism, general knowledge books, and academic work in both popular culture and film theory, as a result of the popularity of these two bodies of

⁴⁷ Lamarre (2009), xxvi.

⁴⁸ Powell (2005), 7.

⁴⁹ Tsutsui, William M. (2010). *Japanese Popular Culture and Globalization*. Association for Asian Studies. 20-22.

films this overlap is all the more prominent. Analysing these interconnected texts will create a clear and comprehensive image of Ghibli and J-Horror as international mobile assemblages, as well as reveal the transformations of ideological technologies as they encounter industries, texts, and audiences. It must be reiterated that rather than attempt a unifying theory or definitive account, my aim is to trace the workings of ideology within these two globally popular assemblages: in other words, what is accommodated and what is contained by hegemonic systems when they come into contact with the structural apparatus of Ghibli and that of J-Horror. In this way I aim to build both a double case study of what are arguably the most pervasive and influential texts of globalised Japanese popular cinema so far, to outline the related ideological and material effects of globalization in the culture industry, to emphasise the historical significance of these changes as they took place in the 1990s and the 2000s, and also to contribute an analysis that furthers the ongoing politicization of Japanese popular culture studies.

IV. The Persistence of Postwar Ideology

Films are part of an assemblage: viewership and affect, art and cultural milieu, production and marketing, acceptance or rejection at the critical, popular, and financial levels. At the same time, they can be categorized into various assemblages themselves that include these interrelated mechanisms – it is two such assemblages that form the objects of my analysis. The specificity of the two groups J-Horror and Ghibli is matched by the diversity of their extra-textual components. I am interested in each group insofar as they relate to ideology, and more specifically “the political”, i.e. an engagement with discourses that advocate different modes of governance (of the state, of the body, of historical narratives, and so on). In the following chapters I will investigate the J-Horror and Ghibli phenomena separately at first, before considering them alongside each other in my conclusion. In both cases, my aim will be twofold: in the first place to describe and define J-Horror and Ghibli using the framework established above, and in the second place to emphasise the role of hegemonic ideology in each assemblage. In particular, I will move towards a greater understanding of the cultural role of what can be termed the postwar ideology of Japan.

There may seem to be something of a disjunct between on the one hand arguing for bringing studies of contemporary Japanese popular culture up to date with recent interventions in cultural studies, and on the other hand focusing on ideology dating back to the postwar period. As Azuma Hiroki puts it in his authoritative study on postmodernism and otaku culture,

Perhaps some readers may be puzzled that I am dragging events that occurred more than fifty years ago into a discussion on contemporary subculture. Yet the legacy of World War II has determined the entire culture of Japan to a greater extent than we imagine.⁵⁰

He goes on to reference Sawaraki Noi, who argues that changes in Japanese popular culture in the 1990s such as the proliferation of the “J-pop” music aesthetic have less to do with globalization than with cultural legacies of the postwar period.⁵¹ However, Azuma is not interested in ideological continuities, but rather developments between time periods – in other words, a cultural evolution that leads to the present state of Japanese popular culture. Following the lead of postmodern theorists like Derrida and Lyotard, Azuma is interested in history insofar as it reveals the passing of the grand narratives of discourse to be replaced by a multitude of new narratives and subject positions existing alongside each other – a passing “from ideology to fiction”,⁵² as he puts it. Problematically, this stance entails that ideological continuities, like those informing the sexist gender norms of otaku culture, are largely missing from his account. In contrast, by looking at the continued presence of postwar ideology in popular culture, I aim to explore the aesthetic and political possibilities and limitations of both. My project therefore attempts to reconcile the evident ruptures and fragmentations of the postmodern, globalized age that produced J-horror and Ghibli with the persistence of hegemonic ideological narratives that were first formed in the postwar period.

⁵⁰ Azuma, Hiroki (2009). *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*. Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono, trans. University of Minnesota Press. 15

⁵¹ Sawaraki Noi (1998). *Nihon, gendai, bijutsu* [Japanese, modern, art]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha. 94.

⁵² Azuma (2009), 35.

It is important to take note of the fact that the concept of the continuity of postwar ideology often underlies the most culturalist and nationally reductive accounts of contemporary Japanese popular culture. This tendency is often expressed through psychoanalytic notions of trauma – thus every anxiety in J-horror or Ghibli can be framed as an affective reiteration of postwar nuclear anxiety, and so on. Some accounts offer non-reductive and thoughtful analyses of connections between contemporary popular cinema, globalization, and the legacies of postwar ideology, only to culminate in highly speculative theoretical bridging between them, such as Adam Lowenstein’s claim that the film *Ring* and J-horror in general were “mobilizing [the tradition of] surrealism [...] to restore evaded memories of World War II”.⁵³ Despite its engagement with ideological connectivity and inheritance, ultimately Lowenstein’s account de-politicizes J-Horror by embracing the de-regionalizing concept of the “global village” alongside the interpretative concept of “repressed history” as a way of making sense of the phenomenon. In contrast, I believe that an account of the postwar ideological connections to J-Horror and Ghibli films should be able to articulate the regionalizing effects of power, especially as a function of globalization, in an internationally-minded, non-culturalist way. It is this kind of “continuity” that I have in mind when referencing the postwar in relation to my objects of study.

Defining the exact time period of the “postwar” is not an easy task, given that many if not all of the major changes to Japanese society since the end of World War II can be traced back in some way to the political and societal restructuring that began taking place directly after the war. Ōsawa Masachi, focusing on a characterization of the Japanese socio-political imaginary, divides the postwar into an “idealistic age”, that lasted from 1945 to 1970, and a “fictional age”, that lasted from 1970 to 1995.⁵⁴ This latter age can be described as a turn towards cynicism and relativism in the absence of competing grand narratives of political ideology, complementary with the infamous “end of history” claim that Francis Fukuyama claimed as a dividing line between two eras at the end of the Cold War in 1989. However, as I wish to record

⁵³ Lowenstein, Adam (2009). “Ghosts in a super flat global village: globalization, surrealism, and contemporary Japanese horror films”. *The Free Library*. <<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Ghosts+in+a+super+flat+global+village%3A+globalization%2C+surrealism%2C+and...-a0200723441>> [04/28/2018].

⁵⁴ Ōsawa, Masachi (1998). *Sengo no shisō kū kan* (“Postwar intellectual space”). Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho.

the survival of certain grand narratives of postwar ideology in J-Horror and Ghibli, my definition of the postwar period is the same as Ōsawa's "idealistic age", or what Azuma calls the age of grand narratives in Japan: 1945-1970.⁵⁵ It is in this time period, especially during and immediately after the American Occupation, that certain political narratives emerged that are to this day highly relevant to analyses of Japanese popular culture, as I will show in the following chapters. I will now outline a theoretical framework that I will draw on extensively for this purpose, beginning with Sakai's theory of "transpacific complicity" between Japan and the USA. This transpacific complicity, established during the "idealistic age" of grand narratives, is perhaps the most significant, productive, and hegemonic ideological arrangement that emerged at this time.

V. Transpacific Complicity and Victims' Consciousness

In his chapter "Transpacific Complicity and Comparatist Strategy", Sakai demonstrates that some of the key strategies of the Allied Occupation of Japan during the immediate postwar period of national instability have had lasting effects on the political landscape of East Asia. During a transitional period when radical change was possible, a new ideology, which Naoki Sakai has termed "New Emperorism", released both the Japanese people and the Emperor from war responsibility, and was encouraged by both the occupying forces and the government of the time as a means to effecting a stable and smooth transition of power.⁵⁶ Sakai uses the term "transpacific complicity" to refer to the harmonizing of ideological objectives and methodologies undertaken by the Occupation forces and the Japanese government to reinforce New Emperorism. The term "New Emperorism" itself signifies both the advent of a new political imperative in postwar Japan, and also the continuity between the wartime/pre-war *kokutai* ("national body") ideology and postwar ideology. In other words, the image of the Emperor as an organising and centralized "national body" that needed to be protected remained unaltered under the Occupation.

Other historians such as John Dower also stress the continuity between wartime and postwar systems, or that which was strategically preserved by the

⁵⁵ Azuma (2009), 73.

⁵⁶ Sakai (2010 b), 246.

occupying forces and the Japanese government.⁵⁷ Despite the Allies' wartime demand to de-establish the Emperor system as part of an unconditional surrender, rather than being abolished the Emperor system was appropriated and absorbed into the Occupation strategy for postwar reform. While changes such as the Emperor publicly renouncing his divine status were shocking and significant for ordinary Japanese people, the dissemination of the narrative that both he and the Japanese people had been misled by warmongering politicians ensured that a public sense of national unity, patriarchal devotion, and shared trauma could be maintained, and act as a buffer for radical changes such as the implementation of the Occupation's new constitution for the country, the installation of U. S. military bases, and so on. Historian Tanaka Yuki goes further, alleging that the postwar leader Kishi Nobosuke (grandfather of the current prime minister Abe Shinzō), having been reinstated by the Occupation despite their branding of him as a war criminal, literally owed his life to American policy makers, and that this personal but symbolic salvation of a wartime militarist shaped the political objectives of his Liberal Democratic Party as supportive of an American hegemony in East Asia from the Cold War to the present day.⁵⁸

Concurrently, the image of Japan as the Other of Western civilization, frequently reproduced in the traditional rhetoric and methodologies of studies of Japan, is more than just a remnant of colonialist discourse. It is more specifically an effect of the transpacific complicity instigated during the Occupation, as it suits the political aim of making invisible the role of the U. S. in what are portrayed as regional affairs.⁵⁹ Speaking of academic work on the East Asia region in general, Chow writes the following:

...while plenty of work is done on East Asian women, much of it is not feminist but nationalist or culturalist; while plenty of work is done on the modern history of East Asia, much of it is not about East Asia's shared history with other orientalised [sic] cultures but about East Asia as a "distinct" territory with a distinct history. What is forgotten is that these notions of East

⁵⁷ Dower, John W. (1999) *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company/The New Press. 389.

⁵⁸ Tanaka, Yuki (2017). "A Critique of An Open Letter to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe". <<http://yjtanaka.blogspot.jp/2017/01/a-critique-of-open-letter-to-prime.html>> [02/02/2017].

⁵⁹ Sakai (2010 b), 260.

Asia are fully in keeping with U. S. foreign policy in the post-Second World War period, during which the older European Orientalism was supplanted by the emergence of the U. S. as the newest imperial power with major military bases in countries such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Vietnam.⁶⁰

Thus transpacific complicity can be understood as the Japan-specific and pioneering version of a new postwar ideology that structured discourse about the East Asia region in general. Accordingly, Orientalist discourse in Japanese popular culture must be understood not merely as a legacy or discursive branch of European and American colonialism, but as a function of the transpacific complicity between the U. S. and Japan establish in the postwar period.

Edwin O. Reischauer, both an academic and advisor of U.S. foreign policy in wartime and postwar Japan, is one of the figures which most strongly embodies Sakai's articulation of the Foucaultian power/knowledge complicity between "Japanology" as an academic discipline and the political strategies employed as a means to implementing U. S. hegemony within Japan. As Sakai and scholars such as Takashi Fujitani have pointed out, Reischauer openly advocated using tactics similar to those that Japan had attempted in its imperialist expansion into Manchuria by treating the Emperor as the leader of a "puppet" regime.⁶¹ Reischauer argued that the Japanese strategy of instating the descendant of the Qing dynasty as an Emperor of the puppet state "Manchukuo" was admirable in that it aimed at dominating the Manchurian people not through force but through a sense of shared history and culture, embodied by a non-Japanese ruler while the real power remained with the Japanese. However, Reischauer goes on, the weakness of this strategy lay in the fact that the Manchurian people had no previous allegiance or solidarity with such a regime or such an Emperor-figure, and so this new national identity would have to be enforced from top-down initiatives, and ran the risk of seeming artificial and imposed. In Japan, on the other hand, an Emperor system which demanded allegiance and solidarity was already in place and working effectively to mobilize Japanese citizens. Therefore the U. S. stood to gain by using Japan's imperial tactics against it, as

⁶⁰ Chow (1993), 7.

⁶¹ Fujitani, Takashi (2000). "Reischauer no kairai tenno-sei koso". *Sekai*. March 2000: 137-46.

reinstating the Emperor in Japan would be a much smoother and more effective affair than the Japanese installation of an emperor in Manchuria.⁶²

While Sakai focuses on the spread of New Emperorism at official and strategic levels, he also figures it as a key ideology in the formation of postwar Japanese national identity. Therefore in order for it to be effective as a technology of governance over the region, it had to reach and be accepted by the Japanese people themselves somehow. While Sakai convincingly argues for the inclusion of U.S.-based academic work produced at the time as texts that extended the apparatus of New Emperorism, his argument opens a gap between the public sphere and the political one. Perhaps another study could address the ways in which the ideology of New Emperorism was disseminated to the peoples of both Japan and America, in the form of newspaper articles, museum exhibitions, popular books, films, and so on.

Existing work already aligns with Sakai's main argument: for example, Hirano Kyoko argues that the Occupation preserved the fundamental aspects of the Japanese wartime propaganda cinema industry for the same reason it preserved the Emperor system: control and influence would be more easily secured if the new ideological agenda was seen as coming from Japanese people and institutions rather than American ones.⁶³ Following Hirano, John Dower makes various links between film censorship and ideology in postwar Japan which could be used to support Sakai's analysis. Dower highlights the collusion between the Japanese government and the Occupation in the banning of the anti-imperial documentary *The Tragedy of Japan* (*Nihon no higeki*, 1946), even after it had passed the censors and been screened.⁶⁴ Dower goes as far as to say that "the suppression of the documentary essentially marked the moment when serious debate concerning imperial war responsibility

⁶² Sakai (2010 b), 262. Sakai reproduces an extract from Reischauer's *Memorandum on Policy in Japan*: "Japan has used the strategem of puppet governments extensively but with no great success because of the inadequacy of the puppets. But Japan itself has created the best possible puppet for our purposes, a puppet who not only could be won over to our side but who would carry with him a tremendous weight of authority, which Japan's puppets in China have always lacked. I mean, of course, the Japanese Emperor."

⁶³ Hirano, Kyoko (1998). *Tenno to Seppun: America senryoka no nihon eiga kenetsu (Emperor and Kiss: Japanese Cinema Under the American Occupation)*. Tokyo: Soshisa. 60-67.

⁶⁴ Dower (1999), 428.

disappeared”.⁶⁵ He describes how the banning provided a strict lesson for “media people”, who learned

that serious criticism could carry an intolerably heavy price tag. Despite its reliance on already existing footage, *The Tragedy of Japan* proved expensive to produce for Nichiei, the studio that backed it. The film’s suppression pushed the company close to bankruptcy and provided a compelling warning to anyone else who might be contemplating playing with controversy. Individuals working in the print media, where delays as well as outright suppression could be financially devastating, were likewise keenly attuned to the accounting costs of expressing what they truly thought.⁶⁶

Thus Dower provides a compelling link between governmental strategies of control and their impact on the public sphere via the media industry, using the example of a single film to illustrate new “self-censoring” behaviours and norms as a result of a political imperative shared by the Japanese government and the Occupation at a time of economic hardship and national insecurity.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I aim to follow this methodology – of using film as a means to explore the impact of transpacific complicity on the public sphere – as it pertains to contemporary societies. For according to Sakai, the power dynamic of transpacific complicity has had a dramatic and lasting impact on Japanese modern society: from the U.S. fortifying of Japan as a bastion against the perceived threat of communism in the Cold War, to the resentment against U.S. hegemony articulated by both progressives and conservatives in Japan, for example in the mass protests against the two renewals of the Security Treaty between the U. S. and Japan in the late 1960s. Other significant political struggles in Japan, such as those against the bases in Okinawa or those for revising the constitution to regain military independence, have all been embodiments of the tensions created by the alignment between American and Japanese political objectives during and shortly after the Occupation years – in this sense, transpacific complicity can be said to have radically shaped the political life of the country. This suggests that, like all forms of power, it reproduces itself in the everyday life of citizens, indeed the presence of an ideology at

⁶⁵ Dower (1999), 428.

⁶⁶ Dower (1999) 429.

this level of transmission is necessary for it to exert “power” in the Foucaultian sense. While Sakai lucidly articulates the flows of ideology between Japan and the West on a macro level, I believe his analysis could be extended to include a material explanation for how that ideology reproduces itself at the popular level. An analysis of contemporary cultural products and industries will reveal that the transpacific complicity forged during the Occupation period has not only a geopolitical and academic legacy, but a cultural one too.

Since the postwar period, transpacific complicity has been hegemonic to the extent that it has permeated the sphere of global cultural production, where it combines and competes with various other ideological narratives. Just as the advent of New Emperorism ensured continuity between *kokutai* ideology and postwar ideology, transpacific complicity encompasses a continuity between postwar ideology and that which is embodied in Japanese popular culture today. I believe this continuity can be observed in a variety of cultural phenomena, two of which form the inspiration for this dissertation: the cinema of “victims’ history”, which has existed from the postwar period until today, and the remake economy between Japanese and U. S. film industries that emerged in the wake of the J-horror boom in the early 2000s.

Victims’ history has long been observed by critics who argue that the cultural propagation of an image of the Japanese people (and Emperor) as primarily victims of World War II exonerates the nation by extension, thereby fulfilling the political aims of the state. To connect this to Sakai’s argument, we can say that the creation of a victim’s history for Japan using popular technologies such as literature and cinema was one of the ways in which the ideology of New Emperorism established itself in the hearts of the Japanese people. In his book *The Victim as Hero*, James Orr admirably articulates the flows of power through which the image of the Japanese victim moved from the political arena into the cultural domain.⁶⁷ He notes not only the complicity between the occupation forces and the government in their efforts to exonerate Japan, but (from his perspective more crucially) the rise of the anti-nuclear movement in the postwar years, which went from being a fringe anti-state initiative instigated by socialists and *hibakusha* (atomic bomb survivors) to being embraced by conservatives and non-partisan citizens alike, and being established through various

⁶⁷ Orr, James (2001). *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan*. University of Hawai’i Press. Honolulu.

means as part of a state-approved national narrative.⁶⁸ I will consider this convergence of political opinion on the image of Japan-as-war-victim in the chapters on Studio Ghibli. In that section I will also argue that while victims' history has been observed as a theme in Japanese cinema that narratively depicts the wartime period, I believe that as an ideology dependent on affect, it surpasses narrative constraints and is observable in various non-war-related Japanese films. As for the J-Horror remake economy involving the U.S. and Japanese film industries, I will detail the ways in which it exemplifies transpacific complicity in both the industrial production of films and the filmic production of images in Chapter Four.

Beyond these two assertions – of the presence of victims' history in Studio Ghibli films and the presence of transpacific complicity in the J-Horror remake economy – I will consider the related ideological presence of Orientalism and Japanese nationalism within these filmic assemblages. As I have briefly outlined here, Orientalism, Japanese nationalism, and victims' history must be understood as complementary functions of transpacific complicity, and just as they are undoubtedly distinct from each other, so too they are fundamentally connected. In the coming chapters I will illustrate how these connections have material embodiments and consequences, considering especially what they appear to both domestic and international audiences. Therefore my investigation is rooted in the argument that both the Ghibli and J-Horror assemblages are to some degree entwined with ideology developed in the postwar period in Japan and the West. Through this argument I will answer the questions of how transpacific complicity has manifested itself in contemporary Japanese popular culture, how it has mobilized and transformed in order to ensure its hegemony, and what role the globalization of Japanese popular culture has had on its dissemination.

VI. Image Politics

From what has been discussed, we can isolate four aims of this dissertation that will contribute to its larger project. Firstly, I aim to use J-Horror as a means to reconsider Sakai – by suggesting how transpacific complicity reproduces political power at the level of the culture industry. At the same time, I will use Sakai as a

⁶⁸ Orr (2001), 8.

means to reconsider J-Horror – as much of the previous work in the field has tended towards the culturalist assumptions that Sakai criticizes as being complicit with U.S. foreign policy towards Japan and East Asia. Thirdly, I will use Ghibli as a means to reconsider victims’ history – by suggesting that as an ideology victims’ history is not limited to narrative depictions of wartime Japan – and fourthly I will use victims’ history as a means to reconsider Ghibli – which is usually portrayed as unproblematically associated with progressive values (e.g. environmentalism and feminism) and a whimsical, child-friendly aesthetic. These are the specific embodiments of my previously mentioned general aim of uniting theory on the reproduction of political ideologies with theory on Japanese popular culture in order to further the recent turn towards the politicization of Japanese popular culture studies.

While it is important to emphasise the historical development of hegemonic ideology, the genealogical task of tracing its development is not my core focus, but only part of the necessary background of the project at hand. Drawing links between present-day popular culture and the ideology of the Occupation and Cold War periods is not, in this case, setting the stage for a genealogy of transpacific complicity or victims’ history, but aims instead to demonstrate how certain political strategies and imperatives developed in the past are embedded or enshrined in cultural practices today. Furthermore, their presence is significant in the context of present day political relations that affect Japan at national, international, and transnational levels. Various commentators have discussed the recent surge in right wing nationalism in Japan alongside the deterioration of relations with its East Asian neighbours, and some work has been done in tracing the expressions of these shifts within the texts of popular culture.⁶⁹ In discussing visual media such as popular cinema, determining the role of images in politics and identity naturally becomes more pressing as political tensions rise and exclusionary forms of (national) identity gain strength, both in Japan and in other countries that consume and sometimes contribute to Japanese popular culture.

However, in the field of Japanese popular culture studies as in many other fields today, the typical strategy adopted for contesting hegemonic ideology as embodied by images is to focus on what is and what is not represented – for example,

⁶⁹ E.g. Ko, Mika (2010). *Japanese Cinema and Otherness: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and the Problem of Japaneseness*. Routledge.

burakumin on film, or *zainichi* cinema.⁷⁰ Chow articulates the problem of contesting hegemony by focusing on the representation of alternative identities as such:

In many critical discourses, the image is implicitly the place where battles are fought and strategies of resistance negotiated. Such discourses try to inhabit this image-site by providing alternative sights, alternative ways of watching *that would change the image*. Thus one of the most important enterprises nowadays is that of investigating the “subjectivity” of the other-as-oppressed-victim. “Subjectivity” becomes a way to change the defiled image, the stripped image, the image-reduced-to-nakedness, by showing the truth behind/beneath/around it. The problem with the reinvention of subjectivity as such is that it tries to combat the politics of the image, a politics that is conducted on surfaces, by a politics of depths, hidden truths, and inner voices. The most important aspect of the image – its power precisely as image and nothing else – is thus bypassed and left untouched.⁷¹

Rather than an interpretative approach that reveals postwar political ideology as “the truth behind” the images produced in Ghibli and J-Horror films, it is my aim to elucidate the politics and the power of these images by situating them within an ideological and material network: in other words, an assemblage. Within the context of assemblages, the “power” of images is understood in two overlapping senses: firstly in the Foucauldian sense of ideological reproduction and subject formation, and secondly in the affective sense concerned with aesthetic structures and emotive responses. While it will be clear which of these two types of “power” I refer to throughout, the relationship between ideological power and affective power will also be explored in later chapters.

A focus on assemblages rather than subjectivities also challenges the prevalent view that the “national subject” is a discursive space in opposition to that of “globalization”, and that surges in nationalism in Japan, as in other regions, are

⁷⁰ E.g. Ko (2010); Dew, Oliver (2016). *Zainichi Cinema: Korean-in-Japan Film Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁷¹ Chow (1993), 29, italics in original.

developing in opposition to forces of globalization.⁷² Such a stance usually focuses on global or transnational forces as a dispersion or loss of identity, and the reaction of increased nationalism as the consolidating or stabilizing of identity – for example, transnational film productions throw the notion of “Japanese cinema” into crisis. One might say that by focusing on the dichotomy of coherent/dispersed national identities, transnational discourse in film and popular culture studies reproduce an ideological binary that has yet to be adequately deconstructed. On the other hand, by taking into account intra- and inter-national assemblages, one can focus on the negotiations and productive forces that link identities and create new ones, rather than dispersion or loss of identity and the politics of nostalgia which that entails.

Therefore in the following chapters I hope to participate in what Chow calls the “politics that is conducted on surfaces”, similar in tone to Susan Sontag’s championing of analyses that eschew the interpretation of textual content in favour of “anti-symbolic” practices concerned with connectivity and materiality,⁷³ by producing a sub-text in the J-horror and Ghibli assemblages informed by and contributing to the theoretical terrain that has been sketched in this introduction. As various strands of thought have been brought together in this section, hopefully connections will be consolidated and frictions amplified through their application to specific cultural texts and images.

⁷² E.g. Postel-Vinay, Karoline (2017). “The Global Rightist Turn, Nationalism and Japan”. *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. Eds. Tessa Morris-Suzuki and Shinnosuke Takahashi. Volume 15, Issue 10, Number 1.

⁷³ Sontag, Susan. (2009). *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. London: Penguin Classics. 102.

Chapter Two

J-Horror as Extensive Multiplicity: The Rise of a Global Assemblage

There has historically been a disjunct between the international presence of Japanese popular culture and the international presence of Japanese cinema, in which the former has consisted of child and youth-oriented products, and the latter has consisted of art-house or “classic” films consumed at film festivals and by specialists or cult fans. There have been exceptions to this framework, but Japanese film companies’ success at making profits within the international market have been few and far between. The J-horror boom, however, gave rise to the intersection of Japanese cinema and modern global processes of production, distribution, and consumption, which in turn lead to the birth of a Japanese popular cinema with international reach and influence. Therefore, the significance of J-horror’s position as the first iteration of a popular Japanese-global cinema cannot be understated.⁷⁴

However, to present a history of J-horror is to impose stability on a concept that has thrived, in part, due to its ambiguous definitions based on varying criteria (stylistic, regional, commercial, etc.), and also to isolate a beginning and an ending from the array of developments and evolutions in genre, technology, and industry from which the movement emerged around the turn of the millennium. Following Chika Kinoshita, in terms of aesthetics I consider J-horror a movement rather than a genre,⁷⁵ but in terms of its constituent texts I refer to it as an assemblage, whereas in terms of its impact as a moment in history it is perhaps best referred to as a boom or event. I believe these multiple terms best capture the dynamism and border-crossing momentum of J-horror, while the term “assemblage” also emphasizes the interconnectedness of all these terms. To further avoid sealing the texts that emerged from a proliferation of forces into the amber of a fixed segmentation of the past, the J-horror event will be historicized here three times, in different chapters, with each emphasizing a

⁷⁴ Wada-Maricano (2009), 28.

⁷⁵ Kinoshita (2009), 104-105.

different narrative that stresses the interaction between J-horror and hegemonic ideologies. Insofar as they diverge and overlap, these three narratives will cumulatively suggest an image of J-horror as a multiplicity of texts and forces – an assemblage – resistant to the usual boundaries of genre, nation, and movements in regional cinemas.

In addition to providing a detailed depiction of what J-horror was/is, the division of the assemblage into three parts aims to chart different ways in which the nascent processes of globalization connected with and made use of different kinds of ideology. J-horror's dominant aesthetic image of "virus" has been evoked by various commentators to connect the boom with the concept of "global flows"; my aim is to not only provide an account of what constitutes these flows, but also the powers and ideological forces that shape them.

The first narrative will draw on Deleuze's image of an extensive multiplicity, i.e. a set in which each new element does not fundamentally alter the nature of the set. It will focus on how the J-horror apparatus has been dominated by the sign or image of the virus, and how, under this image, it has firstly spread across emerging technologies and markets, and secondly intersected with and invigorated pre-existing culturalist and Orientalist discourses in various media.

The second narrative will draw on Deleuze's image of an intensive multiplicity, i.e. a set in which each new element fundamentally alters the nature of the set. It will focus on how J-horror was shaped by existing discourses of power within the realm of filmic representation, especially those concerning genre and gender, and how it created and contained variations of these discourses. It will also consider how the newly established aesthetic sensibilities of J-horror remained unstable via their contact with these discourses, which led to the dissolution of the movement in the 2000s.

The third narrative will draw on Sakai's concept of transpacific complicity between the U.S.A. and Japan in order to explore the complex relationship between Hollywood and J-horror. It will focus on understanding the distribution of power in this relationship, as well as its effect on the binaristic production of images of "Japan" and "America/the West".

I. Sadako as Virus: Repetition and Spread of the J-Horror Boom

In her discussion of J-horror and new media, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano posits 1989 as the starting point of Japanese cultural transformation in the wake of the collapsed bubble economy.⁷⁶ As regards cinema, these changes can be divided into two major processes: the proliferation of new media formats such as VHS, DVD, cable television, and the internet; and the rise of a new wave of independent filmmakers. While these independent filmmakers (including Kitano Takeshi, Kawase Naomi, Koreeda Hirokazu, and Iwai Shunji) have brought fresh artistry and innovation to Japanese cinema, in many ways the label “independent”, with its connotation of artistic freedom, obscures the constraining forces and structures within which these new films were produced. I will briefly outline these institutional constraints before discussing the “virus” as a structuring image of J-horror. The virus not only defined the J-horror aesthetic, but also its dissemination via new technologies and methods of transmission – but the status of the filmmakers behind these virus-films as “independents” has the effect of promoting auteur discourse over attention to the workings and objectives of the Japanese film industry.

Wada-Marciano notes that “most directors have become paradoxically *independent* as filmmakers, and increasingly *dependent* on multimedia financing and distribution by the major film companies”.⁷⁷ She describes the division of labour between “independent” production and the corporate roles of financing and distribution as the defining structure of the “post-studio period”.⁷⁸ However, while studios no longer involve themselves in the practicalities of filmmaking, their influence on what content is produced cannot be overestimated. One key mode of production brought over from the studio era is the programme picture, or the serialization of films in order to inculcate brand loyalty in audiences, thereby bringing a measure of predictability and stability to box office and film sales. When the J-horror boom began, it followed this pattern of serialization, and so the aesthetic and thematic continuities and binding elements between J-horror films must be understood in the context of the post-studio system’s

⁷⁶ Wada-Marciano (2009), 16.

⁷⁷ Wada-Marciano (2009), 16, italics in original.

⁷⁸ Wada-Marciano (2009), 17.

efforts to inculcate familiarity and brand loyalty via repetition. In other words, while the directors and auteurs associated with J-horror films are categorised as independent filmmakers, both budgetary constraints and the conditions imposed by contracts with financiers have heavily influenced their films' content and status as part of an aesthetic and cultural movement.

In 1998, the “ground zero” of J-horror,⁷⁹ the conglomerate publishing company Kadokawa financed independent director Nakata Hideo to make the horror film *Ring*, and its domestic success sparked a boom in the production of a certain style of horror film in Japan. Accordingly, the image of the film's malevolent ghost Yamamura Sadako has been the emblem and principal signifier of the international phenomenon that followed. Through Sadako's success, the series of filmic repetitions encouraged by producers in Japan quickly took on a life of their own, so to speak. Her immense popularity in Japan led to a surge in transnational activity within East Asia, as horror films spilled across Japanese borders and into neighbouring countries, generating a demand for similar low-budget ghost stories that domestic producers were keen to fund: in South Korea *Whispering Corridors* (1998) was an influential hit, and its remake of Nakata's hit, *The Ring Virus* (1999) – the first ever South Korea-Japan coproduction⁸⁰ – re-territorialized Sadako as the ghost Eun-Ju. In Hong Kong, Applause Pictures was established with the aim of facilitating collaboration between East Asian countries in the production of international horror films, producing hits *The Eye* and *Three* in 2002. In the same year, the Hollywood remake of *The Ring* re-territorialized Sadako once again, this time as the American Samara, although once again her iconic image – long black face-obscuring hair and dishevelled white clothes – remained more or less intact, and has since become recognizable as a symbol of horror cinema in countries all over the world. 2002 is the second vital year for J-horror, as *The Ring's* Hollywood success marked the beginning of a slew of remakes and subtitled DVDs of Japanese and East Asian films that would be distributed to consumers on a scale that had never been seen before.

⁷⁹ Rucka, Nicholas (2005). “The Death of J-Horror?” *Midnight Eye*.

<<http://www.midnighteye.com/features/the-death-of-j-horror/>> [11/01/13].

⁸⁰ Byrne, James (2014). “Wigs and rings: cross-cultural exchange in the South Korean and Japanese horror film”. *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema*. 6:2. 184-201.

When asked why they think their work has had such wide reach, film critics and filmmakers often refer to either the specific qualities of Japanese (or East Asian) horror or the universality of interest in horror.⁸¹ However, as the image of shambling Sadako has moved across markets and cultures, it has clearly transformed itself in various ways as it crossed boundaries in order to secure hegemony. In Sadako we can see that an image reproduces in the same way that ideology does: negotiating with resistant forces like language barriers or cultural difference, compromising its own integrity in order to proliferate and entrench itself all the more easily. Unlike other fictional icons, however, the process of disseminating Sadako's image that led to her international star status is intimately linked to the fictional narrative she inhabits. The story, almost as well-known as her image, tells of a cursed videotape that when played shows abstract and unsettling images – any person who views the images falls under the curse, and will die seven days later. It is eventually revealed that the only way to escape the curse is to make a copy of the videotape and have someone else watch it, thereby passing on the curse to a new victim. By this logic, Sadako can spread via her curse from viewer to viewer in an expanding chain of viral infection, with the potential of extending her influence over the whole world. Like a virus, too, when scrutinized its point of origin becomes unclear: despite instigating the horror boom, the 1998 *Ring* drew inspiration from a variety of previous sources, not least the television film *Ring: Kanzenban* (1995) and the original novel by Suzuki Koji published in 1991. A noteworthy part of the novel's plot which was elided in the film is the revelation that Sadako's curse is literally a type of virus: Sadako is infected with tuberculosis by her rapist, and it is implied that her vengeful and supernaturally powerful will combines with the last of this almost extinct virus in Japan to produce her curse: a hybrid of *yuurei* and plague using technology as a means to contaminate/haunt. The ghost is thus re-imagined as a virus working through the process of reproduction via visual media, with viewers posited as hosts and image consumption posited as the moment of infection.

⁸¹ E.g. Matthews, Paul (2005). "Kiyoshi Kurosawa". *Reverse Shot: Museum of the Moving Image*. <<http://reverseshot.org/interviews/entry/1503/kiyoshi-kurosawa>> [04/07/2018].

To reinforce this image, actual consumers of the *Ring* text are filmically positioned as cursed/infected viewers through techniques such as aligning the frame of a television showing the cursed tape with the frame of the camera, thereby conflating the protagonist's point of view with that of the audience.⁸² The cinematography of *Ring* therefore draws the raw material of the filmic text into the affective experience of watching it. Also harmonizing with this image of the virus is the way in which the *Ring* text has been reproduced across various media and countries, instigating an entanglement of narrative, aesthetic, industrial, and cultural concerns. As Julian Stringer puts it, *Ring* "comprises multiple texts – or more properly, a series of mutually penetrating inter-texts – that encompass a range of both print and electronic semiotic systems",⁸³ and therefore "the *Ring* virus itself resembles the very process of textual translation it so gleefully spawns".⁸⁴ The notion of "glee" is important here, as it outlines how, by uniting narrative-based desire for reproduction with material processes of reproduction, the *Ring* text instills textually-derived affect – whether read as Sadako's glee, desire, or simply will – within the usually distinct processes of disseminating and establishing a franchise within popular culture. Carlos Rojas broadens the focus of this observation to evoke the momentum and orientation towards an outside – in the form of new texts, media, and consumers – that characterize the *Ring* phenomenon, by stating that "*Ringu*—together with the broader genre of J-horror within which it is positioned—both thematizes and exemplifies a phenomenon of cultural contagion".⁸⁵

Before considering the implications of identifying J-horror as a "genre" as Rojas and many other commentators do, I wish to explore the image of the ghost-as-virus as not limited to the *Ring* narrative, but as a permeating and dominant structure in J-horror as a whole. The year after *Ring* was released, *Tomie* (1999) became a domestic hit with cinema audiences, and spawned a long series of sequels. Like *Ring*, *Tomie* was based on a non-filmic popular text – the acclaimed

⁸² Wada-Marciano (2009), 20.

⁸³ Stringer, Julian (2007). "The Original and the Copy: Nakata Hideo's *Ringu*". *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts*. Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer, eds., London: Routledge. 168.

⁸⁴ Stringer (2007), 170.

⁸⁵ Rojas, Carlos (2014). "Viral Contagion in the *Ringu* Intertext". *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Cinema*. Daisuke Miyao, ed. Oxford University Press. 416.

horror manga serialized throughout the 1990s by Ito Junji. However, unusually for a J-horror film, the titular antagonist was not a ghost but an immortal woman condemned to repeat a violent cycle of bewitching men with her beauty, being violently murdered by those men, and then gradually regenerating her body to begin the process again. This narrative is emblematic of J-horror in three ways: firstly, it continues the trope, adapted from traditional ghost stories, of a sinister woman being victimized by men and then exacting her revenge via supernatural means. The twist that Tomie is immortal rather than a ghost was a fresh idea that nonetheless allows her to fulfill the ghost's basic functions of repetition, suffering, and instilling fear. Secondly, Tomie's curse entails an increasing group of people coming into contact with her malevolence over time – unlike traditional ghost stories (*kaidan*), the curse is not defined by its attachment to a territory (be it locale, family, or whatsoever), but rather its ability to spread and reproduce. The viral image is furthered when her regenerative abilities cause her to split and for multiple Tomies to appear in later additions to the series of *Tomie* films. This brings us to our third point: the narrative of *Tomie* lends itself to the manufacturing of sequels and remakes, as the antagonist must always survive so that the curse can spread, and the curse entails the repetition of its own narrative. In other words, narrative becomes an enabling force for industry.

Three years after the first *Tomie*, *Ju-on: The Grudge* (2002), remade as Hollywood's second biggest J-horror hit, *The Grudge* (2004), rewrote the "haunted house" story in such a way that it also adhered to those three principles that re-inscribe the traditional "woman's curse" as viral infection. A haunted house is immobile by definition, a danger zone or fixed territory to be risked or avoided. In *Ju-on: The Grudge*, Saeki Kayako and her son Toshio (both victims of male domestic abuse) haunt and eventually murder anyone unfortunate enough to cross the threshold of their house's doorway. Once a character enters they become marked, or infected, so that even after they leave and are in the comfort of their own home, death may strike at any moment. The dangerous territory of the haunted house is thus mobilized as protagonists become carriers of its curse, and the same story of Kayako's vengeance can be retold in countless scenarios and across countless films and other media platforms. To date there are ten

Japanese films, three Hollywood films, and a videogame in the *Ju-on* series (a Hollywood reboot is scheduled for 2019).

While many other key J-horror films, such as *Kairo* (*Pulse*, 2001) or *Jisatsu Saakuru* (*Suicide Circle*, 2001) failed to generate such a vast number of reiterations through new products and sequels, they share the same re-imagining of the curse as virus that has facilitated the process of reproduction at the level of industry. The final scene of *Kairo* shows its surviving protagonists on a boat escaping Japan and heading to Latin America (figured as Arcadian or “primitive-and-pure” colonial imaginary) in the hope of finding a space untarnished by the ghosts that have spread across the world via the internet. This ending harkens back to that of *Fukkatsu no Hi* (*Virus*, 1980), a Fukasaku Kinji-directed disaster film that sees humanity wiped out by a man-made virus, and concludes by having its survivors seek sanctuary in an uncontaminated Argentina. Similarly, all of the J-horror viruses are man-made: both in the *kaidan*-derived instigator of male violence against women, and the quotidian machines (video cassettes, mobile phones, television screens, etc.) which are conduits for their reproduction.

This emphasis on modern technology as the space of contamination and fear also mythologises the reproduction of Japanese horror films into new media as part of the films’ narratives. By introducing both mobility (i.e. the ability to transform in order to reach new territories) and technology (as a site of reproduction) into the ghost story, the virus becomes the sign under which aesthetics becomes conjoined to industry. Along with other key signifiers, such as the female ghost with long black hair, the image of the virus, and the process of reproduction and dissemination that it entails, is not only one of the defining tropes of J-horror – or one of its “generic” elements – but also, and unusually, a figure that organizes this body of cultural products at the levels of aesthetics and of industry.

II. Decentralizing Forces: Ghosts in the New Media Machines

Indeed, J-horror’s success in global dissemination lies largely upon the fact that it harmonized in various ways with radical changes taking place in the film industry. Where once cinema productions were the dominant centre of

filmmaking and main avenues for profit, the rise of alternative media such as VHS, DVD, and the internet radically decentralized the underlying structure of the film industry, with the bodies governing production and distribution becoming increasingly heterogenous and dispersed. For example, internet piracy allowed for new decentralized modes of film distribution, allowing audiences greater access to international films, and internet chat rooms, fan sites, and comment threads allowed for new communities to grow and create discourse around previously niche content. Just as *Ring* had absorbed its technological means of reproduction into its aesthetic with the representation of a haunted video tape, so too did *Kairo* and the anime *Serial Experiments Lain* (1998), directed by J-horror auteur Konaka Chiaki, absorb or thematize the internet into their own aesthetic of fear and infection. The decentralizing force of new technology that was both extending and “pulling apart” the film industry therefore enabled the distribution, the discourse (e.g. internet fan discourse), and the affect (horror) that propelled J-horror to success.

Today, the shocks and fissures caused by this devolution of film industry power is felt even more strongly due to the rise of streaming services such as Netflix – take, for example, the row over the recent inclusion of Netflix-produced films like *Okja* (2016) in competition at the institutionally dominant Cannes film festival, which resulted in the festival organisers vowing to no longer allow the participation of films that did not receive theatrical screenings. Not seeing any financial gain in to be had in releasing *Okja* in cinemas despite the festival’s requests, Netflix producers were apparently not troubled by Cannes’s symbolic castigation, or the deepening of the rift between the institutional film industry and the new media monopolies on distribution. Interestingly, *Okja* is an international coproduction directed by South Korean auteur Bong Joon Ho, whose early work gained global audiences largely through its DVD distribution as part of the “Asia Extreme” boom of East Asian cinema instigated by J-horror in the late 1990s. Indeed, the restructuring of industry brought about by Netflix and other streaming services can be framed as the second wave of a process that began with the emergence of the DVD market in the 1990s. According to Wada-

Marciano, “from the industrial point of view, the central force enabling J-horror’s entry to the world market has been its integration with the DVD format”.⁸⁶

In other words, as has happened many times in media history, new technology instigated a crisis in old powers of industry, and the 1990s and 2000s marked the first wave of a powerful centrifugal force that would heavily influence aspects of production, distribution, and consumption on a global scale. The viral structures inherent in J-horror at the level of narrative and domestic production allowed it to successfully ride this wave of new media, spreading and transforming as it encountered new regional styles of marketing and cultural distribution. In addition, the mobilizing forces for this outward spread were not limited to narrative, industry, and technology: geopolitics played a role as well. For example, due to the ban on Japanese cultural imports in South Korea at the time of the boom, only films which had won awards at certain international festivals were eligible for theatrical release. Thus it was only after *Ring* had won an award in Brussels that it could be released in South Korea, six months after the South Korean remake *The Ring Virus*.⁸⁷ Therefore, despite the influence of J-horror on South Korean popular culture, political history disrupted J-horror’s centrifugal lines of extension, forcing Sadako to take a European detour to reach a neighbouring country. The role of ideology and images of the nation played an important role in J-horror’s American and European dissemination as well, as we shall see in the next section.

Suzuki’s novel, *Ring*, describes the results of a chance encounter between the tuberculosis virus and a maltreated young woman with supernatural powers. We might say that in the narrative of the markets, it was the chance encounter between the release of the DVD format in 1996 in Japan (1998 in the USA and 1999 in Europe), and the release of Nakata’s film *Ring* in 1998 that led to Sadako’s viral dissemination and appropriation across the world. As I have made clear from the ways in which J-horror’s aesthetic elements have become materialized through distribution and how its commercial processes have

⁸⁶ Wada-Marciano (2009), 27.

⁸⁷ Choi, Jinhee (2009). "A Cinema of Girlhood: *Sonyeo* Sensibility and the Decorative Impulse in the Korean Horror Cinema". In Jinhee Choi and Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano (Eds.), *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. 41.

become aestheticized, this overlapping of functions should not be framed as art imitating life or life imitating art, but as various components (aesthetic, industrial, and technological) of the same assemblage working in tandem with each other in a way perhaps unique in the history of both popular culture and of cinema.

III. National Genre/Brand: Orientalism in J-Horror Discourse

We now must consider an apparent contradiction that leads us back to the notion of J-horror as a genre. On the one hand, the virus entails proliferation and transformation into new forms, such as the narrative trope of haunting as infectious spread, or the proliferation of films through DVD distribution and remakes. On the other hand, in order for the virus to retain its identity as distinct from others, it must have certain characteristics that remain the same. Deleuze's conception of extensive and intensive multiplicities is of use to us here.⁸⁸ Does J-horror connote an extensive multiplicity, in which each added part is subsumed under the unchanging whole? In this scenario, every line of transformation remains fixed under the label "J-horror", including non-Japanese Hollywood remakes, non-filmic merchandise such as spin-off manga or themed keychains, and so on. Or is J-horror an intensive multiplicity, in which each added part irrevocably alters the whole? In this case, J-horror is less a stable category, such as genre or national cinema, and more a process or movement that has set these categories in motion and breached their boundaries. So far we have mostly considered J-horror as a virus that has a bounded and categorizable identity, like *Sadako*, or a brand or genre. Now we must turn to the problems which arise when the "intensive" nature of the virus is elided.

To begin with, using the term "J-horror" as a genre or sub-genre instantly raises a number of questions: does the term signify the same referent for audiences, filmmakers, and distributors? To what extent has it emerged from fan-based, artistic, and commercial motivations? How does it relate to the practice of branding? If "genre" signifies a set of narrative and thematic tropes and expectations, does the appending of genre to the concept of "national cinema"

⁸⁸ Colebrook (2002), 117-118.

reinforce the idea that the narrative of the nation also produces its own set of tropes and expectations, i.e. national stereotypes? What does it mean to hybridise the national with the generic? Are all Japanese horror films now considered “J-horror”, and if not then is there a clear distinction between the two? If the distinction is based on characteristics unrelated to the idea of nation, can non-Japanese horror films be labeled “J-horror” if they possess these characteristics? Is the distinction between “J-horror” and the also popular label “East Asian horror” determined by aesthetics, politics, or production? How did the terms “Japanese” and “East Asian” come to be almost interchangeable when discussing a style of horror developed and popularized at the turn of the century, and what does this conflation between regions entail?

To begin answering these questions, let us consider how J-horror and similar labels for East Asian cinema gained traction in the early 2000s. The term “J-horror” is believed to have emerged from English-language internet forums as a way for fans of cult films to discuss the new horror films emerging from Japan in the wake of the domestic success of *Ring*.⁸⁹ Importantly, these films shared certain sensibilities beyond their country of origin – more direct than the image of the virus were the images of urban decay, murky water and damp interiors, and the female ghosts, as well as the commonalities of being slow-paced and atmospheric, accompanied by subtle discordant ambient sounds and shot on grainy film that created the impression of roughness or unevenness. If we follow the definition in which “genre is not a set of textual features that can be enumerated; rather, it is an expectation”,⁹⁰ then it was the expectation of these features that led to the categorising of the J-horror film. At the same time, the proliferation of independent DVD distribution companies were searching for ways to compartmentalize the vast array of regional cinemas that had become available thanks to the new methods of distribution discussed above. For distributors, terms like “J-horror” signified not only a readymade niche category, but also an audience invested in the term. The largest distributor of J-horror films to a foreign audience was the U.K.-based Tartan (1984 – 2008), which

⁸⁹ Rucka (2005).

⁹⁰ Cobley, Paul (2006). “Objectivity and Immanence in Genre Theory”. *Genre Matters*. Garin Dowd, Lesley Stevenson, and Jeremy Strong, eds. Bristol: Intellect Books. 41.

developed its “Asia Extreme” branch in response to these pressures, as well as the image of “controversial new Asian films” that proliferated in the British press. A pivotal point in the company’s turn to Asia, and therefore pivotal also for the global dissemination of J-horror, was the divided reaction among critics towards *Audition* (1999), with some praising its artistry and others condemning its violence. Oliver Dew describes the intervention (or co-opting) of Tartan and Asia Extreme into the J-horror narrative as such:

A series of festival and industry screenings in 1999 and 2000 led to British theatrical and video/DVD releases for Miike Takashi’s *Audition* (1999), Nakata Hideo’s *Ring* (1998) and Fukasaku Kinji’s *Battle Royale* (2000) by Tartan in 2001 [...] Capitalizing on [the controversy over *Audition*], Tartan rebranded the titles as *Asia Extreme* in 2002. By March 2005, *Asia Extreme* included over 40 DVD/video titles, almost a third of Tartan’s entire catalogue. Other UK distribution companies established Asian genre cinema imprints concomitant with Tartan’s growth, including Arts Magic’s *Warrior* and *EasternCult* labels, Optimum Releasing’s *Optimum Asia*, Medusa’s *Premier Asia* and Momentum’s *Momentum Asia*. In recognition of this proliferation, DVD retailer HMV set up a separate ‘Extreme Asia’ section in their shops.⁹¹

While J-horror had its own aesthetic, it was conflated with other East Asian films (mostly South Korean) under the image of “extremity” – quite a few of these films were not horror at all, such as Park Chan Wook’s *JSA: Joint Security Area* (2000), a mystery thriller about taboo friendships within the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea. While the label “Asia Extreme” seems out of place here, so it also does with many of the Japanese horror films, which, as I’ve mentioned, were slow and contemplative in comparison with other horror films (and indeed with most genre cinema) of the time. Other words used to promote these films – shocking, perverse, weird, outrageous, sick, twisted – also seem to have less to do with the content of the films and more to do with marketing strategy: despite the explicit and implicit claims of representing Japanese or

⁹¹ Dew (2007), 54.

Asian film cultures, labels like “J-horror” and “Asia Extreme” can be said to be more reflective of cultural expectations of what “Asia” and “foreign” cinema signifies.⁹²

The J-horror phenomenon therefore gained traction in non-Asian regions from a fetishistic discourse in Western film marketing, given that “since the 1960s foreign-language films in the United States and Britain have often carried an expectation of nudity or violence”.⁹³ By repeating and amplifying the binaristic figure of the “West and the Rest”, the neocolonial nature of this established discourse that has allowed the proliferation of J-horror must not be underestimated. As well as describing filmic tropes, “J-horror” and “Asia Extreme” became labels which conflated entire regions with the expectation of a horrific or shocking spectacle, in contrast to the imagined non-Asian, shockable consumers. As Dew puts it, “these brands are not merely a passive expression of Japanese cinematic culture, but are in part constructed by traditions of marketing and watching foreign language film in Anglophone territories”.⁹⁴ These particular “traditions of marketing and watching” were shaped by the ideology of the Eastern Other, Orientalism, and so it is clear that companies like Tartan exploited and promoted pre-existing Orientalist stereotypes in order to sell East Asian films to a global audience.

The presence of Orientalism in the discourse surrounding J-horror did not remain confined to marketing strategies, but permeated both journalistic and academic writing. Both favourable and negative reviews could be found to have racist remarks based on assumptions that the violence or perverseness of this new wave of films could be explained by an Asian or Japanese culture or psyche.⁹⁵ Similarly, if the films were seen to be making a critique of, say patriarchal violence, critics would tend to frame these as critiques of specifically

⁹² Shin, Chi-Yun (2009). “The Art of Branding: Tartan ‘Asia Extreme’ Films”. *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*. Jinhee Choi and Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, Eds. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. 86-87.

⁹³ Betz, Mark (2003). “Art, Exploitation, Underground”. *Defining Cult Movies: The Cultural Politics of Oppositional Taste*. Eds. Mark Jancovich et al. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 205.

⁹⁴ Dew (2007), 56.

⁹⁵ Dew (2007), 68.

Asian or Japanese patriarchal norms, rather than patriarchy in general.⁹⁶ This culturalist approach found its voice in academia in the plethora of works that primarily saw J-horror as reflective of Japanese culture, history, or psychology.⁹⁷ To take a striking example, we have the claim in *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic* that

J-horror is also known for its fascination with the flesh [...] Japanese body horror is frequently described as excessive due to its combination of sado-masochistic eroticism, graphic representation of violence, and pornographic modes of visual representation including a perverse fascination with deformity.⁹⁸

While saying Japanese horror is “frequently described” in such terms is correct, by following this statement with a list of Japanese films rather than interrogating why they are considered “excessive” the critic contributes to a milieu in which “perversity” and “Japanese film” are associatively linked. It is the culturalist focus on “Japan” as object of analysis that prohibits meaningful comparisons with similar non-Japanese works such as Canadian auteur David Cronenberg’s body horror films, or the use of physically impaired actors in the works of Chilean-French auteur Alejandro Jodorowsky, and it is this culturalism which leads to the reproduction of Orientalist ideology.

In journalistic reviews, the Orientalism of the culturalist approach towards Asian horror films becomes more evident when it is compared with contemporary reviews of similarly styled Hollywood horror films such as *The Blair Witch Project*, which rarely consider their objects of study in the context of American or Western culture and history.⁹⁹ In addition to written media, new

⁹⁶ Dew (2007), 68.

⁹⁷ See Chapter One, Footnote 37.

⁹⁸ Ancuta, Katarzyna (2016). “Japanese Gothic”. *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*. William Hughes, David Punter, and Andrew Smith, eds. Chichester: Blackwell Publishing. 373.

⁹⁹ There are of course exceptions, like this contemporary review, though it stops short of identifying literary antecedents such as *Dracula* as Western culture: French, Philip (1999). “Who’s Afraid of Blair Witch?”. *The Guardian*. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/1999/oct/24/philipfrench>> [04/07/2018].

visual media representing J-horror also reproduced Orientalist discourses: Dew demonstrates how the United Kingdom DVD cover of *Audition* rearranged the original Japanese cover, which focused on the male protagonist, to show only a blown-up image of the film's female antagonist, looking seductively downwards while brandishing a syringe in gloved hands, in a sexualized image evocative of sado-masochism.¹⁰⁰ The book cover of *J-horror: The Definitive Guide to The Ring, The Grudge, and Beyond* imaginatively positions a sideways image of a woman's ethnically East Asian eye in front of the title, so that the woman's eyebrow forms the shape of the "J" in the word "J-horror" (Fig. 1). The eye combined with the white of the book's cover also suggests the painted face of a geisha, or perhaps a traditional Japanese ghost. This cover is impressive in the variety of images it conflates despite the simplicity of the image: in the figure of the Asian sideways eye we see a conflation of the ethnic, the sexual, and the national, thanks to the "J for Japan" of the eyebrow, as well as the literal inscription of the word "horror" into a body signified as Japanese and female. The book, bridging lay and academic registers of commentary, inadvertently shows how J-horror has helped instigate a fresh wave of Orientalist exoticisation in popular media.

¹⁰⁰ Dew (2007), 61.

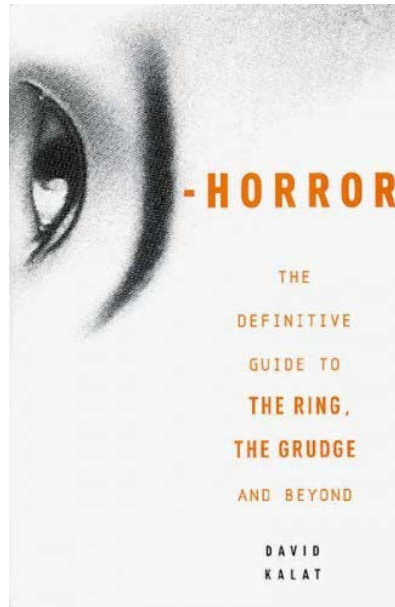


Figure 1: The book cover.

IV. Not Bound By Time or Place: J-Horror's Cross-Genre, Pan-Asian Hegemony

Nonetheless, this narrative runs the risk of reinscribing the overly simplistic image of Western commercial oppressors plundering the culture of a victimized Asia, reducing the Asian and Japanese components of the apparatus to passive and sexualized bearers of culture to be contrasted with an active and dominant West – the very binary that a postcolonialist critique should aim to disrupt. In fact, if we return to the guiding image of the virus as a diagrammatic figure, or one which retains hegemony over J-horror at the levels of aesthetics and industry, we see that it's collision with Orientalist discourse in marketing strategy has only reinforced the processes of contamination and reproduction that were apparent before. Just as Western media was “piggy-backing on Orientalism”¹⁰¹ to sell J-horror films, so too were J-horror films riding the waves of pre-existing Orientalist discourse to reach new audiences and continue their spread across the globe. Similarly, journalistic and academic commentary on J-horror has largely failed to consider how its own writing forms part of the J-horror assemblage – by emphasizing the links between Japanese culture and

¹⁰¹ Dew (2007), 68.

horror, it fulfils J-horror's functions of reproduction and spreading the image of "Japan" in a global arena. In addition to being favourable to domestic advocates of "Cool Japan" hoping to see the consolidation of soft power for the nation,¹⁰² we can also view this as Sadako's curse (the J-horror assemblage) co-opting academic and journalistic discourse in its spread around the world.

While other forces, such as the branding of "Asia Extreme", co-opted J-horror to an extent, so too did the image of J-horror have a hegemonic influence within the new milieu of films that it was exposed to. Just as "Asia Extreme" has been used as an umbrella term which includes J-horror (which, again, generally tends towards slow pacing and atmospheric drama over visceral shocks), so too has the term "J-horror" become an umbrella term for a variety of non-horror Japanese films released as part of the same marketing/distribution wave in the early 2000s. The previously mentioned *Battle Royale* is a good example of this. Despite having very little in common with the J-horror aesthetic (the central premise of a class of students being transported to an unknown environment and descending into savagery was famous in Western popular culture due to the novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, while in Japan its most famous iteration was Umezu Kazuo's *shonen* manga *The Drifting Classroom*, serialized in the 1970s), its branding as Asia Extreme seems to have brought it into contact with the J-horror apparatus, and, as a new carrier of the virus, to be branded as "J-horror" by vendors, critics, and academics.¹⁰³

As Wada-Marciano notes, this reclassification of Japanese cinema is not limited to films produced during the J-horror boom. Classic films such as *Kwaidan* (1964) and *Onibaba* (1964) have been increasingly referred to as horror films in recent years in both marketing and academic discourse.¹⁰⁴ While the classification arguably isn't incorrect, the observation that developments in the early 2000s are altering the way critics classify and discuss films from the 1960s is testament to the sheer force of J-horror's impact on the popular imagination. Its image has extended not only to films made before the 1990s and 2000s, but also to those made after the J-horror boom. For example, in 2014,

¹⁰² McGray, Douglas (2002). "Japan's Gross National Cool". *Foreign Policy*. No. 130. 44 – 56.

¹⁰³ Wada-Marciano (2009), 34.

¹⁰⁴ Wada-Marciano (2009), 35.

Kurosawa Kiyoshi's thriller *Creepy* found an international DVD release almost immediately after its domestic release, thanks to the reputation as an auteur that Kurosawa had built from directing J-horror films. More significantly, the film was branded as the director's "return to J-horror" in its English-language marketing, again, despite the fact that its stylistic and genre tropes had little relation to the ghost stories of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Beyond cinema, the new conceptual power of "Japanese horror" as a category in other popular media, even in classical literature, seems to have made an impact on marketing practices and scholarship: it has been noted, for example, that identifying "a Japanese strand of gothic fiction" in the works of canonical authors such as Akutagawa, Mishima, Tanizaki, and Kawabata, "is a relatively new phenomenon, although not completely undeserved".¹⁰⁵ The image of J-horror will presumably continue to influence and interact with the marketing and categorization of Japanese culture, especially cinema, far into the future. Like a virus, J-horror has reconfigured the image of Japanese culture in general, by spreading its own image across media, both into the past and into the future.

Importantly, as was implied earlier, the inexorable spread of the J-horror image has crossed not only temporal boundaries, but national ones too. Some commentators refer to the U.S. remakes of Japanese horror films as "J-horror" themselves. Similarly, other Asian cinemas have been subsumed, in various ways, by coming into contact with the label. Due to culturally- and ethnically-derived similarities (e.g. the long black hair of a female ghost) J-horror often functions as a metonym for East Asian horror films. As James Byrne writes, Western critical treatment of these films relies on "the assumption that Japanese horror cinema is the dominant framework, influencing all other horror cinema that emerges from the [East Asian] region".¹⁰⁶ Byrne points to the way in which British and American reviews of new Korean cinema categorised under the "Asia Extreme" brand were invariably placed within the context of contemporary Japanese horror cinema, rather than placed in relation to Korean cinema or culture. Even today, J-horror's position as the dominant framework for analyzing or even merely viewing other East Asian horror cinema persists. When Netflix

¹⁰⁵ Ancuta (2016), 372.

¹⁰⁶ Byrne (2014), 185.

added the Hollywood remake of *The Eye* (2008) to their catalogue, it was advertised as a remake of a “cult Japanese hit”, despite the fact that the original film was in fact made in Hong Kong, with some work done in Thailand as well. While this can be seen as a small mistake, it seems unlikely that a remake of a Japanese horror film would be mislabeled as originating from another East Asian country – this suggests that an important side-effect of the conflation of national cinemas in the horror boom of the 1990s and 2000s was not merely the invention of an image of pan-Asian horror homogeneity, but also the positioning of Japan as hegemonic signifier within that amalgamation. At the time of writing, the Netflix error remains on the service, repeating and disseminating the image of Japan as a source of horror even in relation to an American remake of a Hong Kong film.

There are various explanations as to how the image of J-horror secured hegemony over other East Asian films in this contextual sense. A large reason is no doubt the simple fact that Japanese genre films like *Ring* and *Battle Royale* sparked a boom in East Asian and global distribution, and so for many audiences other East Asian genre films (horror or non-horror) were seen as “following” the Japanese efforts. Add to this the lumping together of films under the brand name “Asia Extreme”, and the image of a “type” of film derivative of J-horror is further entrenched. However, we must also consider the fact that, unlike other Asian countries, Japan already had an established image as purveyor of “strange” popular culture in the Western imaginary – global phenomena such as the *Pokemon* craze combined with a history of previously-mentioned Orientalist stereotypes to cement a reputation being actively promoted by the Japanese government under the brand name of “Cool Japan”. While the image of J-horror was not calculated to be part of this push for cultural soft power, its contaminating effect on perceptions of East Asian genre cinema seems to have both drawn on and furthered the political efforts to establish a hegemony of Japanese popular culture at a global level.

Interestingly, Byrne and others have attempted to rectify this hegemonic state of affairs by emphasizing the distinctions between East Asian horror

cinemas as reflective of differing cultural practices.¹⁰⁷ By comparing Japanese and South Korean horror cinema produced within the horror boom, Byrne aims to illustrate “the disparity between the two national approaches to horror cinema, illustrated by distinct, culturally specific interpretations of the same core narrative”.¹⁰⁸ This academic reaction to J-horror’s hegemony over East Asian horror cinema is fascinating in the way that it reproduces the image of East Asian nations asserting their national identities in distinction to the hegemony of the image of Japan, and of a reinscribing of regional autonomy (including in non-national territories such as Hong Kong) evoked at least partially as a reaction to Japanese hegemony – the reinscription is thus also one of a historical framework shaped by the contemporary geo-political imaginary of East Asia.

The attempts to divide the J-horror-dominated conceptual space of “East Asian horror” or “Asia Extreme” into distinct cultural and national blocs is telling of wider tendencies in the study of East Asian popular culture. Rey Chow describes this tendency as the challenging of an Orientalist and generalizing framework by a culturalist and particularizing framework; in other words, an attempt “to avoid the pitfalls of the earlier Orientalism simply by particularizing their inquiries as meticulously as possible by way of class, gender, race, nation, and geographical locale”.¹⁰⁹ However, while the focus on producing new, region-specific subjectivities, such as, in this case, the Korea-as-producer-of-horror-cinema, certainly leads to valuable work done in under-researched areas, in doing so it also fails to adequately confront the “politics of the image”.¹¹⁰ This is to say it runs the risk of obscuring the interrelated network of image distribution that does not respect regional boundaries or cinemas. The most obvious filmic examples are international coproductions, such as the action-horror manga adaptation *Higanjima* (2009), made by Japan and South Korea. There are also more subtle relationships that upset the Japan-South Korea boundary, such as the J-horror *Otoshimono* (2006), which was entirely a Japanese production, and

¹⁰⁷ For example, the recent book *Korean Horror Cinema* situates the Korean films of the Asian horror boom in the context of “Korean horror” dating back to its earliest cinematic incarnations. (Peirse, Alison, and Daniel Martin [2013]. *Korean Horror Cinema*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).

¹⁰⁸ Byrne (2014), 185.

¹⁰⁹ Chow (1993), 6.

¹¹⁰ Chow (1993), 29.

yet it was heavily marketed in South Korea and released there before Japan. This is no doubt due to the casting of Sawajiri Erika in the lead role, who had become popular in South Korea thanks to her role as a *zainichi* Korean (Korean living in Japan) in the Japanese romantic drama *Pacchigi!* (2004), which depicted the interactions between *zainichi* Koreans and Japanese during the 1960s. Despite not being a coproduction, the international context of the *Otoshimono's* context positions it as a cinematic event relevant to a study of Korean horror, or what some commentators have dubbed “K-horror”, mimicking the regionalized music genre “K-pop” which similarly followed an earlier trend from Japan dubbed “J-pop”.

In the best case scenario, assuming either the “K” or the “J” epithet as an unproblematic organizing framework for horror films serves an obscuring function. At worst, it becomes “a scholarly nativism that functions squarely within the Orientalist dynamic” (6) by using national and ethnic signifiers like “Japan” and “Korea” as sites of difference and essentialised identity.¹¹¹

In the name of investigating “cultural difference,” ethnic markers such as “Chinese” easily become a method of differentiation that precisely blocks criticism from its critical task by reinscribing potentially radical notions such as “the other” in the security of a fastidiously documented archival detail.¹¹²

This is why, in this section, the spread of J-horror across technologies and national boundaries has not been focused on cultural segmentations, but rather the discourses that have allowed it to gain a degree of hegemony in various fields. Rather than extract Korean or other horror cinemas from the extensive multiplicity of J-horror by establishing new extensive multiplicities alongside it (in other words to secure each cinema in nationally bounded “archival detail”), my aim has been to identify the process by which J-horror discursively dominated these other cinemas to begin with. Indeed, by insinuating itself in such a way that scholars reclassify classic Japanese films as “horror”, and in the

¹¹¹ Chow (1993), 6.

¹¹² Chow (1993), 6.

way that streaming service providers and DVD distributors brand contemporary and upcoming Japanese releases as “horror” despite their tenuous links to the genre, J-horror can be seen to have had a discursively colonizing effect not only within Western and East Asian territories but on the image of Japanese cinema itself.

As should be clear, the “Japanification” of popular media from different times and territories should not be viewed as entirely distinct from the Orientalism that promoted J-horror in the West. Both the Orientalist discourse (which posited J-horror as exotic and extreme) and the hegemony of the “J-horror image” over other Japanese and East Asian media were the results of an environment in which the image of Japan-specificity was used as a dominant and organizing framework to make sense of new horror media. If the image of the virus captures the dynamics of J-horror as media horror, then its international success resulted in its reconfiguration as “Japanese virus”, an image which may connote xenophobic fear, textual de-territorialization, or national pride depending on which contextual milieu it inhabits. J-horror’s relation to the concept of Japan-specificity will be more fully explored through the work of Naoki Sakai in Chapter Four.

In the next chapter, however, I will turn from this extensive, viral image of J-horror to an intensive one that observes in closer detail how the filmic content of J-horror has engaged with and negotiated the structural constraints of genre and gender within the context of its cultural production. As in this chapter, I will focus on cultural specificities not in order to enshrine them as part of a national or regional discourse, but rather to observe how they have mobilized and been mobilized by the textual components of J-horror.

Chapter Three

J-Horror as Intensive Multiplicity: Gender, Genre, Aesthetics

Horror films have proven to be a rich resource for gender studies, and many of the key academic texts on horror use gender theory as a primary lens of analysis. Perhaps the even more dominant academic framework of choice when approaching horror films is psychoanalysis – indeed, cinema studies in general has done much to unite gender studies and psychoanalysis as a single coherent theoretical framework, such as in Laura Mulvey’s highly influential essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” first published in 1975. The horror genre in particular has often been noted to be a cultural form particularly suited to gender-based psychoanalysis thanks to its frequent representations of both traditional and non-traditional gender roles as sources of fear, and it is frequently figured as withholding latent truths about societies and cultures (Linda Williams, Barbara Creed, Carol J. Clover, and Rhona J. Bernstein are some prominent examples of critics who have applied the tools of psychoanalysis and gender theory to horror films). In film theory, the tradition of psychoanalytic-gender studies generally aligns with the culturalism of area studies by employing what can be called an interpretative methodology, which figures the cultural imaginary as an expression of and means of understanding an underlying and productive identity. Thus critical analyses of Japanese horror films often draw on this shared methodology, figuring gender in horror films as an expression of the underlying nature of Japanese culture, history, or even everyday people.¹¹³

While sometimes overlapping with this body of work, other theorists (following Butler and Foucault, for example) have figured the relevance of gender in popular culture quite differently: as a discursive practice, as an interrelated network of material technologies repeated in daily life, as a method of governance intersecting with various other fundamentally political forces. This approach does not seek meaning beneath or beyond cultural representations of gender, but seeks rather the connections and disruptions that

¹¹³ E.g. See Chapter One, Footnote 37.

exist between these various images – analysis becomes a lateral act of mapping an assemblage rather than a vertical act of interpretation, or an attention to surfaces rather than depths. It is this latter approach that better reveals the “politics of the image”,¹¹⁴ or how the image functions within the mobile ideologies that produce and are produced by it. When considering J-horror, this approach does not aim to merely show how the films represent gender, but how the representation of gender reconfigures or reproduces established images – and by implication, how audiences come to identify with, celebrate, or reject certain new images of gender roles.

A more lateral approach based on connectivity also aligns well with the aesthetics under consideration. In her discussion of “*sonyeo* sensibility” or girls’ sensibility in the Korean branch of the 1990s horror boom, Jinhee Choi proposes the concept of sensibility as an “alternative to ‘sexuality’, on which many of the previous approaches to the horror genre have been based”.¹¹⁵ Her theoretical framework is largely based on the aesthetic content and brand identity of the most popular Korean horror films, and what she notes was a conscious attempt by producers and filmmakers to create “a cinema that targets female teenage audiences by dealing with problems that are pertinent to teenage girls” and “counterbalancing trends toward more male-oriented genres”.¹¹⁶ Similarly, Hara Masato, the executive producer of *Ring*, has claimed that the film’s domestic success lay heavily on the word-of-mouth free publicity it had received from schoolgirls, who flocked to see it and drove up its popularity with the rest of the nation.¹¹⁷ What established the schoolgirl as one of the formative figures of J-horror, both as onscreen image and as audience member? While Choi identifies the emergence of *sonyeo* sensibility in horror as occurring in the late 1990s,¹¹⁸ in this chapter I will show how the Japanese variant emerged in visual media several years earlier in the video tape and television formats. An analysis of

¹¹⁴ Chow (1993), 29.

¹¹⁵ Choi, Jinhee (2009). “A Cinema of Girlhood: *Sonyeo* Sensibility and the Decorative Impulse in the Korean Horror Cinema”. In Jinhee Choi and Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano (Eds.), *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. 42.

¹¹⁶ Choi (2009), 43.

¹¹⁷ Wada-Marciano (2009), 31.

¹¹⁸ Choi (2009), 39.

these early texts and their legacy reveals J-horror's trajectory from schoolgirl to nation, just as the previous chapter articulated its trajectory from the nation to Asia and the rest of the world. In keeping with the image of a new aesthetic produced by intensive connections between genres and industries, the final section of the chapter will show how further connections of this sort led to both the dissolution of the J-horror phenomenon and its discursive re-territorialization under the signs of nostalgia and the nation.

I. Japanese Horror Forms Before J-Horror

J-horror is frequently framed as a modern label for a Japanese tradition of horror stretching back to ancient times. Equally problematically, it is sometimes assumed to be no more than the name for a boom in the late 1990s that accelerated the production and consumption of a Japanese aesthetic that already existed – in other words, that “J-horror” signifies the moment that a national aesthetic, fundamentally unchanged since the Edo period, reached the rest of the world. Katarzyna Ancuta writes that “[a]lthough *kaidan* stories enjoyed their golden age in the Edo period (1603-1868), they remain popular today, forming a staple repertoire of Japanese cinematic horror”, and then goes on to list *Ring*, *Juon: The Grudge*, and other J-horror films of the late 1990s and 2000s as examples of “cinematic *kaidan* stories”.¹¹⁹ Sadako is thus framed as the direct descendant of Oiwa, the first media-hopping *yuurei* who moved from kabuki play *Ghost Story of Yotsuya* (*Tōkaidō Yotsuya Kaidan*, 1825) to ukiyo-e paintings, and then to the cinema in 1912 where her story has since been adapted many times throughout the ensuing decades, most recently by J-horror auteur Miike Takashi in *Over Your Dead Body* (*Kuime*, 2014). J-horror's penchant for haunted videotapes, cellphones, and so on; or its iconic backdrops of a grim and modern urbanity, can therefore be rationalized as expressive of contemporary and superficial changes to a rigid core known as “Japanese horror”. As discussed in the previous section, marketing, journalistic, and academic practices tend to contribute to this image of J-horror as being contained by homogeneity and the national, when its tendency towards proliferation and border-crossing implies

¹¹⁹ Ancuta (2016), 373.

the contrary. However, in many ways it did evolve from a Japanese tradition, and historicizing this evolution in a non-essentialist and non-culturalist way reveals how, rather than a simple continuation of the culturally specific blueprint for horror stories in Japan, J-horror was a moment of disruption in the nation's horror trajectory, and a moment when dominant images of horror were upended and diminished under the hegemony of a new image that formed through the intersection of several forces.

In Japan, classic *kaidan*-based cinema has, until recently, been categorically distinguished from the genre known as "*horaa*". During the postwar Occupation, *jidaigeki* or period dramas were banned, along with much other work from both Hollywood and the Japanese film industry,¹²⁰ due to the occupiers' impression that such films could reignite or fan the flames of Japanese nationalism. While samurai films' combination of action-oriented thrills and images of a traditional Japan were viewed by the Occupation as a threat, *kaidan* were seen as harmless enough to avoid censorship,¹²¹ and their focus on drama and female agency were more in line with the cinematic themes that the Occupation wanted to flourish in the aftermath of war.¹²² Due to the popularity of modern drama pictures at this time, the Occupation's censorship of *jidaigeki*, and the new importing of Hollywood films, in the years of Occupation (1945-1952), *kaidan* films were one of the few ways that popular cinema depicted "historical" or "traditional" images of Japan. While their association with folklore already contextualised them as part of the national imaginary, their presence as bearers of tradition during and after the censorship years may have helped to solidify this image. Kobayashi Masaki's *Kwaidan (Kaidan)* was released in 1964, won the Special Jury Prize the next year at Cannes, and was nominated in the Academy Award category of Best Foreign Language Film. In Japan, reviews and other media framed it as both an independent film and a Japanese film, but not a

¹²⁰ Kitamura, Hiroshi (2012). "America's Racial Limits: U.S. Cinema and the Occupation of Japan". *The Japanese Journal of American Studies*. No. 23. 139-162.

¹²¹ Powell, Brian (2002). *Japan's Modern Theatre: A Century of Change and Continuity*. London: Routledge. 144.

¹²² Coates, Jennifer. *Making Icons: Repetition and the Female Image in Japanese Cinema, 1945-1964*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. 23.

horror film.¹²³ Internationally, films like Kobayashi's *Kwaidan*, Mizoguchi Kenji's *Ugetsu Monogatari* (1953), and Shindo Kaneto's *Kuroneko (Yabu no naka no kuroneko, 1968)*, were discussed as examples of Japanese cinema and auteur cinema, but were rarely contextualised on the basis of a shared genre.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, it is tempting to view these films as a shared resource for the aesthetic that developed into J-horror in the 1990s, especially in the visual motifs of the *yuurei* and the emphasis on drama and melancholy over violence and thrills.

However, during the 1970s and the 1980s, the horror genre firmly established itself, in Japan and many other countries, as a cinema of shocks and violence. Especially when the home video market grew in popularity in the 1980s, the horror genre thrived in the form of low-budget, exploitative films, rarely employing tropes from *kaidan* and Japanese folklore, focused instead on effects-based scenes of extreme violence. "Horror films" and *kaidan* films were therefore quite distinct, almost oppositional, in terms of genre and aesthetics, a point which is rarely, if ever, made in contemporary discussions and catalogues of "Japanese horror".¹²⁵ Whereas *kaidan* connoted Japanese folklore, tradition, drama, and spiritual or psychological suffering, "horror films" in the 1980s connoted video cassettes, sadism, excess, and physically violent suffering. Whereas the *kaidan* was part of a shared national imaginary, horror films were to be consumed like pornography, in private and removed from the public sphere. Exemplary among these latter films was the *Guinea Pig* series, started in 1985, which included two films written and directed by Hino Hideshi, an influential horror manga artist who had experimented with grotesque imagery in the 1960s and 1970s. The intersection between non-filmic visual sub-culture and cinema is important here for two reasons. Firstly, it links the exploitation films of this period with *ero-guro nansensu*, or "erotic grotesque nonsense", a self-explanatory genre label developed in the Taisho period and later applied to

¹²³ Wada-Marciano (2009), 36.

¹²⁴ Wada-Marciano (2009), 36.

¹²⁵ E.g. Murguia, Salvador, ed. (2016), *The Encyclopedia of Japanese Horror Films*, London: Rowman and Littlefield; Punter, David, ed. (2012), *A New Companion to the Gothic*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing; Hughes, William, David Punter, and Andrew Smith (2016), *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, Chichester: Blackwell Publishing.

experimental images produced from the 1960s to the present. Secondly, it reveals a little of the under-researched relationship between horror manga and cinema at this time, which is in fact crucial to an understanding of the emergence of J-horror.

While not prolific as a genre in itself, various acclaimed and influential manga such as Umezu Kazuo's *The Drifting Classroom* (*Hyōryō Kyōshitsu*, 1972-1974) have retrospectively been classed as "horror", though again, their contextualization at the time of writing would more likely have simply been "*shōnen*", or, "for boys". The gendering of manga into *shōnen* and *shōjo*, for boys and for girls, remains a hugely influential discursive framework within which texts are produced. While this gendered division of popular culture texts is arguably only a more explicit version of the similar framework that exists in the popular cultures of countries like the U.S.A., the concomitant aesthetic divide is noteworthy here. *Shōnen* works typically favour dynamic and action-oriented narratives over character development, whereas *shōjo* works typically favour emotional and drama-oriented scenarios in which introspection is dominant in relation to narrative development.¹²⁶ There are of course many works which challenge these simple binary conditions, and much has been written about how power expresses itself within this gender-genre system of production and categorisation. As horror narratives were primarily classified as *shōnen* manga, their style naturally adhered to the "adventure" or action-oriented framework in their depiction of scary events. The use of horror as expressive and violent is also seen in manga artists such as Maruo Suehiro, who continued the *ero-guro* tradition of combining the carnivalesque and the exploitative, for example in his manga *Mr Arashi's Amazing Freak Show* (*Shōjo Tsubaki*, 1984), an appropriation of the Showa era stock character "camellia girl" (*shōjo tsubaki*) which charts her descent from abject poverty into nightmarish exploitation and humiliation.

At the same time, *shōjo* horror manga began to take form, but its expressions were muted and few at this time, presumably because girls did not seem like a financially viable target demographic for horror. *Shōjo* had found a

¹²⁶ Saitō, Minako (2001). *Kō itten ron* [A Discussion on a Splash of Crimson].

Tokyo:
Chikuma shobō.

corollary in cinematic horror in a very limited number of films, such as 1977's *Hausu*, which had a script inspired by conversations between director Obayashi Nobuhiko and his adolescent daughter. In the same year, Dario Argento's *Suspiria* became a hit in Japan, and while its aggressively garish colour pallets and scenes of violence might seem to align it more with the more prolific sub-culture horror films of the 1980s, Stéphane du Mesnildot believes the film's Japanese success was due to its setting (a girls' dance academy) and narrative structure, which develops "like a *shōjo*".¹²⁷ Nonetheless, these rare intersections between the *shōjo* aesthetic and horror cinema did not increase throughout the 1980s.

Just as the advent of DVD technology would later facilitate the emergence of J-horror, in the 1980s the advent of home-video technology created a market for low-budget exploitation cinema that could make a profit through rentals and sales rather than at the box office. Video production allowed filmmakers to produce work with historically low budgets, in small and private spaces, and without previously essential components including equipment and scripts. The conditions were therefore ideal for pornography and graphic horror, which both began to proliferate as part of the new media. In Japan and other countries such as the United Kingdom, the new forms of availability of graphic or controversial visual media became a much-debated topic within popular media itself, instigating moral panic over what, in the U.K., the press dubbed "video nasties". In Japan, this controversy came to a head following the widely publicised murders in 1988 and 1989 of four young girls by a serial killer who was found to have a large collection of graphic videos. Dubbed the "otaku killer" by the Japanese press, the negative image that this media event ascribed to the "otaku" identity in Japan has had a long-lasting effect, and in this context has been of interest to researchers of Japanese popular culture.¹²⁸

However, its relation to the horror genre has also been pivotal. In the first case, the image of the video tape as both capable of containing horrific content and also being a source of horrific events (i.e. real-life violence) no doubt

¹²⁷ Du Mesnildot, Stéphane (2011). *Fantômes du Cinéma Japonais*. Rouge Profond, Pertuis.

¹²⁸ Azuma (2009), 4.

lingered in the popular imagination and found its cultural expression in *Ring*, first in the 1991 novel and later in the 1998 film (non-Japanese films such as *Videodrome* [1983] and *American Psycho* [2000] also thematized the anxiety of the video tape moral panic of the 1980s). The bad reputation of video had a less obvious effect on Japanese horror due to another significant event of 1989: the studio Toei released the first direct-to-video films in Japan, heralding in a new era of “V-Cinema” which legitimized and integrated video into the film industry as all major film companies began producing and distributing direct-to-video films.¹²⁹ One of these companies, Japan Home Video (JHV), had distributed many of the gory horror films that were found in the serial killing case, and was thus in a position where, on the one hand, it was reluctant to distribute graphic or violent films, but on the other hand eager to distribute low-budget, newly-made genre films. Given these cultural and industrial pressures, one might have expected the horror genre to fade or diminish in the wake of other, less controversial genres. Instead, thanks to a new JHV production called *Honto ni Atta Kowai Hanashi* (*Scary True Stories*), the genre underwent a radical transformation by reinventing itself under the sign of *shōjo* horror.

The Asahi Shinbun corporation had published a manga of the same name in 1987. What’s more, the success of schoolteacher Tsunemitsu Toru’s collection of ghost stories published as *Gakkō no Kaidan* (“School Ghost Stories”) in 1990 showed that there was an audience for student-centred spooky tales.¹³⁰ Tsuruta Norio took the *Honto ni Atta Kowai Hanashi* title and literary format, an omnibus of ghost stories in the style of urban legends, and adapted them in his V-Cinema collection of horror vignettes released on video in 1991 and 1992. His scriptwriter was Konaka Chiaki, who had previously penned an unusual horror film called *Jaganrei* in 1988, which employed found-footage and documentary styles and focused on ghost-haunted media rather than violence – some commentators have called it “the first J-horror”.¹³¹ However, while *Jaganrei*

¹²⁹ Mes, Tom (2014). “The V-Cinema Notebook: Part 1”. *Midnight Eye*.
<<http://www.midnighteye.com/features/the-v-cinema-notebook-part-1/>>
[04/02/2017]

¹³⁰ Kalat (2007), 55.

¹³¹ E.g. Scherer, Elisabeth (2016). “Well-Travelled Female Avengers: The Transcultural Potential of Japanese Ghosts”. *Ghost Movies in Southeast Asia and*

remained obscure, the new project of Tsuruta and Konaka which would prove to be more influential. In contrast to the “hard” masculine image of fast, graphic violence and physical brutality that horror had been associated with in the 80s; it was now rebranded under a feminine image of “soft” atmospherics and slow, psychological fear, in which both protagonists and antagonists tended to be female. The lack of onscreen violence in these short horror vignettes allowed JHV to distribute the videos without an age restriction, and to have them placed on “respectable” shelves in video shops where they could reach their target audience of schoolgirls.¹³²

By shifting the genre radically away from the image of masculinity and violence, Tsuruta and Konaka effectively circumvented the public outcry against horror videos and exploited a niche in the market which had been present for some time: “horror for girls”. What’s more, the blueprint for *shōjo* horror already could be found in the realm of manga and literature where it had always existed in the shadow of *shōnen* horror. Ito Junji, who became the world’s most internationally renowned horror manga artist by the 2000s (and whose work would later be adapted for many J-horror films, including the *Tomie* franchise), emerged at this time, publishing his work in Asahi’s “Halloween *shōjo* comics”, a horror supplement for girls which lasted from January 1986 to December 1995. The videos of *Honto ni Atta Kowai Hanashi* (hereafter “*Kowai Hanashi*”) were the filmic expression of *shōjo* horror, separate from the onscreen horror genre as it existed at the time. Despite the focus on ghosts and human relationships, there were no strong connections to the classical *kaidan* films, either – these shorts were not nostalgic and aestheticised, but notable instead for the mundane urban environments in which strange events occurred. Ghosts and the supernatural emerged subtly in the day-to-day lives of contemporary teenage girls, in settings such as schools, homes, friends’ houses, and so on. The videos were a hit, creating a template that, due largely to their lack of violence, became popular in Japanese television programming (and remains so to this day), allowing the new style of horror to reach a much wider audience.

Beyond: Narratives, Cultural Contexts, Audiences. Ed. Peter J. Bräunlein and Andrea Lauser. Leiden: Brill. 74.

¹³² Zahlten, Alex and Kimihiko Kimata (2005). “Norio Tsuruta”. *Midnight Eye*. <<http://www.midnighteye.com/interviews/norio-tsuruta/>> [02/04/2017].

The videos also opened up a new field of experimentation for many independent directors who could begin their careers by gaining experience in the “low culture” productions of V-cinema. The vignette format of *Kowai Hanashi* was especially suited to new directors, allowing them the chance to hone their skills by producing shorts that would only last around five minutes. Many of the later auteurs of J-horror, such as *Ring*'s director Nakata Hideo, began their careers by directing vignettes for Tsuruta's successful series, and have recognized *Kowai Hanashi* as the first iteration of a new type of film.¹³³ From this we can see that J-horror emerged largely as the result of the industry and cultural positioning of horror as a genre only fit for inexperienced filmmakers, but also as a result of the gendered distribution of styles in *shōnen* and *shōjo* manga being applied to low-budget genre cinema. Both the success and defining characteristics of J-horror make sense in light of its original conception as “horror for girls”.

II. Video Tapes: Telling Tales From Schoolgirl to Nation

When considering how images of gender and nation operate within *Kowai Hanashi*, one starting point is the video tapes' continuity with oral tradition: each vignette is a conscious transposition into a cinematic medium of the supernatural urban myth popular in Japan at the time. The significance of the form that this early 1990s transposition took is clearer when placed in the context of the prior transposition of the *kuchi sake onna* (“slit-mouthed woman”) oral urban myth into print media. Michael Dylan Foster describes how the late 1970s story of a murderous woman hiding a disfigured face behind the commonly worn medical face-mask became a nationwide phenomenon that connected the mythic fear of the unknown with urban areas. As he puts it, “The luminal, dangerous no-man's-land of the mountains and forests surrounding

¹³³ Mes, Tom (2018). “V-Cinema: How Home Video Revitalized Japanese Film and Mystified Film Historians”. *Introducing Japanese Popular Culture*. Alisa Freedman and Toby Slade, eds. Routledge. 225-226.

Yanagita's Tōno¹³⁴ was now manifest in the expanses between home and school in the conurbations of late industrial Japan".¹³⁵ In this respect, the spread of the *kuchi sake onna* urban myth can be seen as a forerunner of J-horror's popularity, as both fixate on supernatural female threats hidden within mundane urban settings – indeed, *kuchi sake onna* makes for a far more convincing ancestor of Sadako than Oiwa or other Edo-period *yuurei*. However, Foster writes that both academic discourse and popular media framed the urban myth as part of a national folkloric tradition, most notably in famed manga artist Shigeru Mizuki's depiction of her as a *yōkai* (a supernatural being associated with folklore).

The search for traditional influences reveals a signal desire to associate this very modern woman with the *yōkai* of the prewar and pre-Meiji periods. [...] Almost as soon as she garnered public attention, Kuchi-sake-onna came to be treated, not as a this-worldly figure speaking sharply about late 1970s social norms, but rather as an otherworldly figure, a present-day avatar of age-old mysteries that refuse to go away.¹³⁶

This appropriation stands in stark contrast to *Kowai Hanashi's* treatment of urban myth, which sought to replicate and capitalize on the "this-worldly" nature of modern ghost stories. Even when traditionalist elements appear in the stories, they merely provide a backdrop to the more immediate concerns of threatened schoolgirls in an urban environment. In the first video tape's third vignette, when two sisters visit a shrine to ask for help, a strange priest explains that the ghost haunting them had recently killed herself – he clarifies that she has no connection to antiquity. The girls do not seem impressed by the priest, and the story ends with them offering their own personal prayers at the roadside site of the suicide.

¹³⁴ Foster is referring to Yanagita Kunio's influential *Tōno Monogatari*, published in 1910, which figured a rural and "native" space of folklore against an urban space of rationality and modernity.

¹³⁵ Foster, Michael Dylan (2009). *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yōkai*. London: University of California Press. 202.

¹³⁶ Foster (2009), 188-201.

Kowai Hanashi's aim of adapting the phenomenon of urban myths into a video format is especially clear in the repeated opening structure of the vignettes. Each vignette begins with a female voiceover speaking in the past tense in the manner of a storyteller, setting the scene and letting the viewer know that what they are about to watch is something strange that happened to her. The audience is thereby figured as an intimate friend or peer of the storyteller, and dramatic tension is built on the premise that the audience is about to be told something secret, personal, and strange – we are, in a sense, being allowed access into a chain of storytelling, as though we might also pass on the tale: “I heard about this girl who...” Usually at the same time as the opening voiceover, the vignette’s title, followed by the name of a Japanese prefecture and the name of a girl, our storyteller, appear on the screen (Fig. 1). By identifying a prefecture and schoolgirl for each story, this opening subtitle both localizes the vignette in a documentary-style display of realism, while at the same time evoking a network of stories and girls within the territory of Japan. The physicality of the video tapes themselves, as objects which can be owned or passed on, further enhanced the archival aesthetic that evoked the image of a collection of stories from around the nation.

In a sense, the urban menace and national interest of the *kuchi sake onna* myth is an indirect forerunner of the *Kowai Hanashi* phenomenon, and therefore a forerunner of J-horror itself. However, unlike the shared, nativist traditionalism of the *yōkai* discourse that subsumed *kuchi sake onna*, the Japanese nation was evoked in an entirely different way by *Kowai Hanashi*: as a fragmented patchwork of prefectures linked via an intra-national network of storytelling schoolgirls. The aesthetic of these video tapes demanded they be read as representative of the Japan of the present, and not a Japan of the past. It should be noted that this gendered depiction of community, connectivity, and transmission preceded the age of the internet and mobile phones, which would later become appropriate conduits for J-horror’s ghosts and social anxieties.



Figure 1: Title, prefecture, and schoolgirl in *Kowai Hanashi*.

III. Television: Juggling Genres in *Shōjo* Horror

The use of schoolgirls telling ghost stories as a way of reimagining the Japanese nation as fragmented, urban, and dangerous reveals how *Kowai Hanashi* interacted with and subverted both gender and national ideologies by linking them in a popular culture format. In addition, *Kowai Hanashi* used gender as a means to explore and adjust genre. It was in many ways a transitional form between drama and horror, as evidenced by the various elements of *shōjo* aesthetics that would become diluted or disappear entirely as the J-horror movement established its own lexicon of cinematic styles and tropes. However, outside of the internationally successful J-horror films, *Kowai Hanashi's shōjo* horror remained largely unaltered in the format of television vignettes. Embracing the J-horror boom initiated by *Ring* in 1998, the television station Fuji TV enlisted the creator of *Kowai Hanashi*, Tsuruta Norio, to work on a new series under the same brand. The main series ran from 1999 to 2005, and was followed by a string of special programmes, usually released annually in the summertime. Rival television stations followed suit, notably with the TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting Station) series *Kaidan Shin Mimibukuro* (internationally released on DVD as *Tales of Terror*), which ran from 2003 to 2006 before adopting a similar format of annual programming. While J-horror auteurs pushed their films in new aesthetic directions and courted Hollywood, these television programmes sought to replicate the style and child-friendly focus of the original *Kowai Hanashi*

videotapes. For example, the new *Kowai Hanashi* series introduced a framing format in which child “club members” of both genders would discuss the vignettes amongst each other after they aired. The stories themselves retained a focus on schoolgirls and young women, sometimes taking on a didactic or moralistic tone and sometimes focusing on the absurd or humorous elements of a story. A gap was opened between domestic J-horror and its international brand: televised J-horror retained *shōjo* sensibilities, while international J-horror not only moved away from these concerns, but even became branded as particularly transgressive or “extreme” as discussed in the previous chapter. It is the televised form of J-horror, and how it operated within and against the gendered constraints of genre, that will be the focus of this section, explored through close readings of a few *Kaidan Shin Mimibukuro* vignettes all broadcast by TBS in March, 2005.

Despite the fact that Choi uses Korean horror films’ foregrounding of female adolescent sensibility as an impetus to move away from sexuality as a dominant framework for conceptualizing horror cinema, the role of sexuality remains important to her analysis.¹³⁷ Similarly, a distinguishing example of J-horror’s *shōjo* sensibilities is the thematic presence of sexuality, largely absent from classic J-horror films like *Ring*, *Dark Water*, or *Juon: The Grudge*. The ways in which *Kaidan Shin Mimibukuro* embodies sexuality is also important in that it underlines the status of “cautionary tales for schoolgirls” that could be seen as a key component of the *Kowai Hanashi* videos in the early 1990s. Let us begin with the vignette titled “The Blue Raincoat”: a girl, still in school uniform, is alone with a boy in his apartment to help him with his studies; when he tries to kiss her she rebuffs him but is shown to be privately delighted. The boy moves off-screen so that the camera can create a space in which to explore the girl’s emotional reaction: dramatic music plays and the camera cuts to a close-up of her smiling face, and then her finger as she uses condensation to privately trace a heart on the desk. Up to this point, there is nothing to distinguish this narrative from a standard *shōjo* drama, in terms of setting, scenario, characters, dialogue, pacing, theme, and so on. Especially of note is how a sexual or romantic event is the catalyst of a girl’s emotional reaction, and more time is spent portraying her

¹³⁷ Choi (2009), 42-51.

personal reaction than the romantic action itself. The dramatic music stops as the doorbell rings, and she opens it to find an eerie male child in a dripping wet raincoat, despite the lack of rain. This event begins a structural pattern that is repeated throughout the vignette: the establishment of romantic drama tropes, interrupted by the jarring intrusion of horror tropes. “The Blue Raincoat” thus employs the clash of genres as a means to generate affect: the horror elements are made more frightening by the sense that they are “out of place” within the *shōjo* drama. At the same time, this affective manipulation reinforces the didactic narrative that punishes or warns the schoolgirl every time she begins to experience romantic feelings in response to the boy’s lustful advances.

At first, the girl interacts individually with the two characters in separate scenarios, switching back and forth between the boy in the apartment, and the ghostly child in the blue raincoat – emblematic of “horror” – who repeatedly says “give it to me” and extends his palm as if demanding an object from the girl. As events progress, the two boys become conflated: when she yields to an embrace from the former, the child’s hand of the latter touches her hair. The intersection of “drama” and “horror” simultaneously repositions a desirable romantic partner as a dangerous child, prompting the girl to finally say, “I see what you are” to the lustful boy, and an assertive “good bye” as she rushes out of the apartment. The final image literally overlays the body of the ghost child and the boy watching her leave, with both voices saying “give it to me” in unison. The inventive hybridization of genres is therefore purposefully employed as a reinforcement of the normative framework of gender relations, with drama and horror tropes working in harmony to support a moral fable of how young girls should beware of misinterpreting male desire as romantic affection. At the same time, dramatic conventions are upended by finding their resolutions in horror, and horror conventions are repurposed to accentuate the dramatic. To put it another way, the experimental hybridization of genre is contained within a stabilizing matrix of gender.

The theme of adolescents navigating the new hazards of sexuality is also present in two other vignettes, “The Ghost of Ohatsutenjin” and “The Music Box”. “The Ghost of Ohatsutenjin” is unusual in having a male protagonist: a pre-adolescent boy who is beginning to experience sexual feelings for the first time,

as the camera implies by shifting focus from a sensual close-up of his schoolgirl tutor's mouth to his own enraptured gaze. Rather than lingering on suggestive scenes or female bodies, the camera spends more time on close-ups of the boy as he watches: in this case the male gaze is not an organizing framework of visibility (as in Mulvey's famous formulation),¹³⁸ but a visualized image, i.e. it does not determine the frame but is held within it. At night the boy is haunted by a traditional kimono-clad *yuurei* who appears to engage in sexual activity with him. His tutor remarks the next morning that he looks pale, and, deducing that he is being haunted, she warns him that he is in terrible danger, and must avoid the ghost at all costs. Sinister music and fearful reaction shots align the schoolgirl's warning with the narrative framework of both the folkloric female ghost that saps male vitality through intercourse, and the logic of *shōjo* horror – as seen in “The Blue Raincoat” – which figures sexuality and the supernatural as sites of peril for young people. However, when the *yuurei* visits the boy once more, his father, hearing noises, rushes into the room. The horror story is thus upended by the intrusion of a trope from comedy and drama genres: the mutual embarrassment of a parent walking in on their child having sex. This disruption of the established horror narrative goes further, when the father tells his son not to worry, and to “continue”, revealing that he himself had been visited by the ghost “at that age”, and that once the boy was a little older she would disappear. In a final comedic shock, the father pauses in the doorway to express his envy of his son's youth. While the ending is apparently entirely different to that of “The Blue Raincoat” in both narrative and tone, the same structural formula is in fact employed here: a hybridization of horror and drama tropes (this time the tension of horror finding its resolution in drama), and the stabilizing effect of normative gender roles being reasserted in a didactic, moralizing manner. Whereas the schoolgirls in these vignettes must learn to recognize and avoid the danger of sexuality in order to survive, the young boy is reassured that the terrifying and predatory appearance of sexuality is just part of growing up, and that to experience sexual contact is in fact something worthy of others' envy.

¹³⁸ Mulvey, Laura (1992). “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader on Sexuality*. London: Routledge.

Sexuality in “The Music Box” is less explicit as a theme, but it exemplifies the same cautionary format of “The Blue Raincoat” as well as a similar use of drama and horror hybridization in the service of teaching the audience about gender and sexuality. The story begins with a first-person monologue explaining the scenario and aligning the audience’s subjectivity with that of the speaking schoolgirl as the camera shows her entering the house of a middle-aged man and having a cup of tea with him: “Mr. Hoshita taught me at junior high school. I bumped into him at my friend’s piano recital... and that’s why I visited him. We were meant to talk about the old days and to enjoy ourselves. But then he took it out.” As in “The Blue Raincoat”, the *shōjo* drama set-up avoids explicitly depicting predatory behaviour by displacing it onto horror conventions: rather than his penis, the object that Hoshita takes out is a mysterious music box he has acquired, with the strange property that when it is played, along with the tinkling, pleasant melody a low male moaning can indistinctly be heard. This scenario quite clearly lends itself to symbolic or psychoanalytic readings, as the music box seems to stand in for a dangerous male existing within an apparently pleasant scenario, such as visiting an old teacher to have tea in his home. As the story goes on the threatening male voice grows louder, and the schoolgirl makes several attempts to leave, but Hoshita, clearly as frightened of the ghost as she is, insists that she stays, until finally both are attacked by the malevolent presence and the story ends. As with “The Blue Raincoat”, the threatening ghost of “The Music Box” is figured as male rather than female, contrary to the J-horror norm. However, unlike “The Blue Raincoat”, in which the schoolgirl asserts herself and escapes the dangerous situation with a boy, “The Music Box” depicts a schoolgirl who is unable to extract herself from a dangerous situation with a man – it is not revealed what happens when the ghost catches both her and Hoshita, but the implication that she becomes the victim of a terrible fate is generated strongly by the affect of horror. The fact that Hoshita is also a victim of the ghost is interesting in placing the monster of sexual predation outside of the man who invokes it, as though the danger is not one of an oppressor and an oppressed, but rather one that emerges from a social site and that negatively impacts both parties, predator and schoolgirl.

What these examples reveal is a coded depiction of serious issues that would be of interest to the target girl audience, but which are rarely present in children's media due to their sexual nature. The televised formula established by *Kowai Hanashi* and continued in *Kaidan Shin Mimibukuro* is quite remarkable in many respects, and no doubt its wide viewership was a result of many factors, but a significant one is the way in which it engineers an accessible space in which considerations of sexuality from the perspective of young girls can be depicted in a dramatic and accessible format, thanks to the coded and non-explicit presentation of its content as trivial, fun, spooky stories. This new avenue for social issues in popular culture was the result of an intensive hybridization of genres: horror tropes were put to the service of *shōjo* thematic concerns, and in the same moment the introduction of these concerns transformed the possibilities of how one could make a horror film.

In addition, the limitations of a very low budget and not being able to depict violence allowed for new creative images that addressed a variety of social scenarios figured as relevant to girls. In "Animal Odour", a man who killed animals for pleasure as a child is cursed to always have a strange animal smell about him – possibly the cheapest curse in screen history – and the schoolgirl protagonist is faced with the *shōjo*-esque dramatic scenario of whether or not she should tell her pregnant cousin what she knows of her new husband's dark past. In "Visitor", a schoolgirl is worried about her friend who has been missing school because of a cold, and when she visits finds her to be co-habiting with a female ghost that drips blood everywhere, while the sick girl scrubs her clothes and the blood that drips onto the floor. The girls' reactions to the ghost are telling: the sick girl angrily says "Don't!" when the ghost tries to emerge and it demurely obeys, and the friend, less in terror than in shock or embarrassment, says she needs to go and hurriedly leaves, enforcing the image of the "visitor" as a manifestation of a particularly severe period, or at least an undesirable condition that must be endured by schoolgirls rather than the life-threatening evil that ghosts often represent.

The magical realist endings of these stories, in which girls acknowledge the supernatural events as part of their social reality, can certainly be traced back to folkloric precedents, but their prevalence in televised J-horror is much

more immediately the result of contemporary influences, such as the short running time of each vignette, or the urban myth-derived style of positing supernatural events in day-to-day settings. What's more, they further reinforce the image of these ghost stories as reflections of social realities that the assumed schoolgirl audience can imagine themselves being part of, and therefore facilitate empathy with the protagonists.

IV. Cinema: The Feminised Mental Spaces of J-Horror Films

The introduction of empathy as a primary element of the new horror genre was also a result of figuring the ghost as concomitant with the “interior” (emotional, personal, contemplative) dramatic situations favoured in *shōjo* manga over the “exterior” (action, plot-based) dramatic situations favoured in *shōnen* manga. Aligning ghosts with mental states was not new in the horror genre, but the extent to which this trope of interiority was aligned with female subjectivity – rather than male subjectivity, or the positioning of female interiority as an oppositional force to male exteriority – was radical within the context of the genre. With J-horror, the creation of female mental spaces became a new trope of the horror genre in Japan. Also radical in its own way was the new presentation of the ghost: urban and subtle. These key attributes of J-horror were certainly the result of independent filmmakers’ creative responses to budgetary constraints: for example, simple changes to lighting, whether its intensity or colour, are sometimes used to imply the presence of the supernatural. This lighting technique can be seen frequently as a means to evoke a mental space of intensity in the works of Kurosawa Kiyoshi, both in his J-horror films and his later internationally acclaimed pieces, such as the romantic drama *Journey to the Shore* (*Kishibe no tabi*, 2015) and the thriller *Creepy* (*Kuriipii*, 2016). Kurosawa has acknowledged the influence of *Kowai Hanashi* on himself and other independent filmmakers of the time, and the fact that techniques established in low-budget *shōjo* horror are still repeated in various works of

acclaimed Japanese cinema is testament to their importance.¹³⁹ When asked about his stylistic choices, Kurosawa has also stated that his style, so often framed in critical discourse as that of an auteur, evolved from and continues to be largely determined by budgetary constraints: his use of dialogue rather than action scenes, his contemporary urban settings, and his use of cheap practical effects rather than computer-generated imagery all exemplify how the new aesthetics of J-horror emerged from material limitations at least as much as they did from personal visions.

It is therefore worth stressing how techniques based on practicality were later replicated for their aesthetic impact, even when they were no longer necessary measures. For example, the conditions of the early 1990s required the absence of violence in order to market horror to young Japanese girls, but when discussing the making of *Tomie* (1998), director Oikawa Ataru described the choice to tone down violence from the original manga as an aesthetic choice, claiming he did not want to make “people scream with fear. I didn't imagine that kind of horror movie. I wanted this to be more like a drama for youth”.¹⁴⁰ At the film's climax, Tomie taunts the protagonist by mocking what she claims are her aspirations: “Getting married to a good-for-nothing man, having a stupid child, and shriveling into an old woman – that's a woman's happiness, right? But I'll be cute forever – isn't that sad?” Despite Tomie's monstrousness, her articulation of womanhood into two spheres – being young and “cute”; and being an unfulfilled housewife – demonstrates the prominence of femininity and what are figured as “female concerns” within the context of horror. Furthermore, Tomie's position as both monstrous and “cute forever” subverts or even satirizes what Saitō Kumiko calls the *shōjo's* “eternal deferral of growth” in order to remain “just cute and young”, an image which she says gained particular prominence in the 1990s.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Mes, Tom (2018). “V-Cinema: How Home Video Revitalized Japanese Film and Mystified Film Historians”. *Introducing Japanese Popular Culture*. Alisa Freedman and Toby Slade, eds. Routledge. 225-226.

¹⁴⁰ Kalat (2007), 71.

¹⁴¹ Saitō, Kumiko (2014). ‘Magic, *Shōjo*, and Metamorphosis: Magical Girl Anime and the Challenges of Changing Gender Identities in Japanese Society’. *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 73:1.154-155.

In the same year, Nakata's *Ring* replaced the male reporter protagonist of the book with a woman, and what had been the reporter's old friend became the woman's ex-partner, with her main motivation in stopping Sadako's curse also being altered after her son (fathered by the ex) watches the malevolent video tape: unlike the book, *Ring* was a film about a mother's love for her son, the difficulties of single motherhood, and the "horror" that can seep in to non-traditional family units. While *Ring* espouses quite conservative values about womanhood and the family, rather than reuniting the separated couple and restoring an imagined harmony, the film ends with the father-figure being killed by the curse and the woman realizing that the way to save her son and herself is to show the deadly tape to someone else – the final shot is of her driving to her parents' house, implying that she is ready to risk her parents' death by showing them the tape. In other words, the concept of "mother's love" is presented as stronger than, and even destructive towards, the image of traditional extended family units.

Tomie and *Ringu* are notable not only for connecting the *shōjo* horror aesthetics of *Kowai Hanashi* with the image of the virus as discussed in the previous chapter, but also for being more woman-focussed and arguably less misogynistic than their literary origins. The manga version of *Tomie*, serialized from the late 1980s through the 1990s, presents the character as a cross between pitiless femme fatale and Lovecraftian monster, and perfectly embodies what Kinoshita calls the "long tradition of forging an affinity between woman and monster in terms of the allocated position as a spectacle-image-object within patriarchy".¹⁴² Beyond this, the manga's focus on "bewitched" and helpless men brutally attacking *Tomie* uncritically reflects patriarchal social attitudes regarding gendered violence and culpability (in which women are cast as instigators of blind male aggression), yet this focus is largely absent from the film. While the book version of *Sadako* is sympathetic as a character, she is nonetheless the only significant female character and also a monster, and the theme of rape – both *Sadako*'s rape and an alleged rape by the journalist's friend – is used rather tastelessly as a plot device and discussed in an alarmingly nonchalant and unconcerned manner by the two male protagonists. The second

¹⁴² Kinoshita (2009), 120.

book in the *Ring* series, *Spiral*, is far more explicit in its invitation to readers to participate in the misogynistic attitudes of its male protagonists towards women, but Nakata's sequel *Ring 2* departs from the literary franchise entirely, and once again builds its main subjectivity around a female rather than male character. In the *Ring* franchise, the Korean *The Ring Virus* (*Ring*, 1999) and Tsuruta's *Ring 0: Birthday* (*Ringu Zero: Bāsudei*, 2000) went even further in using drama tropes to depict Sadako in a sympathetic light. When translating popular texts into a filmic format, J-horror thus excised a considerable degree of misogyny as it allowed these texts to reproduce themselves for new, wider audiences. Far from being a feminist statement by the filmmakers (*Ring 2* is also very conservative in its depiction of a woman's role as mother), this transformation is more accurately figured as another effect of intensive contact within the multiplicity of different forces that J-horror was bringing together. An important ideological intervention of J-horror is therefore the way in which misogyny becomes literally "lost in translation" when narratives move from books and manga into the filmic medium.

All key films in J-horror depict female subjectivity in a variety of ways which encourage viewer empathy as well as fear. Furthermore, "J-horror films [...] capitalize on women's identification with space".¹⁴³ In Nakata's *Dark Water* (*Honogurai Mizu no Soko Kara*, 2002), a single mother struggles through a divorce while trying to raise her child while living in a dilapidated, depressing apartment building – dealing with not only the ghost of an abandoned child but also her own insecurity over her ability to be a good mother, and her ex-husband's attempts to gain custody over the child by bringing her mental health into question. In Shimizu's *Ju-on: The Grudge* (*Juon*, 2002) the ghost Kayako forces victims to relive her experience of domestic violence. In Kurosawa's *Loft* (*Rofuto*, 2005) the typical genre roles for women that depict them as either victimized ghost, terrifying monster, or heroic investigator are deconstructed and swapped between the film's female characters.¹⁴⁴ In Kurosawa's *Cure* (*Kyua*, 1997), a detective thriller which makes use of and establishes a variety of J-horror imagery, a female doctor is psychically overpowered by the film's

¹⁴³ Kinoshita (2009), 107.

¹⁴⁴ Kinoshita (2009), 120.

malevolent hypnotist, who first asks her to think of all the injustice she has faced from society just for being born a woman, before suggesting that “woman is beneath man” in general. This scene is instructive, for it suggests a terrible miasma of an accumulated and feminized burden of oppression, which is in a sense also one of the main images used for building atmosphere in J-horror. Unlike the melancholic Japanese *kaidan* which tend to express women’s fates as dramatic tragedy, and unlike the horror films of the 1980s which tended to objectify male and female bodies in order to shock the audience with violence, J-horror created urban oppressive atmospheres marked by female subjectivity, inviting viewers to enter into the haunted and feminised mental spaces constructed within each film.

V. The End of J-Horror: Turn of the Auteurs and Becoming *Kawaii*

An intensive multiplicity is as destructive as it is creative: as connections and hybridizations create new identities, the old identities caught up in the process find themselves irrevocably altered. In this way the aesthetics of J-horror transformed the cinematic and non-cinematic genres it originally grew out of, providing them with a new lexicon of images and styles as a resource for future projects, whether in cinema, manga, video games, and so on. However, the same destructive aspect of the intensive multiplicity also worked to dismantle J-horror as a distinct body of texts. Commentators disagree on when J-horror came to an end, both as an aesthetic and as a commercial boom. To conclude this section, I will consider some of these disparate endings and how they resulted from the intensive transformations of the J-horror multiplicity.

Part of the instability of J-horror’s form has been due to the experimental tendencies of its auteurs. A key figure regarding the development of J-horror from the artistic perspective was Konaka Chiaki, the original screenwriter for *Kowai Hanashi*. His book, published in 2003, outlined the new “rules” of Japanese horror, such as never directly showing the ghost, and the structure and boundaries it applied to the horror genre were largely agreed upon by other

horror filmmakers.¹⁴⁵ In this respect, his work can be seen as having had a constructive and stabilizing effect on J-horror. The ways in which Konaka's personal approach to horror disrupted J-horror norms became clear in the film *Marebito* (*Marebito*, 2004) which he wrote the script for, and the two anime he was a key creator for, horror-themed dramas *Serial Experiments Lain* (*Shiriaru Eksuperimentsu Rein*, 1998) and *Ghost Hound* (*Shinreigari*, 2007-2008). All of these works drew heavily on both the style of Western horror writer H. P. Lovecraft and conspiracy theories, neither of which are related to J-horror aesthetics. Nonetheless, consistent with J-horror is a penchant for experimentation within genre forms, with *Serial Experiments Lain* especially singled out by anime commentators as "avant garde" and ahead of its time in its depiction of a society overlaid with an internet-like virtual layer of reality.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, both anime focus on adolescents coming to terms with social realities, a slow building up of atmosphere and mental spaces, and the hybridization of tropes from the drama and horror genres. This reveals continuity between the emergence of J-horror and these other examples of popular media, despite the fact that they are rarely considered as part of the same movement. While these new outlets for J-horror could be understood as extensive movements into other media, they are also intensive changes that have disrupted and dispersed J-horror into other categories of popular culture.

Another auteur whose work has had a disruptive effect on J-horror is Miike Takashi, whose most well-known J-horror contribution, *Audition* (*Ōdishon*, 1999), removes the horror elements almost entirely from most of the film, focusing instead on J-horror's slow oppressive atmospherics and what seems like a romantic drama, before suddenly turning to extreme violence, emphasized by shocking disruptions of conventional filming techniques, the horror affect thus being generated by arthouse conventions disrupting a genre film. This violence is all the more shocking in its reversal of the *shōjo* non-violent horror

¹⁴⁵ Konaka, Chiaki (2003). *Hora eiga no miryoku: fundamentaru hora sengen* [The Fascination of Horror Films: A Manifesto of Fundamental Horror]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

¹⁴⁶ Napier, Susan J. (2002). "When the Machines Stop: Fantasy, Reality, and Terminal Identity in *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Serial Experiments Lain*". *Science Fiction Studies*. Number 86, Volume 29, Part 3.

that *Kowai Hanashi* had established in the early 1990s. On the other hand, Miike's surreal *Gozu* (*Gokudo kyofu dai-gekijo: Gozu*, 2003), more informatively translated as "Yakuza Horror Theatre: Oxhead", meshes J-horror aesthetics and comedy within a *yakuza* (gangster) genre plot that perhaps structurally has more in common with *Alice in Wonderland* than any film from either Japanese genre. Miike's films pose the question: if J-horror aesthetics are only one resource in a text that draws on many, does that text qualify as J-horror? In an extensive network perhaps, but in an intensive one such texts are moments of disruption and fragmentation that eventually lead to further transformations of the original image.

Introducing the element of comedy into genres that take themselves seriously often has a domino effect. The auteur Sono Sion, who had made surreal but forcefully disturbing contributions to J-horror such as *Suicide Club* (*Jisatsu Saakuru*, 2001) and *Strange Circus* (*Kimyōna Sākasu*, 2005), later mocked genre conventions in the parodic *Exte* (*Ekusute*, 2007), in which cursed hair extensions attack the women who wear them, while a hair fetishist encourages their evil influence to spread. While *Exte* brought comedy to J-horror like *Gozu* had done, *Exte* was different in being an example of laughing *at* something rather than with it. Chief J-horror producer Ichise Takashige's anthology television film *Dark Tales of Japan* (*Sekai saikyō J horā SP: Nihon no kowai yoru*, 2004) is an interesting case because, despite Ichise's attempt to generate national interest in his film with the title "*Sekai saikyō J horā*" ("World-renowned J-horror"), two out of the anthology's five short films actually mock J-horror, both in its domestic context (*Spider Woman* [*Kumo onna*] unobviously suggests that the nature of urban legends in Japan is becoming increasingly ridiculous) and its international context (*Blonde Kwaidan* [*Kinpatsu Kaidan*], which I will discuss in the next chapter, satirizes J-horror's relationship with Hollywood). Once a genre begins to self-parody, it is hard for the intensity of its pioneering films to reassert itself, and this certainly seems to have been the case for J-horror. In the case of Kurosawa Kiyoshi's *Loft*, by taking genre conventions as an object of interest, the director aimed "to make a horror film, and to destroy all horror films"¹⁴⁷ – Kinoshita

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in White, Jerry (2007). *The Films of Kiyoshi Kurosawa: Master of Fear*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press. 201.

discusses how *Loft* deconstructs J-horror tropes such as the image of the ghost within media circulation.¹⁴⁸ Perhaps some of this destructive impetus stemmed from the auteurs' realization that the images they had created were no longer under their authority, as with Frankenstein's monster: *Tales From the Dead* (2007) was a film shot independently by an American (Jason Cuadrado) in Los Angeles with a Japanese cast who speak Japanese throughout the film, and is branded as "J-horror" by both the American filmmakers who made it and in internet commentary.¹⁴⁹ Whether it was because images of Japaneseness and J-horror had become unanchored from Japan and made available as an international resource or not, it seems fair to draw the conclusion that, by the mid-2000s, many J-horror auteurs still involved with the genre were actively trying to dismantle it. This came despite the efforts of Ichise, whose "J-horror theatre" project, which commissioned six new J-horror films from auteurs, failed to generate profits. In 2012, Ichise's production company Oz filed for bankruptcy.

However, various critics date the end of the J-horror aesthetic (if not its commercial successes) much earlier, and place the blame squarely on auteur Shimizu Takashi. His first feature-length hit *Juon: The Grudge* (*Juon*, 2002) has been marked by many commentators as the moment when J-horror discarded the principles of its old aesthetic, whether by virtue of violating the Konaka rules and clearly "showing the ghost",¹⁵⁰ by utilizing the "stalker aesthetic" of American slasher films to create a Japanese-American hybrid horror experience,¹⁵¹ or by encouraging the image and plot repetition (in both its internal vignettes and its many sequels) that would lead to audience fatigue with J-horror in general.¹⁵² It was certainly not the first instance of J-horror taking experimental liberties with its inherited style, but its success in Japan and then later as an American remake can be understood as an influential reconfiguration of how J-horror was done, and perhaps more importantly, for whom it was done.

¹⁴⁸ Kinoshita (2009), 117.

¹⁴⁹ Including archival websites such as Wikipedia and the Internet Movie Database (IMDB) at the time of writing.

¹⁵⁰ Kinoshita (2009), 115.

¹⁵¹ McRoy, Jay (2005). "Cinematic Hybridity in Shimizu Takashi's *Ju-on: The Grudge*". *Japanese Horror Cinema*. Jay McRoy, ed. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 176.

¹⁵² Rucka (2005).

The new pressure on J-horror creators to produce work for an international market affected their work in a variety of ways which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. For now, in the context of J-horror's representations of gender, it is worth considering how the Kayako of Hollywood's *The Grudge* (2004) was made to be even more monstrous than her Japanese incarnation, despite the fact that both films were directed by Shimizu.

In his attempt to refashion his film in line with "an American and Japanese style",¹⁵³ Shimizu alters the climactic confrontation with Kayako in a variety of significant ways. In the Japanese version the character Rika discovers a trick to seeing the ghosts clearly (peering between one's fingers), and when she looks at Kayako in this way the ghost becomes less threatening, reaching out pitifully as mournful music suggests some kind of empathy or understanding between the two women. Kayako disappears, only to be replaced by the ghost of her abusive husband, who murders Rika in the same way he murdered Kayako. Thus, through aligning the viewer subjectivity with first Rika and then her embodiment of Kayako's role as victim, the viewer enters into a becoming with the female ghost: the film encourages us to live her tragedy, to feel her fear at the hands of her abuser. This is the emotional climax and heart of *Juon: The Grudge*. In Shimizu's "American version", the camera cuts repeatedly to Kayako's mutilated body as she crawls down the stairs making gnashing noises with her teeth, in marked contrast to her slow descent in the "Japanese version". Also notable is that the female hero Karen has a boyfriend with her in this final confrontation, and he quickly falls victim to Kayako, who is seen crawling over his body in a sexualized and threatening manner which contrasts the appalled reaction-shot of Karen (played by Sarah Michelle Gellar, whose iconic "*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*" character no doubt influenced her casting as well as audience expectations of her role in this film). The viewer's subjectivity, aligned with Karen's, is thus positioned in opposition to Kayako as a threatening, monstrous, sexual rival. More than anything the camera establishes a space of subject and object, hero and villain, which is much less defined in the first version. The film's space of sympathy has been manufactured so as to exclude the female ghost in this case. Female solidarity is replaced with female rivalry. Rather than fall

¹⁵³ Shimizu quoted in McRoy (2005), 176.

victim to an unending cycle of male abuse, Karen fights off Kayako by setting fire to the house and then escapes (though it is implied she will remain haunted by the ghost).

The diminishing of J-horror as a producer of feminized mental spaces of atmospheric horror occurred not only through its exposure to and interaction with Hollywood, but also in the way its original films were rebranded for international markets. In the previous chapter I discussed how Orientalist stereotypes used in marketing “Asia Extreme” DVDs would emphasise women on box-art and promotional material, using Oliver Dew’s discussion of the transformation of Asami’s image from its appearance on the Japanese DVD of *Audition* to its appearance on the British DVD as a prime example. Following the tradition of conflating “world cinema” with erotic/exotic art in British film marketing,¹⁵⁴ this emphasis on images of women in J-Horror was clearly an invitation to consumption of the product, rather than an invitation to empathise with the character. The marketing of DVDs was aimed at niche audiences figured as mostly male: fans of horror cinema, fans of cult cinema, and fans of Japanese cinema.¹⁵⁵ In both the case of remakes and DVD marketing, coming into contact with the international market caused J-horror to be reinscribed, to a degree, under the image of a genre designed for primarily male consumption, in stark contrast to the schoolgirl-oriented strategy (and audiences) of *Kowai Hanashi* and *Ring*. What’s more, the aesthetic began to turn, if only slightly, towards the kind of fast-paced and violent horror that J-horror was supposed to be the antithesis of back in the Japan of the early 1990s.

A rebranding of J-horror has more recently taken place in the domestic sphere. In many ways, the extension of J-horror texts, such as merchandise and imagery, into everyday realms went from being a harmonious furthering of its aesthetic of tainting everyday objects and technology with a “curse”, to being a normalizing force that robbed its affect of intensity. Contemporary Japanese horror films which get cinema releases, such as *Ghost Theater (Gekijourei, 2015)*, employ J-horror conventions and so could be classed as such. However, they also appear concomitant with a number of factors which clearly signal an age post-J-

¹⁵⁴ Dew (2007), 60.

¹⁵⁵ Dew (2007), 61.

horror: attempts at evoking nostalgia; *kawaii* or cute depictions of the film's ghost in advertising and merchandise sold in the cinema; and the casting of *aidoru*, tv-star young female "idols" to attract audiences, are some of these factors. For *Ghost Theater*, directed by Ring's Nakata, the director's name was heavily fore-grounded in publicity, and the film was presented as a remake of his first feature-length horror film, *Don't Look Up (Joyūrei, 1996)*, during the formative period of J-horror, despite the fact that the new film only had very superficial links to this older one.

As a lead-in to discussing this "*kawaii*-fication" of J-horror, we should first mention the other auteur, aside from Shimizu Takashi, who can be said to have had a leading role in reconfiguring the direction of J-horror: Shiraishi Kōji. This is despite the fact that, in the aesthetic sense, Shiraishi's films are not J-horror at all (although some critics have said the same of *Juon: The Grudge*).¹⁵⁶ Shiraishi began directing for television under the *Kowai Hanashi* brand in 2003, and like the 1990s videos his early work aimed to make the most of a very low budget to depict supernatural menaces in everyday, contemporary Japan – aside from that premise, his work has little in common with the original *Kowai Hanashi*. Shiraishi's films were more closely aligned with the "found footage" boom of horror films produced worldwide after the success of *The Blair Witch Project* (1999),¹⁵⁷ which, in terms of its tiny budget and immense financial returns, remains one of the most profitable films of all time. Shiraishi's television and film projects typically employ a blend of Lovecraftian narrative wrapped in Japanese folklore, threats of physical violence, and found footage aesthetics which sometimes reference Japanese culture in distinctly stylized ways, such as recreating the style of Japanese "variety show" television as a medium to create narrative in his film *Noroi: The Curse (Noroi, 2005)*. Shiraishi has been discursively positioned as an "inheritor" of the J-horror tradition by both critics¹⁵⁸ and the Japanese film industry, given that he was selected to direct the heavily promoted *Sadako vs Kayako* (2016). While perhaps prefigured by the

¹⁵⁶ Kinoshita (2009), 115.

¹⁵⁷ For example, the low-budget Spanish *REC* (2007) and its Hollywood remake *Quarantine* (2008), or the virally marketed and highly profitable *Cloverfield* (2008).

¹⁵⁸ Du Mesnildot (2011), 215.

low-profile *Tomie vs Tomie* (2007), *Sadako vs Kayako* notably made use of the formula of Western slasher films that pit familiar antagonists against each other (e.g. *Alien vs Predator* [2004], *Freddy vs Jason* [2003]), also present in V-cinema-style low-budget Japanese horror films, but which has its cinematic origins in *King Kong vs Godzilla* (*Kingu Kongu Tai Gojira*, 1962) and the genre of Japanese *kaiju* (giant monster) films that followed in its wake. The title of *Sadako vs Kayako* alone promises its audience not a traditional J-horror experience but a monster wrestling match, which shows how these two fictional characters have transformed in the cultural imaginary: in the same way that horror characters such as Godzilla or the Hammer horror monsters of Dracula and Frankenstein's monster were re-territorialized from shocking and affective images into familiar and fun popular culture icons,¹⁵⁹ so too have J-horror's most iconic women become familiar and fun, the affective qualities of their images dissipated into the far reaches of the multiplicity. The content of Shiraishi's film does nothing to challenge this re-territorialization of J-Horror – the absurd sight of Sadako and Kayako attacking each other with creeping hair and lunges from the television set is more likely to induce laughter than fear in audiences.

The rebranding of Sadako and Kayako is also apparent in the promotional material released for the film. This included a viral internet video clip of "Sadako" appearing during a baseball game and taking up the role of batter – the incongruity of her appearance, coded as scary, in the context of baseball was clearly intended to promote the film using humorous and eye-catching imagery, relying on the familiarity of Sadako rather than the image of something fresh, new, obscure, and terrifying which was used to promote *Ring* and earlier J-horror. In another example of how the film's marketing team made use of contemporary technology and social trends, an account for "Kayako" was set up on the social media platform Instagram, from which photographs of everyday family situations were posted (eating dinner, playing in a playground, etc.) starring actors portraying Kayako and her son Toshio. Once again, the images' contrast between mundane activities and ghosts coded as scary, as well as the accompanying text and "hash tags" of Kayako's signature death rattle, makes this

¹⁵⁹ Berenstein, Rhona J. (1996). *Attack of the Leading Ladies: Gender, Sexuality, and Spectatorship in Classic Horror Cinema*. Columbia University Press: New York.

material funny. The continuous production of this humorous material encouraged people to “follow” or subscribe to the account, which would not only allow the consumer to view more content as it was made available, but would promote the account to the consumer’s contacts on Instagram, thus continuing the dissemination of the promotional material and the re-imaging of J-horror.

As part of J-horror’s focus on spaces coded as “female”, iconic films such as *Ring*, *Juon: The Grudge*, and *Dark Water* had all explored the themes of family and domesticity in various ways, usually subverting the image of harmonious family spaces by construing them as unsettling or horrific. By the end of the 2000s, the rare J-horror film that adhered to these themes in fresh and inventive ways, such as *Nightmare Detective 2 (Akumu Tantei 2, 2008)*, received little fanfare or marketing campaigns. In contrast, *Sadako Versus Kayako* was heavily marketed based on familiarity and humorous images that reinstate the ghostly family as harmonious and mundane. This mirrors the common trajectory of successful transgressive cultural icons: Godzilla was first imagined as a terrifying nuclear threat to Japan, but in later films he was re-imagined as its protector, and now enjoys the popularity of being one of its national symbols. Regarding the dangerous urban monster *kuchi sake onna*, Foster claims that

[t]he drive to associate her with the *yōkai* of the past, and with the playful images of Mizuki Shigeru, has distracted attention from what she had to say about gender, normative standards of beauty, and particularly the women’s liberation movement of the 1970s.¹⁶⁰

What was once threatening to hegemonic institutions, whether societal, national, political, etc., becomes re-appropriated as not only safe, but also representative of the very institutions it once threatened. Sadako, as the hair-obscured face of J-horror, spread across the world in an extensive image, figuratively infecting consumers, cultures, and markets as she came into contact with them, but as an intensive image, her image has ultimately been reinscribed under the nostalgic symbol of popular culture icon. The international popularity and acceptance of J-horror has no doubt helped in this gradual transformation of its cultural

¹⁶⁰ Foster (2009), 194.

standing. Like Godzilla, who was ceremoniously awarded a certificate of citizenship in 2015,¹⁶¹ the once terrifying Sadako has now been integrated as a Japanese national.

¹⁶¹ Chen, Heather (2015). "Godzilla Finally Gets Citizenship in Japan". *BBC News*. <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32987622>> [02/02/2018].

Chapter Four

The Transpacific Complicity of J-Horror and Hollywood

I. The Remake Economy: A Division of Labour

As has been argued, the concept of globalization is sometimes just a more egalitarian and palatable way of describing what are essentially the transforming methods employed by Hollywood (the film industry of the U.S.A.) to maintain hegemony over global markets and cultures. In J-horror's case, one might argue that "global success" only really became apparent once Hollywood became involved in remaking Japanese films, and yet, as we have seen, J-horror first flourished by inspiring producers, creators, and distributors in the East Asian sphere, and then began making waves in European film festivals and finding distribution outlets there – all before Hollywood took note. Once Hollywood did take note, a fascinating collaborative process began Japan and America began which marked a new phase of J-horror, and which, far from being a one-sided appropriation of Japanese culture, was predicated on a system of exchange and a cultural division of labour, what one could call a remake economy. I find that the more usual term "remake industry" places too much emphasis on Hollywood's role of repetition and production, whereas the word "economy" implies not only a mutually agreed upon system of exchange, but also the attachment of specific yet arbitrary value to the units of exchange. In the case at hand, these units are not just films, but also aesthetics, images, and even national identities, as I will show.

Hollywood and East Asian genre cinema have a shared history of being inspired by each other (or purloining from each other), such as in the back and forth borrowing between Hong Kong and Hollywood action films, as well as Kurosawa Akira's samurai *jidaigeki* films and American Westerns (not to mention George Lucas's translation of Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress* [*Kakushi Toride no San Akunin*, 1958] into the international sci-fi hit *Star Wars* [1977]). However, as copyright laws became stronger and international cinema more available to the public, these kinds of unofficial cultural exchanges became less

easy. In this context we can retell J-horror's global story as beginning with Roy Lee, an American film producer born to South Korean parents, who developed a method that would redefine Hollywood's role in East Asian cinema. Lee would travel to East Asia to approach filmmakers who had had a hit in their own countries, convince them that their film would never do well in the international market (due to the fact that audiences don't like reading subtitles, etc.), but that they could make more money by selling him the rights to their film instead. His first hit using this tactic was the Hollywood remake *The Ring* in 2002, which ensured the continuation of the method in the following years. On the Japanese side, the producer Ichise Takashige, who had invested heavily in the J-horror boom by financing much of its domestic output since the original *Ring's* success in 1998, saw the opportunities of not only selling story rights but also becoming involved in the production of Hollywood remakes, and so began producing projects in Japan with the aim of eventually producing their more profitable remakes in America, too.¹⁶² One could even delineate the timeframe of J-horror according to the major dates in the history of Ichise's production company, Oz: launched in 1989; enjoyed great success in the late 1990s and early 2000s; and bankrupt in 2012. In 2006, though, Ichise made a three-year deal with the Hollywood studio 20th Century Fox, allowing Ichise to offer American financing for domestic Japanese film projects.¹⁶³

While the actual number of Hollywood remakes of horror films from East Asia since then is relatively low (what qualifies as a remake is sometimes arguable, but at an estimate there are around 15 such films), what is significant is the nature of this new model for transnational productions, which also impacted the production of domestic film industries. In general, for every film that is realized, there are countless negotiations and collaborations towards projects that never make it to the big screen: it is the development of this process of production that is our focus here. Effectively, through producers like Lee and

¹⁶² Schilling, Mark (2004). "Takashige Ichise Interview". *Mark Schilling's Tokyo Ramen*. <<http://japanesemovies.homestead.com/ichiseinterivew.html>> [04/08/2018].

¹⁶³ La Porte, Nicole and Gabriel Snyder (2006). "Fox holding 'Grudge' guy to new deal". *Variety*. <<http://variety.com/2006/film/features/fox-holding-grudge-guy-to-new-deal-1200505999/>> [02/02/2018].

Ichise, Hollywood was now putting a new financial pressure on Japanese filmmakers: if they could provide fresh and original films, they could make a lot of money through selling the rights to Hollywood, or even better, through a Hollywood coproduction. Ironically, when Hollywood did make use of the story rights it had bought, it would engage in “cultural transposition” to try and make the films more accessible, while utilizing the label of “J-Horror remake” as a selling point. The remake economy thus demanded firstly Japanese creativity and national specificity, and secondly Hollywood homogenization for a domestic American audience and an international audience, figured as one and the same.

As other commentators have noticed, the audience for Hollywood films had already been primed for atmospheric, supernatural horror. While the output of horror films at this time were mostly low quality, violent slasher films, the rare horror hits which gained both commercial and critical acclaim among Western audiences had a slower pace and a focus on ghosts or other invisible menaces, as seen in independent film *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), Hollywood’s *The Sixth Sense* (1999), and the English-language Spanish film *The Others* (2001).¹⁶⁴ The cultural climate of globally successful horror cinema was thus well-prepared for what Hollywood’s producers might otherwise have branded “unsellable” Asian films due to their cultural specificity. Even so, this specificity, beginning with the language but extending to narrative, cinematography, casting, etc, all had to be reconfigured so as to appear less “Asian” or less “Japanese” and more “universal”. This method is evidenced by the resulting films and how they compare to their Asian counterparts, which has been a point of interest in both fan discourse and academic research on J-Horror.¹⁶⁵ Thus the conceptual framework of the remake economy has the effect of regionalizing images and styles of filmmaking into two categories, “the West and the rest”, thereby contributing to the conflation of Asia and Japan in filmic

¹⁶⁴ Rose, Steve (2002). “Nightmare Scenario”. *The Guardian*.
<<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/sep/20/artsfeatures.dvdreviews>
> [02/08/2018].

¹⁶⁵ E.g. Lee, Vivian P. Y. (2011). “J-Horror and Kimchi Western: Mobile Genres in East Asian Cinemas”. *East Asian Cinemas: Regional Flows and Global Transformations*. Ed. Vivian P. Y. Lee. London: Palgrave MacMillan. 118-144; Balmain (2008).

discourse as discussed in Chapter Two. This dichotomy goes some way in explaining why, despite the relevance of the atmospheric horror made popular by the non-Asian contemporary supernatural hits listed above, that context was elided in most discourses (marketing and critical) surrounding the remakes of Japanese and later other Asian horror films.

While much has been written about the aesthetic and cultural impacts of the remake economy, little to nothing has been said of the framing of Hollywood as culturally universalistic and Japan as culturally specific sites of production, nor of the regional divisions of labour between Japanese and American producers that took place. To better understand these points, we can turn to Sakai's idea of transpacific complicity, summarized in Chapter One, as an organizing framework. This framework traces back the formation of the contemporary power dynamic between the United States and Japan to the immediate postwar period. At this time, following the wartime form of Japanese imperialist ideology, the rewriting of that hierarchically multiculturalist, "Pan-Asia" narrative became an imperative for two groups: the USA, who needed Japan to function as a secure, self-sufficient satellite for the approaching Cold War, and Japanese nationalists who wanted to emphasise the authority of the Emperor, the uniqueness of the Japanese people, and, ironically, the oppressive colonialist attitudes of America in Japan. As such, knowledge "was produced and reproduced to replace the integrationist logic of a multiethnic nationality by the exclusionary logic of ethnic singularity".¹⁶⁶ This led to an "international division of labour" being instituted, in which the USA would continue "to legitimate its polity in terms of universalism", while Japan would give up this role in order to be a "particularistic counterpart" to the USA.¹⁶⁷ This binary relation positions Japanese culturalism (whether in the form of domestic nationalism, Orientalist discourse, assumptions of a clearly bounded "national cinema", and so on) as a supporting pillar of American hegemony in East Asia. Even anti-American nationalist sentiment in Japan argues for things such as cultural or militaristic "independence" from America, an aim which only furthers the particular-

¹⁶⁶ Sakai (2010 b), 247.

¹⁶⁷ Sakai (2010 b), 252-253.

universal discourse of power and does nothing to challenge American hegemony in East Asia.¹⁶⁸

Under a simplistic postcolonial framework, the remake economy might be seen as an American exploitation of Japanese culture and creativity, which in some cases utilizes Orientalist prejudices and images of the country whose films it is profiting from. Roy Miller's concept of "self-Orientalism" goes some way in problematizing this framework,¹⁶⁹ and might seem an ideal term to describe the Japanese producers and filmmakers who take part in these processes. However, reinscribing Japanese as simultaneously Orientalised and self-Orientalizing only superficially challenges the problematic oppressor-oppressed binary, and retains its basic structure. On the other hand, when the relationship is viewed using the lens of transpacific complicity, one can see that the encouragement of Japanese creativity by Japanese and American producers is itself part of a wider, entrenched dynamic that values both nationalistic symbols of Japan and their status as currency within a universalist American hegemony.

For example, when the director Higuchinsky (the notably non-Japanese-sounding alias for Higuchi Akihiro) made the surreal J-Horror *Uzumaki* (2000), he reportedly said, "I wanted to make a film like *Star Wars*, but I realised that because I'm Japanese, I should do something different."¹⁷⁰ His "realization" that Japanese horror films should be "different" as opposed to America's "sameness" must be understood in the context of transpacific complicity, especially given that *Uzumaki* was financially supported by Omega Project, a Japanese company focused on producing J-horror films for an international market.¹⁷¹ Films like *Uzumaki*, based on the Ito Junji manga about a Japanese village cursed by recurring images of spirals, would then fuel the "weird Japan" stereotypes in marketing and critical writing as discussed in Chapter Two, which figured J-horror not only as an exotic other to Hollywood, but also Japan as the creative

¹⁶⁸ Tanaka (2017). Contrast this with the anti-American sentiment in Okinawa, which also targets the Japanese government for their complicity in maintaining the bases.

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in Iwabuchi, Koichi (1994). "Complicit Exoticism: Japan and its other". *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture*. Ed. Tom O'Regan. Vol. 8, No. 2. 209.

¹⁷⁰ Kalat (2007), 87.

¹⁷¹ Kalat (2007), 91.

source of that difference. As well as Higuchinsky, various Japanese filmmakers have mentioned the new incentive towards originality after the success of Gore Verbinski's *The Ring* (2002).¹⁷² While Shimizu Takashi and Nakata Hideo were hired to direct Hollywood remakes of their own J-horror originals, in a domestic context there have not been opportunities for Japanese horror directors like Higuchinsky to make their "films like *Star Wars*". When asked in an interview if he would like to make large-scale, action-oriented films in the style of Hollywood, J-horror auteur Kurosawa Kiyoshi responded, "Honestly, I would love to one day", but claimed he was simply unable to do so for lack of money.¹⁷³

Academic responses to the globalization of Japanese popular culture tend to emphasise the rise of regional cultures to the level of global culture, which is indeed an important effect of globalization. For example, Wada-Marciano frames the remake economy as a reversal of cultural flows (from Japan to America rather than from America to Japan), thereby figuring the remake economy as part of a process of the decentralization of power from the centre of Hollywood to the periphery region of Japan.¹⁷⁴ While this is true, the image it creates obscures the primarily political power relation between America and Japan – transpacific complicity – which contains and in many ways dictates the new flows that emerged in the remake economy. In fact, these new flows, and what Wada-Marciano calls evidence of a "new geography" in film production and distribution,¹⁷⁵ fall neatly into what Sakai describes as an "old cartographic imaginary" of flows of knowledge between a centralized "West" and its peripheral areas.¹⁷⁶ He claims this old cartographic imaginary consists of two complementary flows:

The first is a centripetal flow of "raw" and particularistic factual data from peripheral sites to various metropolitan centers "in the West." The second is a centrifugal flow of "advanced" information about how to classify

¹⁷² Zahlten (2005).

¹⁷³ Kirkham, Andrew P. (2016). *Light in a Dark Corner: interview with Director Kiyoshi KUROSAWA* [film]. Eureka Entertainment.

¹⁷⁴ Wada-Marciano (2009), 32.

¹⁷⁵ Wada-Marciano (2009), 32.

¹⁷⁶ Sakai (2010 a), 28.

domains of knowledge, how to evaluate given empirical data, how to negotiate with the variety and incommensurability inherent in the body of empirical data from the peripheries, and how to render intelligible to “a Western audience” the peculiarities and trivia coming from particular peripheral sites.¹⁷⁷

While Sakai is referring to academic knowledge in this case, his model is quite suitable for understanding the J-horror remake economy. Wada-Marciano and similar-minded academics are correct in pointing out the increase in centripetal flows and new possibilities that entails, but this greater emphasis on Japanese productivity and creativity conforms to a hegemonic structure that dictates what role periphery regions play (providing cultural “peculiarities”) and what role the centre region plays (translating or “rendering intelligible” those peculiarities into a “universal” Western format). Whether the critic sees Hollywood as exploiting Japanese cinema or sees a reversal of power and influence in which Hollywood reacts to Japanese productions, in both cases the critic fails to point out how the flows of particularized Japanese films and their American translations are part of a wide network of power that is of political origin. Similarly, while critics have taken note of the ways in which remakes of J-horror films reveal differences in cultural expectations,¹⁷⁸ most fail to point out how these remakes work within a framework of, and contribute to the global cultural image of, a peripheral-particular Japan interacting with a central-universal America.

II. Productive Texts: Creative Japan and Comfortable America

One possible counterargument would be to highlight that the American studio involved with *The Grudge*, the most successful remake alongside *The Ring*, was Columbia Pictures, a subsidiary of the Japanese conglomerate corporation Sony. The argument would be that Sony’s position puts Japan at “the centre” of the Hollywood filmmaking apparatus after all, or at least offers an instance of the

¹⁷⁷ Sakai (2010 a), 27-28.

¹⁷⁸ E.g. Lee (2011); Balmain (2008).

remake economy working against the dominant structures of regional hegemony. However, in the context of filmmaking, Sony's relationship to the Hollywood *Grudge* series of remakes is more of an ironic coincidence rather than an example of Japanese corporate influence in the sphere of American industry. To understand why, we must understand Sony's history with Hollywood: in 1989, during the short-lived period of Japan's economic asset bubble, Sony bought Columbia Pictures, one of the major film studios of Hollywood. This move was indeed of great significance in the early days of corporate globalization, and it remains an example of the way in which globalization de-territorialized the traditional flows of power. Tezuka Yoshiharu writes that it not only "heralded the globalization of Japanese film finance" but also "marked the beginning of the conglomeration of media corporations and the era of a global culture industry".¹⁷⁹ However, the economic asset bubble collapsed in early 1992, coincidentally (or not, as some have argued)¹⁸⁰ around the start of the J-horror movement in Japan. This marked the end of the time in which Japanese companies sought to buy up powerful American assets such as film studios, and so Sony's position of ownership is not reflective of the changes that took place during the remake economy of the 2000s.

Furthermore, Sony has no involvement in the production side of Columbia Pictures or its other American studio, Sony Pictures. The main players in the production of *The Grudge* were figures like Roy Lee, Ichise Takashige, and Sam Raimi of the newly formed independent American studio Ghost House Pictures. Sam Raimi's brand image, heavily tied to the film's marketing, in a sense prefigured the status-shift of *The Grudge* and J-horror films in general: originally famous for directing *The Evil Dead* (1981), an icon of low-budget, creative independent horror cinema, Raimi had recently directed the Hollywood blockbuster *Spider-Man* (2002), helping to reignite popular interest in high-budget superhero spectacles and introducing his name to a younger audience. When *The Grudge* transitioned from Japanese film to American film it followed this trajectory, and so was able to appeal to both cult and mainstream audiences.

¹⁷⁹ Tezuka, Yoshiharu (2012). *Japanese Cinema Goes Global: Filmworkers' Journeys*. Hong Kong University Press. 3-4.

¹⁸⁰ E.g. Wada-Marciano (2009), 16.

Without going into the film's content, we can see how both the division of labour in the film's production and the final product sold to audiences therefore functioned under the same image: Japanese creative material in the service of Hollywood's global role as entertainer. The success of the film only further propagated the necessity of these roles amongst audiences and filmmakers, in which Japan provided originality and Japan-specificity, and Hollywood provided familiarity, spectacle, and a global platform.

The paradox of the remake economy is that it pressures Japanese filmmakers to produce original or "different" content, while at the same time pressuring Hollywood filmmakers to translate that original content into a familiar, homogenized framework. This can be understood as an effect of the framework of transpacific complicity that exists between Japan and America, and more generally as the "West and the rest" dichotomy that influences the globalization of regional cultures. While some commentators have framed the increasing use of the "Japan-specific" image within global popular culture as evidence of a pushback or Orientalist/nationalist reaction to the forces of globalization, Kinoshita suggests that rather than evidence of friction within a global-local dichotomy, the Japan-specificity of the J-horror discourse shows that "globalization is constitutive of local culture".¹⁸¹ When we examine the financial logic of the remake economy, we can see material and ideological examples of how this constitution takes place. What is important is to take into account not only the constitutive power of globalization on both Japanese and international popular culture, but also to note how it also reinforces and re-creates an older regional distinction between the West as centre and Japan as periphery. In this specific context, we can also say that globalization is not opposed to but constitutive of culturalist ideologies like Orientalism and Japanese nationalism.

The transpacific complicity of the remake economy has not only been a determining factor in the production and distribution of J-horror in Japan and abroad, but also in retrospectively manufacturing the status of Japanese horror auteurs. Tsuruta Norio's filmmaking trajectory is revealing in this respect: he first directed the influential *Honto ni Atta Kowai Hanashi* (1991, 1992) on a tiny budget from Japan Home Video for a domestic audience, then struggled to find

¹⁸¹ Kinoshita (2009), 122.

work; he was later considered as a potential director for *Ring* (*Ringu*, 1998) but was passed over due to his lack of filmmaking experience;¹⁸² during the J-horror boom he was asked by *Ring* scriptwriter Takahashi Hiroshi to direct *Ring 0: Birthday* (*Ringu Zero: Bāsudei*, 2000);¹⁸³ and then by producer Ichise Takashige to direct the “original story” of *Premonition* (*Yogen*, 2004) which was remade as a thriller in Hollywood;¹⁸⁴ and finally asked by American producer and director Mick Garris to direct a television film as part of his *Masters of Horror* series, which resulted in *Dream Cruise* (2007).¹⁸⁵ His career and auteur status have thus bloomed in tandem with the global success of J-Horror, rather than due to the creative content of his films, which have consistently garnered mild critical approval at best.

Let us re-summarize: when J-horror was in its formative stage in the 1990s Tsuruta was respected by the directors and filmmakers he had inspired, but failed to find work due to his “inexperience”. When J-horror boomed at the turn of the millennium, he was invited onto projects and discursively reinstated as a horror auteur by the Japanese filmmakers and producers who recognised his role in their successes. Finally, during the remake economy of the 2000s, he was marketed as a “master of horror” internationally, both as part of Ichise’s “J-Horror Theatre” series of films (2004 – 2010) and as part of Garris’s *Masters of Horror* television film series (2005 – 2007). In other words, the transformations in the cultural image of Tsuruta as Japanese auteur have been effected in the first place by changes in market and industry practices in Japan and America, which in turn are expressions of the power relation of transpacific complicity.

From this perspective, Garris’s *Masters of Horror* series is also interesting in two other ways: how it presents Japanese auteurs alongside their American counterparts, and how those auteurs have followed Shimizu’s *The Grudge* in adapting their styles to make J-horror films with an American audience in mind. The second case will be examined closely in the next section. As for the first case,

¹⁸² Zahlten (2005).

¹⁸³ Zahlten (2005).

¹⁸⁴ Zahlten (2005).

¹⁸⁵ Kehr, Dave (2006). “Horror Film Made for Showtime Will Not Be Shown”. *The New York Times*.

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/19/arts/television/horror-film-made-for-showtime-will-not-be-shown.html>> [02/08/2018].

Japanese auteur Miike Takashi was invited to direct the final film of the first season of *Masters of Horror*, and Tsuruta was invited to direct the final film of the second and final season. With the exception of Hungarian Peter Medak and Italian Dario Argento, all of the other directors were American. In addition, unlike the Japanese films, the others were shot and set in America, obscuring Medak and Argento's signs of foreignness. However, by including one representative of Japan per season, the use of regional context as a structuring device becomes apparent. Either the "masters" are chosen based on the quality of their work regardless of region and the Japanese directors just happen to have been awarded parallel positions in the programming, or an unusual kind of regional imaginary is being used to determine the show's content. The former seems unlikely given the clear image of a "Westerners-plus-one-Japanese" lineup for each season, as well as the specific placement of each Japanese film as the final film of each season. What this format suggests then is indeed a new regional imaginary ostensibly based on horror auteurship, with the new auteurs of J-horror being invited into the ranks of American horror auteurs, much as the remake economy was figured as an integration of specific J-horror aesthetics and filmmakers into general American cinema – with the condition in both cases that Japaneseness is marked and differentiated from the whole.

Positioning the Japanese films at the end of each season has the advantage of multiple connotations: the "grand finale" that provides an affective climax overshadowing the earlier films; but also the addendum or appendix, existing outside of the main content as "bonus material" or an afterthought. While the former connotation furthers a cultural narrative that exalts the superior qualities of J-horror and Japanese genius, the latter connotation keeps it at a wary distance by positioning it as an "outside" of the American television series – but both connotations construct a regional imaginary in which Japanese horror is fundamentally different from general American content, and in which the Japaneseness of the work is emphasized by its repeated placement in the programming schedule. The Americanness of the other works, however, remains unmarked and therefore universal, in contrast to the national specificity assigned to Miike's and Tsuruta's films. Dario Argento and Peter Medak's entries are haphazardly mixed in with the others, showing their equal status as "one of

the boys". Alternative programming schedules could have placed the Japanese films haphazardly among the American ones, or invited auteurs from a larger variety of countries to participate, and so on, so why this particular configuration of Westerners-plus-one-Japanese? As a cultural text, the programming schedule of *Masters of Horror* clearly demonstrates the hegemonic status of the "old cartographic imaginary" in the way it organizes the representation of J-horror as a marked national-cultural region attached to an unmarked American universalizable region.

III. The Shimizu Formula: Transpacific Complicity Embodied in Filmic Content (*Dream Cruise*, *Blonde Kaidan*, and *Shutter*)

In fact, the *Masters of Horror* programming schedule was never fully actualized as a televised viewing experience, as the Miike film ultimately wasn't aired due to its violent content (it was, however, available to viewers who purchased the DVD).¹⁸⁶ Regarding that content, I will only mention here how it followed the formula of Shimizu's remake *The Grudge* in having a white American protagonist facing terrors in a Japanese context – specifically an American journalist searching for a Japanese prostitute during the 1800s (it departs from J-horror conventions, as Miike normally does, by eschewing contemporary urbanity and including scenes of violence). Tsuruta's film, *Dream Cruise* (2007) also followed the formula of a white American protagonist in Japan, presumably on the assumption that audiences will better relate to characters that look, act, and speak like them, and that its main audience would indeed be white Americans. However, this thematic formula also clearly derives from the image of universality associated with American protagonists established by Hollywood's global hegemony. We must therefore consider how it came about and what functions it serves within filmic narratives and as an image being reproduced in global popular culture.

As we have seen, the success of J-horror had led to a new combination of Western audiences becoming fascinated with Eastern horror, and this fascination was aligned with Orientalist discourses in order to market DVDs and

¹⁸⁶ Kehr (2006).

so on. However, this new cultural image of Westerners coming into contact with a mysterious and terrifying East would in fact be taken up by J-horror filmmakers themselves. In a strange twist, the audience-spectacle, consumer-producer, Westerner-Asian binaries that had been conflated to sell J-horror now became filmic content themselves. The first and most successful iteration of this image came in Shimizu Takashi's Hollywood remake of his own J-horror original, *The Grudge*. His positioning of Western protagonists coming into contact with a haunted Japan was a winning formula, and another example of how the aesthetics of J-horror embodied the material processes of their reproduction, as discussed in Chapter 2. Indeed, the new aesthetic formula of developing the affect of alienation and isolation through the depiction of being a white American in an incomprehensible Japan went beyond the horror genre, as in this context *The Grudge* can be considered Hollywood's low-brow horror version of its high-brow drama *Lost in Translation* (2003), which had been released a year earlier to critical acclaim. Director Sofia Coppola has described her film as a portrait of two characters "going through a similar personal crisis, exacerbated by being in a foreign place".¹⁸⁷ While the use of an East Asian metropolis to exacerbate white American characters' alienation had arguably become a trope since the Techno-Orientalism of *Bladerunner* (1982),¹⁸⁸ the focus on modern "Japaneseness" in particular as the source of disorienting Otherness for white Americans had probably never been so central and so aestheticised in a Hollywood film as it was in *Lost in Translation* and *The Grudge*, and to a lesser extent in later remakes that imitated Shimizu's specific appropriation of "culture shock" as a tool in the horror genre.

As much has been said about *The Grudge* already, I will focus instead on the less well-known *Dream Cruise* to highlight the use and impact of the Shimizu formula. Like *The Grudge* and Shimizu's Hollywood follow-up *The Grudge 2* (2006), the transnational production and distribution of *Dream Cruise* also disrupted normative notions of national cinema as well as global flows. These kind of films were described in the Japanese press as "Hollywood production[s]"

¹⁸⁷ Quoted in Tezuka (2012), 127.

¹⁸⁸ "Techno-Orientalism" was originally coined and discussed in relation to Japan in: Morley, David and Kevin Robins (1995). *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes, and Cultural Boundaries*. London: Routledge. 147-173.

made in Japan by Japanese filmmakers”¹⁸⁹ and were all released first in the U.S.A. and then some months later in Japan. In fact, most Hollywood remakes of J-horror films transposed their settings to an American context like *The Ring*, and only a small but significant subset of films produced under the remake economy replicated the Shimizu formula of changing protagonists into Americans while retaining a Japanese setting. *Dream Cruise* is notable for being an entirely original film (though based on a short story) produced under these remake economy-induced narrative conditions, i.e. a “new” J-horror film made in the first place for an American audience.

From its opening shot of the busy Shibuya pedestrian crossing that has come to visually signify to viewers, “we are in Japan”, *Dream Cruise* has much in common with *The Grudge*, which indulges in Orientalist and xenophobic stereotypes through its positioning of American sympathetic subjects navigating an alien and hostile world of Japanese objects.¹⁹⁰ However, the content of *Dream Cruise* varies in that it contains hints that Tsuruta was aiming to express, in some scenes, a space of “Japanese subjectivity”, perhaps with the film’s secondary Japanese audience in mind. The film, an adaptation of a story by *Ring* author Koji Suzuki, depicts the tensions of a love triangle between the three passengers on a boat at sea: wealthy Japanese businessman Eiji; his unsatisfied wife Yuri; and the hero Jack, an employee of the company of which Eiji is a client and also Yuri’s lover. As it begins to become clear that Eiji is aware of the affair, he makes several references to “Japan” and “America”, telling Jack: “A Japanese lover would improve your Japanese”; “Just being an American in Tokyo means there are plenty of girls whose eyes will land on you”; and “In the old days in Japan, people who committed infidelity were sliced into four parts”. Eiji rhetorically aligns himself with the image of an old and vengeful Japan in contrast with Jack and the image of an American foreigner both lustful for and desired by Japanese women. This depiction is notable in that this common stereotype and anxiety towards foreign white men in Japan is rarely depicted in films,¹⁹¹ but also in that, by allowing Eiji to express his jealousy and anger, a subjective, relatable space

¹⁸⁹ Tezuka (2012), 116.

¹⁹⁰ E.g. Rucka (2006); McRoy (2008), 100-102.

¹⁹¹ Kelsky, Karen (2001). *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams*. Duke University Press. 198.

coded as “Japanese” is opened within the film’s narrative. Unlike the unsubtitled anger of a Japanese taxi driver who complains about Jack the “*gaijin*” (foreigner), Eiji’s anger against Jack can be read and understood by the primary American audience as well as the secondary Japanese one, indeed viewers may feel sympathy for the cuckolded husband, despite the more numerous narrative devices which position Eiji as a villain and Jack as a hero. For example, the film opens by presenting Jack as a thoughtful young man getting by in a foreign country and struggling to overcome the trauma of having lost his brother in a boating accident at a young age (he has been scared of the ocean ever since). When it comes to adultery, we only ever see Jack looking regretful and troubled, or chastely pledging his love to Yuri and asking that she leave Eiji. Yuri herself is presented as having married Eiji for money and status, but claims that Jack has shown her the error of her ways and that she wants to be with him, if only she could get away from the possessive and dangerous Eiji. The typical love triangle plot of dramas interestingly recreates the “white saviour” narrative of popular culture in which ethnicised women are saved from the patriarchal men of their culture by a white foreign male,¹⁹² as well as the gendered power dynamic Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes as a traditional facet of the love triangle plot in which a female object is competed over by two male subjects, a villain and hero¹⁹³ – only in this case, the villain space of subjectivity is figured as “Japanese” and the hero space of subjectivity as “American”.

The plot is too long and convoluted to fully detail here, but I will mention some key elements that show how the addition of “Japanese subjectivity” to this J-horror Hollywood film is quickly and overwhelmingly diminished as the film unfolds. The ghost of Eiji’s ex-wife, Naomi, appears on the scene with the intention of killing Eiji and Yuri. Eiji dies and his ghost returns with the intention of killing Jack. The ghost of Jack’s brother Sean joins the fray to protect his older brother. Despite the tangled web of who-wants-to-kill-who, it is quite easy for viewers to register that the malicious and vengeful ghosts are Japanese, whereas

¹⁹² For a detailed discussion of the white savior trope see: Hughey, Matthew W. (2014). *The White Savior Film: Content, Critics, and Consumption*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

¹⁹³ Sedgwick, Eve K. (1985). *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press. 21-27.

the good ghost (Sean) is American. At one point even Yuri seems to become possessed and attack her lover Jack, who nearly kills her in self-defense before his brother's ghost stops him, and he realizes Yuri is on his side. (This is similar to the way in which his brother's ghost seems threatening in Jack's dreams at the start of the film, but assumes his status as protector once the boat journey begins.) Therefore, all of the Japanese characters are portrayed as threatening ghosts at different points during the boat journey, whereas the American characters, Jack and Sean, are positioned as good throughout this journey. When the film ends, Jack and Yuri are seen happily together on a different boat, with Jack having overcome both his guilt over his brother's death and his fear of the ocean, while Yuri is pregnant. Jack says, "If it's a boy, we'll know what to call him", to which Yuri replies, "Yeah, his name works for me". This ending reframes the entire film as a dramatic adventure in Japan which allows an American man to overcome his personal trauma, a process which includes acquiring a Japanese wife who may provide him with a son to be named after his dead brother, Sean, as part of his healing. The very thought that Yuri might want to name her half-Japanese son something like Kosuke or Taro is laughable in this context. The film's narrative thus works to eventually convert all aspects of Japanese subjectivity into objects within the heroic subjectivity of the white American male hero.

Despite the figuring of Eiji's subjective space at the start of the film, the overall narrative of *Dream Cruise* demonstrates a power dynamic in which Japan is figured as the object of an American subjectivity, which maps neatly onto the image of Japan as culturally-coded particularistic elements interacting with a generalized America presumed to be a source of empathy for international audiences. Of course, films like *Dream Cruise* which follow the Shimizu formula reconstitute an Orientalist framework of Japan as the other, simultaneously an object of desire and fear to be contrasted with a Western subjectivity. This Orientalism, however, also operates as a function of transpacific complicity, replicating the flow of specific cultural data towards a universal Western audience that can make sense of these foreign peripheral objects – just as Sakai describes the flow of academic information above.

This relation is even more obvious when we consider its inverse: the filmic construction of a Japanese subjectivity coming into contact with an objectified Western context, as seen in the parodic *Blonde Kaidan* (*Kinpatsu Kaidan*, 2004), impressively (perhaps tellingly) also directed by Shimizu Takashi. In fact, Shimizu directed this short vignette for one of Ichise's domestic anthology productions, *Dark Tales From Japan* (*Sekai saikyō J horā SP: Nihon no kowai yoru*, 2004), released in Japan one month before Shimizu's *The Grudge* was released in the United States. In *Blonde Kaidan*, a Japanese assistant director has been sent to Hollywood to assist with a Japanese production being made there. Despite being in awe of his surroundings, he complains to his taxi driver that Hollywood "has gone downhill. It's all Japanese horror movies now." This is a prime example (and one of the only examples) of the "reversal of global flows" understanding of J-horror, as espoused by Wada-Marciano and others, being manifested within the filmic content itself. The amusing situation is amplified by the fact that the character is speaking Japanese to an American taxi driver who presumably can't understand a word he is saying, the assertion of Japanese dominance within Hollywood literally falling on deaf ears. At the same time, an audience savvy to genre conventions will realise that our assistant director will soon fall victim to his hubris. His denigration of Hollywood is seamlessly followed by his exclamations of approval for the blonde women he sees in the street, saying they're "not like the girls in Tokyo" who dye their hair blonde, but rather "the real thing". In a humorous reversal of regional power dynamics, the assistant director longingly cries out, "*Neitibu! Neitibu!*" ("Natives! Natives!"), as he watches the blonde women walk by. Although the word "native" in Japanese is short for "native English speaker" and lacks the ethnographic connotations it has in English, in this context it is clearly used to interpellate white women as authentic, blonde objects in relation to a desiring Japanese subject. Through embodying a certain fetishistic attitude towards white Westerners that exists in Japan, this moment is a partial reversal of both the gendered and ethnicised power dynamics present in *Dream Cruise* (in which Japanese women are threatening or desirable objects for a white male subject), as well as a total reversal of the anthropologist's gaze that Shimizu turns on Japanese culture in *The Grudge*. That film begins with a scene of Sarah Michelle Gellar's character

Karen and her boyfriend peering over a wall and into a cemetery while a small ceremony is being held at a grave, in which the camera stays firmly on her side of the wall and voyeuristically frames the mourning Japanese family as Karen explains, to her boyfriend and the audience, that “they do it so their dead can rest”, exoticising mundane rituals and setting an ominous tone at the same time. Just as Japanese ghosts soon haunt their objectifying observers that watch from the “outside” of Japanese culture in *The Grudge*, so too does the ghost of a blonde white woman terrorise the objectifying Japanese assistant director, who is in Hollywood but not of it, in *Blonde Kaidan*. In his short film for a domestic Japanese audience, Shimizu expertly mocks the same fetishistic conventions and industrial changes that he espouses in his feature length film for American/universal audiences.

Blonde Kaidan is less a horror film than a self-reflexive joke, amusing rather than scary, and an enlightening contrast to transpacific power dynamics under the remake economy. Subversions of these dynamics have also, to a much lesser degree, become manifested in “serious” horror films under the remake economy, perhaps most notably in *Shutter* (2008). A notable transnational production, *Shutter* is the Hollywood remake of Thailand’s most successful horror film during the horror boom, but directed by J-horror auteur Ochiai Masayuki and filmed using the Shimizu formula, i.e. white American protagonists in a Japanese setting. In *Shutter*, an American woman and her fiancé are haunted by a female Japanese ghost who is eventually revealed to be a clingy ex-girlfriend of the American man. She kills off his American male friends one by one, and haunts the protagonists in ways reminiscent of *The Grudge*, for example by scaring the American woman on a train so that she screams and then is stared at by uncomprehending Japanese bystanders, her status as “foreigner” used to amplify her isolation and fear. Eventually the ghost appears to be subdued after her spirit is “put to rest”, and the American woman and her fiancé return to the safety of America, in keeping with the regionalization of Japan as a space of strangeness and danger and America as the audience’s normalcy and “home”. Rupturing this tranquility, the Japanese ghost appears again, disrupting the image of monstrous objects and suffering subjects as contained within their national boundaries of Japan and America respectively. In an even more radical

departure from the aesthetics of transpacific complicity, the Japanese ghost reveals to the American woman that the American men she had killed had gang-raped her, and that the fiancé had photographed the event in order to blackmail her. Horrified by this revelation, and realizing that the ghost has been trying to warn her rather than harm her, the American woman decides she cannot marry her fiancé anymore, and deliberately leaves him to be haunted by the vengeful ghost. Whether or not it is unintentional, the ending of the original Thai film is quite significantly altered due to the use of the Shimizu formula in the remake. The remake's twist creates a sympathetic bond not just between ghost and hero, but between the Japanese female ghost and the American female protagonist, with the role of villain being suddenly cast onto an American man. By adopting the typical narrative of the rape-revenge subgenre, the anthropologist's gaze of *Shutter* is overcome by unexpected international female solidarity, and rather than "a clingy Japanese girlfriend", the film's monster is revealed to be white and patriarchal in nature.

Shutter's ending reveals new possibilities for the remake economy, and creates the potential for further subversions of the Shimizu formula in which new international connections and subjectivities are explored without the necessity of Orientalism under the overarching structure of transpacific complicity. It is probably the only Hollywood film produced within the remake economy that has an element of active resistance to transpacific complicity. However, *Shutter* was made at the tail-end of the remake economy, and since then Hollywood has turned away from East Asia as a source of original scripts and horror auteurs. Of course, the passing of the remake economy does not entail the passing of embodiments of transpacific complicity in the sphere of genre films produced in both Japan and Hollywood. Japan's *Shin Godzilla* (*Shin Gojira*, 2016) is a perfect example of transpacific complicity becoming manifest in both production and filmic content. The film was very much designed and marketed as a nostalgic "return" to Japan's original *Godzilla* (*Gojira*, 1954) and as a rebuttal to recent Hollywood portrayals of the monster (*Godzilla*, 1998; *Godzilla* 2014).¹⁹⁴ The "return" to the Japanese past was marked by a similar plot

¹⁹⁴ Various critics and filmmakers related to the Godzilla franchise have expressed their disdain for the 1998 Hollywood *Godzilla*, but sometimes by

(rather than battling other *kaiju*, Godzilla simply emerges from the sea and walks into Tokyo, causing destruction by virtue of his size and power alone) and similar themes (contemporary political responses and the trauma of nuclear disaster – the images reminiscent of the atomic bombings of Japan replaced by images reminiscent of the Tōhoku and Fukushima disaster here). The film’s narrative portrayed a Self-Defence Force restrained by hesitant and bureaucratic politicians, and the threatened bombing of the creature (and by extension Japan) by the United States unless the Japanese government can work out a solution by itself within a given time frame. Ultimately, the Japanese government prevails, defeating the monster created by nuclear waste dumped into the sea, while at the same time standing up to the United States and reaffirming its sovereignty through ingenuity and strong coordination between the government and an efficiently militaristic Self-Defence Force. The specific brand of nationalism espoused by the film is therefore illustrative of exactly that which is complicit with the hegemony of the United States in the East Asia region, a nationalism which is paradoxically “an ideology of colonial dependency” in which the conceptual positioning of Japan “outside” of the West makes it all the more dependent on the foreign policies of the United States.¹⁹⁵ Even without the driving force of the remake economy, the relevance of transpacific complicity to popular culture remains undiminished.

III. New Translations: Video Games and the Remake Economy

The previous sections have shown how the remake economy affected both the production of images of Japan and America in global popular culture, and also the aesthetics of horror films following the Shimizu formula. Through exposing how the logic of transpacific complicity has influenced both the division of creative labour for filmmakers and the regionalization of affect in Shimizu

extension the concept of an “American Godzilla” in general. For example, director Kitamura Ryuhei said of his 2004 film *Godzilla Final Wars* (*Gojira: Fainaru Wōzu*), “I want to compete with America. I want to overwhelm the American Godzilla (which is a symbol of CG) with the Japanese technique of suitmation”. “GFW Update: Godzilla vs Zilla” (2004), *Monster Zero*, J. Figurski & T. Matsuda, trans. <<http://archive.li/vSovU>> [04/11/2018].

¹⁹⁵ Sakai (2010 b), 261.

formula films, I hope to have shown how political power plays an important role in the aesthetic concerns of J-horror. Before concluding this section and turning to the role of political power in Studio Ghibli films, I will discuss the influence of the remake economy on another subset of texts within the J-horror apparatus: video games. I have already mentioned manga and novels as cultural texts that comprise part of this cultural apparatus, especially as a source for film narratives such as in *Honto ni Atta Kowai Hanashi* and *Ring*. The role of video games is more as texts extending out from, rather than going into, the J-horror assemblage; however, as will become apparent, there are have been various modes of cooperation between the film and games industries that have impacted the cultural output of both.

It is an odd coincidence that one of the main auteurs of J-horror, Kurosawa Kiyoshi, is linked to the origins of what has been called “the golden age of horror games” that took place in the 1990s and early 2000s.¹⁹⁶ An early Kurosawa Kiyoshi-directed film about a television production crew investigating a haunted house, *Sweet Home* (*Suīto Hōmu*, 1989) was produced by celebrated filmmaker Itami Juzo, who allegedly held much creative control over the project as well.¹⁹⁷ In terms of genre the film was more of a horror-themed fantasy adventure and had next to nothing in common with the coming J-horror phenomenon, or its slow atmospheric aesthetic that Kurosawa would play a key role in developing. Itami produced a tie-in video game of the same name, for which Kurosawa had a supervisory role, directed and designed by Fujiwara Tokuro for the gaming company Capcom. The *Sweet Home* game was a great success in Japan, praised for its innovation, and, after an attempt to remake it was abandoned in 1993, in 1996 Fujiwara and director Mikami Shinji reimagined the game as *Resident Evil* (*Baiohazādo*). The commercial and critical success of *Resident Evil* established Capcom as a leading developer, and began a multimedia franchise of games, manga, and Hollywood films that continues to this day. The game established a new genre of Japanese video game dubbed “survival horror”

¹⁹⁶ Fahs, Travis (2009). “IGN Presents the History of Survival Horror”. *IGN*. <<http://www.ign.com/articles/2009/10/30/ign-presents-the-history-of-survival-horror?page=5>> [02/15/2018].

¹⁹⁷ Mes, Tom (2001). “Sweet Home”. *Midnight Eye*. <<http://www.midnighteye.com/reviews/sweet-home/>> [02/15/2018].

by marketing and fanbases, which boomed alongside the new J-horror films in the late 1990s. However, *Resident Evil* made several significant changes to the narrative of *Sweet Home*: instead of ghosts, the antagonists were zombies; and instead of a Japanese television crew, the heroes were a squad of American elite soldiers. Presumably in order to appeal to American audiences, the entire setting of the game had been transposed to “Raccoon City” in America, and this, as well as the focus on action, foreshadowed the efforts of “cultural translation” that would be a key component of the filmic remake economy. In 2000, two years before the Hollywood remake of *The Ring*, a Japanese video game company “translated” the hit film into a game set in the U.S.A., *The Ring: Terror’s Realm*, once again demonstrating how Japanese creators before 2002 felt the only way to market J-horror internationally was to rid it of its “Japaneseness”.

The lucrative Western audience imagined by game producers and distributors in Japan was the impetus for another game company, Konami, to assemble a team of inexperienced developers and give them the task of making a horror game “like a Hollywood movie”.¹⁹⁸ The creators took this task to heart, not only building a virtual American setting, cast of characters, but also filling their game, *Silent Hill* (*Sairento Hiru*, 1999), with allusions to figures in the Western horror canon. The town’s high school is named “Midwich High” after the British horror novel *The Midwich Cuckoos*, and the streets of the town are named after other Western horror novelists – these include Bloch Street and Matheson Street, referencing the writers of popular culture hits *Psycho* and *I Am Legend* respectively. Concept artist Sato Naoko described the difficulty of trying to build an American town that felt “authentic”.¹⁹⁹ The director Toyama Keichiro was inspired to build the narrative around a sinister religious cult, drawing on actual Christian texts and mythologies to create an air of authenticity. Various Western horror films, including *The Shining* (1980) and *Jacob’s Ladder* (1990), were cited by the creators as influences. *Silent Hill* is therefore another example of Japanese horror creators whose widely-consumed work relied on considerations of

¹⁹⁸ Kobayashi, Hitoshi and Tsutomu Akiyama (2004). *SIREN MANIACS: Sairen Koushiki Kanzen Kaiseki Hon.* Aya Tamura, ed. Tokyo: Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. 48-53.

¹⁹⁹ Kobayashi (2004), 108-113.

culture, specifically Western culture as universal culture, and which aimed to generate a horror affect by way of an “authentic” image of America.

Like *Resident Evil*, *Silent Hill* was an international success that created a new kind of gaming experience: a focus on atmosphere over combat, and a slow creeping build-up of fear over sudden shocks and scares. That this aesthetic change in the direction of video game horror occurred at the same time as the J-horror boom in cinema had just begun in the wake of *Ring* (*Ringu*, 1998) is unlikely to be coincidental. As has been discussed, the aesthetics of J-horror were characterized by exactly this turning from violence to atmospherics, under a feminized sign of vulnerability. Both the grainy textures of the game’s graphics and the dull, grey colour palette of the mist-filled town were examples of *Silent Hill*’s creators using technological limitations to create iconic imagery that had much more in common with the backdrops of J-horror films than those of contemporary Hollywood horror films. Having the protagonist as an “everyman” wandering around a normal-looking town, rather than elite soldiers investigating a gothic mansion as in *Resident Evil*, was another alignment with J-horror aesthetics that had a lasting impact on video games in general, which as a genre have historically tended to focus on empowering players by casting them as strong or heroic characters in fantastic or unusual settings.

In *Silent Hill*, J-horror influenced some of more practical considerations too, as Sato has said she designed the erratic movements of female nurses, some of the game’s most iconic enemies, based on the movements of Sadako in *Ring*.²⁰⁰ Therefore, while the game’s production and distribution branding as “American horror” has firmly excluded it from most discussions of the J-horror movement, it nonetheless borrowed from and continued the aesthetics of that movement, and in many ways impacted the video game industry in the same ways that J-horror films impacted the cinema industry. Ironically, the global success of *Silent Hill* seems to rely less on its success in reproducing “American horror” as its producers had intended, and more at creating a gaming experience that tapped into the new aesthetics of J-horror that were popular in Japan, but had yet to reach audiences beyond East Asia. In this sense, the game’s success can be said to

²⁰⁰ Kobayashi (2004), 108-113.

have prefigured the demand for Asian horror that would soon impact film and marketing industries.

In 2002, the globalization of J-horror took place not only through cinema and the success of *The Ring*, but also in video games: that year *Project Zero* (known as *Rei* in Japan and *Fatal Frame* in the U.S.A.) was released in Western territories several months before *The Ring*, and spawned a franchise including a novelization by critic Ōtsuka Eiji and a J-horror film (*Gekijōban Zero*, 2014). Inspired by the success of the *Silent Hill* franchise, game developers Makoto Shibata and Keisuke Kikuchi reduced combat elements even further, and openly based their work, including characters and setting, on J-horror and culturally Japanese precedents while attempting to appeal to a global market.²⁰¹ Creating supernatural, atmospheric horror by using signifiers of Japanese culture (including traditional architecture, dolls, Buddhist and Shinto iconography, and so on) was thus reaching a wide demographic of young Western gamers before films like *The Grudge* (2004) presented a fetishized “spooky Japan” as an object for consumption for imagined Western subjects.

The same year that *The Grudge* was released, another Japan-signifying atmospheric horror game, *Forbidden Siren* (*Sairen*, 2003), was released in Europe and the U.S.A., one year after its Japan release. This game was in fact created by Toyama and Sato, the creators of the original *Silent Hill* game, and their turn from making an “American” horror game to a “Japanese” one occurred in the same few years that the J-horror boom went global and the remake economy began. From this one can assume that Japanese game developers had changed their marketing strategy to suit the changes in the cinema industry: from trying to make a game appear as “American” as possible so that it would succeed in the international marketplace, they now were prepared to make a game appear fundamentally “Japanese” to succeed internationally. For Japanese producers with their eye on selling horror in international markets, in the space of a few years “Japaneseness” had gone from being an undesirable cultural marker to being a desirable one.

²⁰¹ “Interview with Makoto Shibata and Keiichiro Toyama (3/10/2016)” (2017). *FFTranslations*. <<http://fftranslations.atSPACE.co.uk/other/denfami.html>> [04/11/2018].

Let us consider, then, the ways in which Toyama and Sato, having previously built images of “America” and “Americanness” in *Silent Hill*, now turned to building images of “Japan” and “Japaneseness” in *Forbidden Siren*. Toyama is candid about the influence of J-horror on the new game:

When I was working on *Mariko* and started formulating ideas for *Siren* (around 2000/2001), the movie version of *Ring* and Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Cure* had achieved worldwide popularity... It was also around the time I read Fuyumi Ono's horror novel *Shiki*, which left a strong impression on me. I guess you could summarise the phenomenon as a "J-horror" boom. That's when I decided I wanted to try showing the world original Japanese horror.²⁰²

There were, in fact, many aesthetic and narrative continuities with *Silent Hill*. The plot still revolves around an isolated community and a religious cult, although this time in the form of a Japanese village named Hanuda, and the cult has a blend of Shinto, Buddhist, and Christian influences. The dull colours and grainy textures are still present, although in addition to grey there is a predominance of dark greens and reds in *Forbidden Siren* which evoke the Japanese countryside. Perhaps most strikingly, throughout *Silent Hill* the sound of an air raid siren heralds the town transforming into a visibly darker and more dangerous version of itself, and in *Forbidden Siren* once the sound of an air raid siren sounds at the start of the game, the village of Hanuda also enters a state of physical metamorphosis and danger for the player, with no respite as the siren continues to blare. The use of real folklore and religious texts to build a fictional world is much more apparent in *Forbidden Siren* than it was in *Silent Hill*, with the end result that *Forbidden Siren* arguably has more educational value as a game due to the amount of details realistically portraying aspects of Japanese culture (including, for example, recipes for noodle soup, characters remarking on the distinction between architecture of the 1970s and the 2000s, etc.). This attention to detail, however, is still a continuation from *Silent Hill* rather than an

²⁰² Kobayashi (2004), 48-53.

entirely new strategy for building a convincing sense of “culture” within the world of the game.

Also, just as *Silent Hill* had drawn on non-American influences to build its American image, *Forbidden Siren* drew on foreign influences as well, though often through the filter of the J-horror movement. For example, Toyama has claimed that a large inspiration for the game was the Japanese television drama *The Shadow of Innsmouth* (*Insumasu wo Ōu Kage*, 1992).²⁰³ This television drama was a Japan-set version of an American novella by H. P. Lovecraft, originally describing the investigation into a mysterious cult in an isolated town in Massachusetts. The screenplay for this drama was written by none other than Konaka Chiaki, who had also written the screenplays for the *Honto ni Atta Kowai Hanashi* videotapes released at the same time as the tv drama. Therefore one of the key source texts for the video game *Forbidden Siren* was a television adaptation of a classic piece of Western horror literature as rewritten by one of the first auteurs and founders of J-horror. This linking of texts reveals not only the connection between foreign and Japanese resources for horror coded as “Japanese”, but also the ways in which J-horror, almost always understood as a label for films, impacted many non-filmic media and creators in a variety of ways.

Forbidden Siren also has clear influences from distinctly non-Japanese source material. It employs a transmedia storytelling strategy by directing players towards the internet to access narrative content in the form of apparently “real” websites, a tactic which Toyama describes as derived from the marketing strategy of *The Blair Witch Project* (1999).²⁰⁴ Many of the game’s scenarios, in which the player is running through murky forests with nothing more than a flashlight, also seem to draw on that film’s aesthetic. In another example, the game’s sound designer, Azuma Erika, recounts how she looked abroad to construct the songs of the game:

For this game we wanted to make it ethnic-sounding [...] Starting with Japanese Buddhist hymns and folk songs, I also listened to Chinese songs

²⁰³ “Interview with Makoto Shibata and Keiichiro Toyama (3/10/2016)” (2017). *FFTranslations*. <<http://fftranslations.atspace.co.uk/other/denfami.html>> [04/11/2018].

²⁰⁴ Kobayashi (2004), 48-53.

and Gregorian hymns - basically, anything that would be called orthodox. I also looked into Arabian-style Khaliji, but since the game's theme was "Made in Japan" I wanted to keep it as close to Japan as possible. Eventually I was left with two choices - an orthodox choir style or an ethnic style - and it became what it is.²⁰⁵

All of the musical influences she lists aside from "Arabian-style Khaliji" are present in the final product of the game, suggesting that the sounds of traditional Arabic music were too foreign to be contained within the image of Japaneseness that the developers had in mind, but that Chinese songs and Gregorian hymns, and even Mongolian throat-singing, could be used as representative of an ethnic Japan. The logic of familiarity holds true: the low monotone of the game's Mongolian throat-singing is similar to Japanese Buddhist chanting, and both traditional Chinese music and Western music have impacted Japanese musical styles. However, Azuma's method of international cherry-picking as a means of constructing an image of Japan is striking, because, just as Sato borrowed Sadako's movement to animate American nurses in *Silent Hill*, it demonstrates how the image of national specificity, and even ethnicity, is built from the components of wider cultural assemblages that do not respect national boundaries.

Forbidden Siren did not perform well in the United States, and so the sequel *Siren 2* was released only in Japan and Europe in 2006. The game also had a film tie-in, a new J-horror named *Siren (Sairen, 2006)* released at the same time as the game to increase the impact of the inter-referential promotional material for both. The fact that the film was released to accompany the game, rather than the inverted case of Itami Juzo's *Sweet Home* film and game spin-off in 1989, can be used as evidence of how the relationship between the game and film industries had changed during the interim. Coincidentally, 2006 was also the year that the Hollywood remake of *Silent Hill* was released, although with no influence from the original developers bar the sound director for that game, Yamaoka Akira, who had the role of consultant and whose game music was used for the film's soundtrack. The film was notable for following the pacing and plot

²⁰⁵ Kobayashi (2004), 180-183.

development typical of survival horror video games, and can be seen as further evidence of the effect of the video game industry on cinematic products. Due to its “American” images and characterization, the film, like the game, is usually seen as unrelated to the J-horror movement.

The third game in the *Siren* series, however, aimed at breaking into the American market by following the path of the remake economy, which is to say, by employing the Shimizu formula. Like many Japanese titles, *Siren: New Translation* (*Sairen: Nyū Toransurēshon*, 2008) was ironically newly translated into something that sounded scarier for its American release: *Siren: Blood Curse*. While this change wasn’t unusual, it did somewhat obscure what the game’s developers had made explicit: that the game was not only a remake, but also a translation from one culture to another. Up until then, Japanese game developers had interacted with the J-horror boom by producing Japan-signifying content that could be sold under the J-horror brand, including game versions of *Juon: The Grudge* (*Kyōfu Taikan: Ju-On*, 2009). Even American games that were not in keeping with J-horror atmospherics, like the military first-person shooter game *F.E.A.R.* (2005), made use of J-horror tropes such as a Sadako-like like antagonist that cannot be killed with bullets, thereby forcing the player to switch from aggressor to evader, evoking the vulnerability associated with J-horror to generate new kinds of affect. The use of white American protagonists and a ghostly Japanese female antagonist in *F.E.A.R.* can be seen as a partial rendering of the Shimizu formula, but thus far only *Siren: New Translation* has replicated it fully as a new video game experience – that is to say, by evoking the atmospheric affect of J-horror by isolating a group of white American protagonists in a haunted Japan.

Notably, the characters who are changed to become white Americans are those who were “outsiders” to the isolated village setting of the original game. In that game, the insider/outsider divide was an important plot device, but it becomes far more culturally loaded in *Siren: New Translation*, when the binary is regionalized to divide foreigners from Japanese, with the player aligned mostly with the foreign characters as they try to make sense of their situation. This transposition has the added effect of making the game’s two main characters a white American male and a “native” Japanese girl, a gendered pairing similar to

that of *Dream Cruise* in which the male is the female's hero and protector, while she is his guide and possible trophy in an exotic new world. Once again, the Shimizu formula is not only an embodiment of the ideology of transpacific complicity, but a conduit for traditional gender and Orientalist ideology in contemporary popular media.

Ironically, the *Siren* series's producer, Fujisawa Takafumi, revealed in an interview that he felt the key to the first game's global success would lie in sticking to a "Japan" theme and making no concessions to foreign sensibilities.

If we were going to take this to the whole world, we had to do a good job of it. If we pandered to them even a little bit, it would create a chink in our armour. We don't live in a foreign country, nor do we drink their water, so I thought that they would more graciously accept it as long as we didn't try to adjust things to their ways of thinking.²⁰⁶

However, presumably as a result of poor sales in North America, Fujisawa clearly agreed with the "adjustments" of *Siren: New Translation* that led to the replication of the Shimizu formula in an attempt to attract more foreign audiences. The reasoning behind such a move is clearly based on the assumption that American people are less likely to want to play as a Japanese fictional character than as an American fictional character. Thus while the ethnically and nationally mixed cast of *Siren: New Translation* may superficially seem like it embraces a multiculturalist ethos, the game's hybridity is built on assumptions of essentialized difference and inflexible borders, making it an example of what Tessa Morris-Suzuki describes as "cosmetic multiculturalism" in contemporary Japan.²⁰⁷

Just as in the case of the Shimizu formula films, the use of American subjects trapped in a terrifying Japanese area was not just a cynical attempt to further sales, but also an artistic change with specific aesthetic aims, as the concept artist Sato can attest to:

²⁰⁶ Kobayashi (2004), 222-225.

²⁰⁷ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa (2002). "Immigration and Citizenship in Contemporary Japan". *Japan: Change and Continuity*. Javed Maswood, Jeffrey Graham, and Hideaki Miyajima, eds. London: Routledge Curzon. 163-278.

I guess it came from me wanting to make people think, “Isn't Japan freaky?

Isn't Japan cool?” [...] I'd be happy if someday foreigners come to Japan on holiday, see an old lady working in a farming village and think, “Ah! Scary!” (laughs). Asking, “Are you a *Shibito* [dead person]?” and asking for a handshake (laughs).²⁰⁸

As can be observed, the conflation of Japanese culture and even Japanese people with the affect of fear is an explicit aim of the Japanese creators of *Siren: New Translation*. Therefore, despite not being filmmakers, the trajectory of Toyama and Sato's projects in many ways demonstrates the evolution of J-horror as a whole: first with the radical focus on atmospherics and slow pace in *Silent Hill* (1999), then with the turn to “Japanese culture” as locus of fear in *Forbidden Siren* (2003) and *Siren 2* (2006), and finally by figuring “Japan” as an object of fear for Western subjects in *Siren: New Translation* (2008). Toyama and Sato's next project, *Gravity Rush (Gurabiti Deizu)*, 2012), was an action-adventure game that marked a complete departure from the horror genre, and in the context of its predecessors it signals the passing of the era of J-horror altogether.

However, while J-horror may be virtually extinct in the form of new content, the effects that it has had on the film and game industries remain intact. For example, the current horror franchise of *Resident Evil* creator Mikami Shinji, *The Evil Within (Saiko Bureiku)*, 2014) was developed by his Japanese company Tango Gameworks but published and distributed by American company Bethesda Softworks, and was in fact released in the United States about a week before it reached Japan. The relationship between the companies involved in the making of this game is another clear example of the transpacific complicity that I have been describing in this chapter: a Japanese developer identified with an auteur (Tango Gameworks), an American publisher (Bethesda Softworks), and an American parent company (ZeniMax Media) which own both. The

²⁰⁸ Toyoda (2008). “SIREN: NEW TRANSLATION BLOG – Hanūda mura nippō dai 33-pō – Kaihatsu-sha intabyū (kōhen)”. *Famitsu*.
<https://www.famitsu.com/blog/siren/1217325_1800.html> [02/18/2018].

regionalization of this triangular relationship between creator, distributor, and financier ought to be an important factor in discussions of Japanese horror.

For the game's sequel, *The Evil Within 2* (*Saiko Bureiku 2*, 2017), American director John Johanas took over as director of Mikami's team of Japanese creators, and horror film director Trent Haaga took over as chief writer. On the one hand, these changes further blur the lines of whether the game is Japanese or American in the way of all transnational productions, but they also maintain the image of a dichotomy of Japanese creativity (in the form of designers, composers, artists, and programmers) as a resource for American direction and production that was characteristic of the remake economy. This division of creative labour is also evident in the attitudes of some of the producers, as can be gleaned from an interview with Bethesda's Pete Hines, who describes what it was like discussing concept art over the phone with Japanese creators: "The U.S. end of that call is always like, what the hell is wrong with you guys? Who comes up with that, like, what kind of nightmares do you have?" The director Johanas interrupts to add, "We're happy with that, by the way."²⁰⁹ As with the remake economy, scariness and creativity is discursively regionalized as an effect of Japanese subjectivity, while the U.S.A. remains both the financier and consumer of "scary Japan".

This structure also continues to be embodied in other forms of popular culture, such as in an episode of the popular Netflix science fiction anthology *Black Mirror*. In "Playtest" (2016), an American backpacker named Cooper becomes stranded in London, and volunteers to test a new type of video game technology for money. He is introduced to a man called Shou Saito, the owner of a video game company called "SaitoGemu" renowned for its horror games. Throughout the episode, Saito frequently speaks Japanese with his British assistant, and the plot follows the typical "mad scientist" plot that has been popular since Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818), in which a creative genius takes on a morbid technological project (in this case, a horror game) which will ultimately fail in the manner of Greek tragedy-derived hubris. In "Playtest", it is of course the experimental horror game that eventually proves

²⁰⁹ "The Evil Within 2 – Gameplay Preview | E3 2017" (2017). *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8rPj_jX_wg&t=128s>. [11/04/2018].

fatal for its American consumer, rather than its eccentric Japanese creator. In emphasizing the Japaneseness of Saito – not only through his appearance, speech, and so on, but also by his implausibly greeting Cooper with a deep bow and “*konnichiwa*” – writer Charlie Brooker clearly aligns Saito with Japanese game auteurs such as Mikami Shinji, and more generally with the “horror genius” image of Japan that continues to be reproduced long after the J-horror movement has faded. More specifically, “Playtest” depicts a creative Japanese genius torturing an unsuspecting American with new technology and horror media, an image evocative not only of the standard discourse of the globalized J-horror boom but also of older strands of Orientalism in popular culture, such as the villain Fu Manchu who gained immense multimedia popularity in the West during the first half of the twentieth century as an embodiment of the “yellow peril” anxiety of the time.

Whether or not this more modern image will survive, transform, or disappear in the arena of global popular culture, and whether or not its intersection with Orientalist exoticism will become more problematic, will have to be observed in the years to come. The fact that as “Playtest” approaches its climactic moment of horror, Saito’s Japanese (unsubtitled for the viewer) prompts Cooper to frantically ask, “What’s he saying? What’s he saying?” suggests that the Shimizu formula of American-subject-encountering-scary-Japanese-object remains a viable resource for popular culture.

IV. Coda: *Detention*

Having mentioned earlier the afterlife that the J-horror movement has had in providing an aesthetic vocabulary for films like *Nightmare Detective 2* (*Akumu Tantei 2*, 2008), it would be remiss not to mention the use of this resource in video games, especially in the interesting case of the independently produced and critically acclaimed Taiwanese game *Detention* (*Fǎn Xiào*, 2017). Like *Silent Hill* and *Siren*, the game’s aesthetic draws on J-horror conventions of dull greyish colours and gradually-building atmosphere. It even seems to reference *Siren*, which trapped its protagonists in a cursed village by the sudden appearance of an encircling red sea, by having a blood-red river block the main

characters from leaving their haunted school. However, being Taiwanese, it cannot be classified as J-horror no matter how closely it adheres to its aesthetics.

What is most interesting about *Detention* is another way in which it mimics J-horror conventions. The creators have marketed their game by advertising its “unique Taiwanese/Eastern Asian cultural references”,²¹⁰ showing how the currency of “Asian horror” first instigated by the J-horror boom is still valuable today. More specifically, they write the following:

Set in a fictitious world in the [sic] 1960s Taiwan under martial law, *Detention*, the story-driven atmospheric horror incorporated [sic] East Asian elements rarely used in games. Taoism, Buddhism, Chinese mythology, the game draws on local Taiwanese cultural references to tell an [sic] unique and terrifying story.²¹¹

Alongside the emphasis on drawing on real mythology and real history, the mention of “a fictitious world” seems odd, as does the unusual message that appears every time a player turns on the game: “All similarity to locales and events is purely coincidental.” This sentiment seems especially out-of-place given the fact that what makes the game exceptional, and what critics have listed as its strongest point, is its attention to historic and cultural detail. Like *Forbidden Siren*, objects and artifacts, as well as clothing, architecture, landscapes, and so on, are all highly evocative of a specific time and place, in this case a school in Taiwan during the 1960s, and so, like *Forbidden Siren*, the game serves a highly educational purpose. The game’s atmosphere of oppression and fear is constructed out of the political realities of daily life under Taiwan’s period of martial law, and the shadow cast by the suppression of political dissidents known as the “White Terror”. Items that can be collected in the game include a copy of a school anthem, in which the protagonist has scribbled in the margins, “I like the melody, but the lyrics are just more propaganda”; a poster asking students to inform staff if they know of any communist activity; a note passed in

²¹⁰ “Detention”. *Steam*.

<<http://store.steampowered.com/app/555220/Detention/>> [02/18/2018].

²¹¹ “Detention”. *Steam*.

<<http://store.steampowered.com/app/555220/Detention/>> [02/18/2018].

class in which students gossip about whether “prohibited books” are being read in the book club or not; and so on. One of the levels is set in a school area which “the Japanese used as a barracks during the occupation”.²¹²

Detention is therefore an example of how the J-horror movement has enabled new content that would probably never have been made by Japanese developers, such as drawing on the history of Japanese militarism in East Asia as a source of horror. *Detention* is also arguably more overtly political in its aims than any J-horror game or film. Objects that embody the presence of the Kuomintang state in the context of Taiwanese schools frequently are used to signify oppression, and are conflated with the supernatural occurrences that haunt the game’s schoolgirl protagonist, Rey. On interacting with a stack of flags of the Republic of China, Rey will say, “I used to love being the flag-bearer, thought it was the coolest job... Now I just want to get out of this nightmare.” This sentiment conflates Rey’s “nightmare” with bearing the flag, creating a hybrid antagonist of the state, the school, and the supernatural haunting. On interacting with a map of the entirety of China, Rey will say, “We had to learn all the provinces. What’s the point in learning about far away places I’ll never visit, when I don’t even know my own hometown well?” This sentiment is perhaps even more overtly political, in that it doesn’t try to relate Rey’s skepticism of her nationalist education to her current supernatural predicament. For a Taiwanese audience, this skepticism will likely evoke more contemporary concerns, such as the recent acts of youth resistance to the Kuomintang in the “Sunflower movement” protests, as well as the anxiety over Taiwan’s current relationship with the People’s Republic of China. Rey’s desire to “learn about her hometown” rather than the provinces of mainland China neatly embodies the contemporary sense of Taiwanese nationalism, and so when the developers insist their game’s connection to reality is “coincidental”, in addition to ironic humour they may be deploying a pre-emptive defense against potential controversy.

Finally, it has been suggested that the affect of vulnerability, as well as that of empathy for its female ghosts, produced by J-horror is related to the narrative of “victims’ history” present in Japanese popular culture.²¹³ The topic

²¹² RedCandleGames (2017). *Detention* [video game]. Steam version [Mac OS X].

²¹³ Byrne (2014), 190-191.

of victims' history will be explored in Chapter Six, and will be considered in the context of J-horror in Chapter Seven. For now it is enough to note how what may have been a cultural effect of Japanese postwar ideology has traveled, via all the channels described above, to be embodied as an affect in a game that evokes that same affect of victimhood in a representation of one of Japan's former colonies. As a result of *Detention*, consumers all over the world have the opportunity to experience a subjective alignment with a rebellious schoolgirl in 1960s Taiwan, an affective experience lacking in probably all other forms of global popular culture. While it may not be called "J-horror" anymore, the history of this dispersed affect, and the aesthetic resources it is evoked by, continue to unfold and be of relevance to both popular culture and the political imaginary today.

This chapter has outlined the material effects of a specific power relation on Japanese and global popular culture: namely, transpacific complicity and how it has been embodied in the division of labour between American and Japanese producers, the images produced by Japanese filmmakers, and the images produced by Japanese video game designers. While these effects have been diverse and continue to diversify through their influence on new, post-J-horror media, they retain the same premise of transpacific complicity: a universal American central subjectivity, and a particular Japanese peripheral objectivity. This image, taking the form of Sakai's "old cartography", has been shown to be reproduced in the processes of production, especially international coproductions between Japan and the U.S.A., but also as an organizational framework for film images and aesthetics in the form of the Shimizu formula. In a sense, the turn to using J-horror as a means to create complementary images of Japan and America was the final transformation of the J-horror movement, and was in itself nostalgic in its use of J-horror's global success – imaged as a binary between Japanese creators producing horror and American audiences experiencing it – as a new focus for its films. By turning to developments in the sphere of video games, one can observe the aesthetics and themes of the J-horror movement being appropriated for new iterations of popular culture, suggesting that the legacies of this movement will lie not only in parodies and nostalgic material (such as *Blonde Kaidan* or *Sadako Versus Kayako*), but also in new

products (such as independent games like *Detention* and the Swedish *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* [2010]), which have shed the “J” but found inspiration in its means of generating horror.

Chapter Five

Ghibli Goes Global: International and Internal Strategies of Control in the Building of a Global Assemblage

While the films of Studio Ghibli, like J-horror, have given rise to an international assemblage which has been at the forefront of Japanese popular culture's shift from domestic to global renown, the differences in form and content between these two assemblages are considerable. The next two chapters will consider the Ghibli assemblage in terms of how it is structured as well as how it has engaged with and manifested political tensions relevant to the geopolitical order between the West, Japan, and the East Asia region in general. The differences and similarities with the J-horror assemblage, especially in terms of industrial and ideological engagement, will become apparent over the following pages, and a comparative approach to these two assemblages will be undertaken in the concluding chapter.

One difference that is worth pointing out immediately is the general trend in commentary that has engaged with the ideology of Ghibli films, in that in almost all cases it posits the films of Ghibli as progressive, which is to say challenging ideological norms by advocating values generally associated with left wing political ideology (especially pacifism, environmentalism, and female empowerment). While the films are quite different from each other in various respects, the presence of an in-house style modeled on Miyazaki Hayao's and Takahata Isao's works is apparent in the presence of a shared aesthetic across the 20 or so films²¹⁴ that the studio has produced, and therefore it seems reasonable to assume the films might also have a shared political leaning. The image of Ghibli as progressive exists in Japan as well, largely thanks to the public personas of its two primary auteurs. Miyazaki has frequently made public statements that align him with left wing opposition to conservative governments,

²¹⁴ The number would be 22 if including the pre-Studio *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (*Kaze no Tani no Naushika*, 1984) and the made-for-television film *Ocean Waves* (*Umi ga Kikoeru*, 1993). As we shall see there are arguably more, and this chapter will explore what makes "a Ghibli film" in the same way that the label "J-horror film" was previously explored.

such as his denouncement of plans to revise Japan's pacifist constitution in 2013.²¹⁵ Far right groups have also declared Miyazaki a "traitor" for espousing his views, and labeled his Ghibli film *The Wind Rises* (*Kaze Tachinu*, 2013) a product of his "anti-Japanese" agenda,²¹⁶ further aligning him and his films in the public eye as oppositional to the political right wing in Japan. Politically-oriented criticism has not come only from fringe groups, either: in an interview with the prestigious *Kinema Junpo* film magazine, acclaimed animation film director Oshii Mamoru compared Miyazaki to "a Trotskyist", Takahata to "a Stalinist", and Studio Ghibli to "the Kremlin".²¹⁷ Miyazaki's political persona has also been manifested at the international level: when his film *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, 2001) was nominated for an Oscar, he did not attend the ceremony, and later revealed that the reason was that he "didn't want to visit a country that was bombing Iraq".²¹⁸ Meanwhile, Takahata is a longtime supporter of the Japanese Communist Party, and his most famous film, *Grave of the Fireflies* (*Hotaru no Haka*, 1988), was described by high-profile American critic Roger Ebert as one of "the greatest war films ever made" for its tragic depiction of children in wartime Japan.²¹⁹ It seems fair to assume that the strongly held political beliefs of these two creators influence the content of their films as well as their public image and reputation.

²¹⁵ Hongo, Jun (2013). "Hayao Miyazaki: Leave Constitution Alone". *The Japan Times*. <<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/25/national/miyazaki-leave-constitution-alone/#.Wovav62B0dU>> [02/02/2018].

²¹⁶ McCurry, Justin (2013). "Japanese animator under fire for film tribute to warplane designer". *The Guardian*. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/23/hayao-miyazaki-film-wind-rises>> [02/02/2018].

²¹⁷ Ishii, Rika (1996). "Mamoru Oshii Interview". *The Animation of Hayao Miyazaki, Isao Takahata, and Studio Ghibli: Kinema Junpo Special Issue*. No. 1166. Ryoko Toyama, trans. <http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/interviews/oshii_on_mt.html#fn2>. [02/02/2018].

²¹⁸ Pham, Alex (2009). "Miyazaki breaks his silent protest of America". *LA Times*. <<http://herocomplex.latimes.com/animation/comiccon-miyazaki-breaks-his-boycott-of-us/>> [02/02/2018].

²¹⁹ Ebert, Roger (2000). "Grave of the Fireflies". *RogerEbert.com*. <<https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-grave-of-the-fireflies-1988>> [02/02/2018].

In academia as in popular culture, the image of Ghibli as a progressive force in media is prevalent. Numerous books and papers create new texts in the Ghibli assemblage that contextualise the studio's films as progressive in comparison with other popular culture texts, both in Japan and abroad. While the findings of these illuminating texts are not in doubt, the trend towards affirming and justifying the general reverence for Ghibli felt by commentators, both academic and not, runs a risk of discouraging or drowning out criticism, as well as obscuring the studio's less noble practices. For example, Jonathan Clemens has pointed out that Ghibli has recently been seeking new animators to be paid extremely low wages in the manner of exploitative intern schemes,²²⁰ and Ghibli producer Nishimura Yoshiaki was forced to apologise for sexist comments regarding the lack of female staff at the studio.²²¹ Nonetheless, the studio's image has apparently suffered no backlash. These rare critical texts are outliers in the Ghibli assemblage, eclipsed by those that take a positive stance towards the studio.

I believe that, especially when framing Ghibli as an assemblage that impacts domestic and international contexts in various ways, connections with hegemonic ideology emerge which are partially obscured by the overwhelmingly positive image of Ghibli that is continuously being reproduced in the form of journalistic and academic content. Therefore, given this context of near-universal positivity, I hope that my articulation of the Ghibli assemblage will go some way in illuminating those aspects of hegemonic complicity that contrast with Ghibli's image as an unquestionably progressive force in popular culture. This is not to say that I aim to challenge the prevailing image of Ghibli as a body of films that promote progressive social change. It is rather an attempt to fill in a gap in ideological considerations of Ghibli in order to provide a more complete image of a filmic assemblage that has been a major force in global popular culture, and

²²⁰ Clemens, Jonathan (2017). "The Last Squad". *Schoolgirl Milky Crisis*. [Blog]. <<https://schoolgirlmilkycrisis.com/tag/hayao-miyazaki/>> [02/02/2018].

²²¹ Barnes, Henry (2016). "Former Studio Ghibli producer offers 'deepest apologies' for sexist comments". *The Guardian*. <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/jun/16/studio-ghibli-producer-apologies-sexism-yoshiaki-nishimura>> [02/02/2018].

one which continues to shape the subjectivities of its often very young audiences today.

I have divided my argument about the relation of hegemonic ideology to the Ghibli assemblage into two chapters: the first focusing on film-production and the second on image-production. More specifically, this first chapter will chart a history of the studio from its inception in the 1980s to the present day in the context of globalization. The focus of this history will be how the extension of the studio's production apparatus into the global sphere has interacted with both international power dynamics and power dynamics specific to the studio's organization. Firstly, I will show how the transpacific complicity discussed in the previous chapter was an important factor in Ghibli's transition from a domestic franchise to a global brand. Secondly, I will show how various strategies were employed to limit the control of Ghibli's image to a small number of localized people, and how the Ghibli brand has been appropriated to new contexts and products through the processes of globalization. While the word "Disneyfication" is often used to describe the American film company Disney's corporate and aesthetic encroachment into spaces of popular culture, my analysis shows not only how the (corporate) Disneyfication of Ghibli took place within the parameters of transpacific complicity, but also how the Ghibli brand itself has become dispersed in popular culture to the extent that the concept of "Ghiblification" has become warranted.

I. *Warriors of the Wind*: Establishing the Studio and Testing the International Market

Like the J-horror movement, Studio Ghibli rode the wave of cultural globalization that came in the 1990s and 2000s to transform itself from a domestic to a global phenomenon. However, while the spread of J-horror could be characterized as virus-like due to the various production and presentational shifts it underwent in order to spread through new technologies, audiences, and markets, the emergence of Ghibli into the sphere of global culture at first appears much more contained. As a studio, it has retained firm control over its film production and brand, so that the "globalization" of Ghibli might at first seem to

be best defined simply as a wider audience being reached thanks to new methods of global marketing and distribution. However, a closer inspection reveals a somewhat more complex expansion.

The formation of Studio Ghibli came about primarily as a result of the partnership of three men: animators Miyazaki Hayao and Takahata Isao, and producer Suzuki Toshio. While Miyazaki and Takahata had collaborated on various projects together in the past, Suzuki was an employee of the publishing company Tokuma Shoten, a large company that produced a variety of media within the entertainment industry, including cinema. From 1974 to 2002 Tokuma Shoten was the parent company of one of Japan's major studios, Daiei. Suzuki, the editor of Tokuma Shoten's anime magazine *Animage* (*Animēju*), approached both Miyazaki and Takahata with the aim of putting them at the helm of new projects. In 1981, *Animage* published an article titled "Hayao Miyazaki, World of Romance and Adventure" (*Miyazaki Hayao bōken to roman no sekai*), and in 1982 it began serializing a new fantasy-science fiction manga by Miyazaki called *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (*Kaze no Tani no Naushika*) – hereafter referred to as *Nausicaä*. Suzuki was also instrumental in encouraging and funding the film version of the manga which was released in 1984, the release of which generated a wave of *Nausicaä*-themed merchandise, including an art book²²² and at least three video games.²²³ The commercial and critical success of the film encouraged Tokuma Shoten to fund a new animation studio, of which Suzuki, Miyazaki, and Takahata became the co-founders in 1985. Although Suzuki's role has changed over the years, this Ghibli triumvirate remained largely intact until Miyazaki's (alleged) retirement and the halt to feature film production in 2014. Nishimura Yoshiaki, who eventually left Ghibli to form his own animation studio, has described the centralization of power in terms of artistic production: "Basically, all the projects were decided on by the two founding directors, Isao Takahata and Hayao Miyazaki. They developed

²²² "Za Āto Obu Kaze no Tani no Naushika [The Art of Nausicaä]". Tokuma Shoten. <<http://www.tokuma.jp/bookinfo/9784198145606>> [02/02/2018].

²²³ Szczepaniak, John (2012). "Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind". *Hardcore Gaming 101*. <<http://hg101.kontek.net/nausicaa/nausicaa.htm>> [02/02/2018].

projects, then assigned them to the staff”.²²⁴ The fact that this highly centralized power persisted throughout the thirty years in which the globalization of Japanese popular culture took place is remarkable, and the strategies it undertook to do so will be a primary focus of this chapter.

To begin with, the label chosen as a brand for the studio’s films notably serves an aesthetically unifying function. Miyazaki was likely referencing the “wind” of Nausicaä’s valley when he chose the name “Ghibli”, which is an Italian word used to refer to both a hot desert wind and a World War II aircraft, the Caproni 309 Ghibli. The *kanji* (Chinese character) for “wind” is frequently present in Ghibli texts – for example, the studio’s official magazine is called “*Neppu*” (“hot wind”), a Japanese translation of the word “ghibli”. The official website of Studio Ghibli suggests the idea behind the name came from the image of “blowing a new wind through the anime industry”²²⁵ as well as Miyazaki’s fascination with aircraft, a running theme in his films. Indeed, the first official Ghibli film, *Castle in the Sky* (*Tenkū no Shiro Rapyuta*, 1986), first depicts a short battle between airships, and then kicks off the studio’s run of films with a title sequence that “opens with a bucolic image of the wind personified: a cloud with a woman’s face blowing the wind and a person standing alongside a human-sized windmill”.²²⁶ However, the way in which the image of the wind personalizes Miyazaki’s connection to the studio seems to go even deeper in light of what was presented as his “final” film (he has since come out of retirement and is working on a new film), *The Wind Rises* (*Kaze Tachinu*, 2013), which not only echoes *Nausicaä* by returning “wind” (*kaze*) to the title and as a central motif, but suggests a wind-related circularity: Miyazaki’s career at Ghibli, which means “wind”, began with a film with a wind motif, and would end with a film with a wind motif. The narrative of *The Wind Rises* also signals another layer of connection between the wind motif and Miyazaki’s personal connection to the Ghibli project as a whole: it tells the historical story of a Japanese man, Horikoshi

²²⁴ Robinson, Tasha (2017). “How Studio Ponoc made the break from Studio Ghibli”. *The Verge*.

<<https://www.theverge.com/2017/10/25/16539532/studio-ghibli-ponoc-mary-and-the-witchs-flower-interview>> [02/02/2018].

²²⁵ “Q&A”. *Studio Ghibli*. <<http://www.ghibli.jp/qa/>> [02/02/2018].

²²⁶ Lamarre (2009), 47.

Jiro, inspired by the Italian inventor Giovanni Battista Caproni (who appears regularly in his dreams) to make new and innovative aircraft during World War II. By emphasizing Caproni's influence on Horikoshi, just as the real-life Caproni's Ghibli plane had been the inspiration for the studio's name, Miyazaki, whose father also worked with airplanes during the war, implicitly drew a parallel between himself and Horikoshi as creators and dreamers. By extension, he was also drawing a parallel between his Studio Ghibli films and Horikoshi's war planes as primarily products of the imagination, thereby positing a notable allegory when considering Ghibli's creation in the context of global popular culture and political ideology – an allegory we will explore further in the next chapter.

Two years after the founding of Studio Ghibli, *Nausicaä's* success in Japan led to an American company buying the video distribution rights and releasing an edited version of the film for a domestic market, re-titled as *Warriors of the Wind* (1987). Due to its aesthetic continuity with Miyazaki's later films, *Nausicaä* is usually considered “a Ghibli film” despite being made before the studio existed, and therefore its incarnation as *Warriors of the Wind* deserves attention as the first iteration of a Ghibli film beyond the borders of Japan – especially insofar as it contrasts with the globalization practices of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The company that purchased the rights was New World Pictures, an independent production and distribution company founded by the influential producer Roger Corman in 1970. New World Pictures followed a similar strategy to the Japanese V-cinema companies described in Chapter Three: to make a profit by in the first place investing as little as possible in low-budget genre films, especially horror or “exploitation” films. However, New World Pictures also had a secondary strategy of gaining the distribution rights to art house and critically acclaimed foreign films (as well as genre films), in order to boost their video sales in the U.S.A. This led to an interesting catalogue: alongside films with titles like *Scream of the Demon Lover* (1970) and *Night of the Cobra Woman* (1972) were Ingmar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* (1972) and films by auteurs François Truffaut, Federico Fellini, and Kurosawa Akira. (The conflation of art house, world cinema, and low-budget genre films effectively created a new genre altogether of “cult films” and a new audience demographic or identity marker,

the cult fan, which continues to influence distributors and consumers as discussed in Chapter Two.) It is unknown if the presence of such prestigious names in cinema had any effect on the willingness of the Japanese side of the deal, but if they had, it would only have compounded the disappointment expressed by Miyazaki when he later learned how his film had been edited and re-contextualised.²²⁷

The most jarringly un-Ghibli-like aspect of *Warriors of the Wind* was probably its new video box art (Fig. 1). The image seems to have drawn inspiration from a number of sources that were prominent in American popular culture at the time: the fantasy cross-species warrior team of role-playing board game *Dungeons and Dragons*, the *Star Wars* franchise that had concluded its original film trilogy in 1983, and *Masters of the Universe*, a popular science fiction-fantasy toy franchise which included an animated series that first aired in the early 1980s. There are apparently only three references to the actual film in this poster: the large monster in the foreground (mouth agape in the style of the iconic poster for America's first ever blockbuster *Jaws* [1975]) bears some resemblance to the "Giant Warrior" monster in the film, as does the shadowy figure standing to the right – and then finally there is Nausicaä on her glider, relegated to the background and uncharacteristically wielding a sword. From this image alone, it is clear that the distributors of Miyazaki's film aimed to translate it into the imagery of "American" popular culture: a band of male warriors (even the robot and shadowy monster are clearly gendered male) battling scary monsters and aided by familiar magical creatures (such as the Pegasus derived from Greek mythology in the background). In this image the central female lead has not only had her name removed from the title, she has been relegated to the token woman character typical of the fantasy franchises of the time.

²²⁷ Rhodes, L. (2012). "Nausicaä in the New World". *Culture Ramp*.
<<http://cultureramp.com/nausicaa-in-the-new-world/>> [02/02/2018].

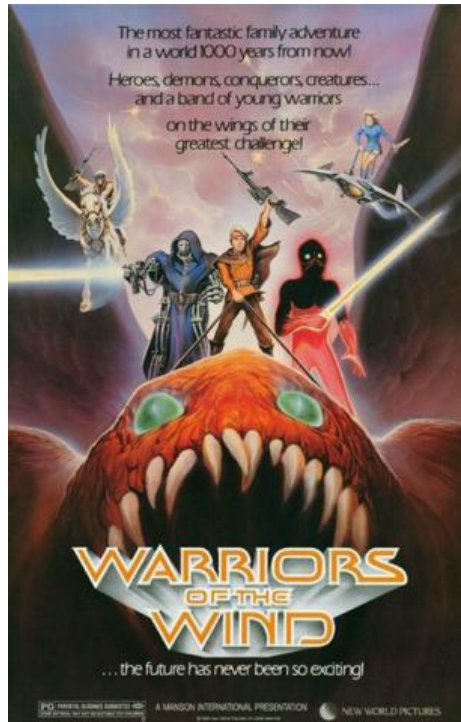


Figure 1: *Warriors of the Wind* video box art.

While it would have been hard to remove the centrality of the female protagonist within the film itself, New World Pictures' cuts largely removed the other narrative trait that Ghibli has come to be most well-known for: environmentalism. In *Nausicaä*, nature is depicted as a force that has become corrupted or “toxic” due to human interference, and accordingly there are scenes in which the characters face the threat of giant insects known as Ohmu, as well as scenes in which Nausicaä expresses her awe and love for these creatures, and in which she discusses her attempts to cultivate new plant life, “purify” the toxic lands, and return clean water and air to the planet. In *Warriors of the Wind*, these latter scenes have been cut, presumably to make the film more action-oriented and less contemplative or “slow”. This act of “cultural translation” enforces two images: that what has been cut (contemplation, environmentalism, slowness) is an aspect of “Japanese culture” and that what has been retained is compatible with “American culture”.

By cutting moments which inspire sympathy for the Ohmu, *Warriors of the Wind* also posits them as the chief antagonist of the films, reinforcing a

moralistic “good and evil” framework.²²⁸ Casting the insects as the villains has the effect, whether intended or not, of de-politicising the drama of the narrative, which concerns the social and military struggles between three kingdoms, two of which are engaged in what is essentially an arms race to acquire a weapon which could defeat both the competing kingdom and destroy the toxic lands that are encroaching on all kingdoms. As Rhodes states,

With the Ohmu recast as the villains of *Warriors*, the geopolitical structure becomes a mere complication in the more central struggle against nature run amok. [...] It’s natural to assume that those differences are primarily the result of box office concerns. But it’s also worth considering the cultural atmosphere of America at the time. *Warriors* was released during Reagan’s first term, when the fall of the Berlin wall was still a distant dream and the Cold War arms race was a defining fact of U.S. foreign policy. Environmentalism was still a nascent movement in America, mostly associated with wildlife conservation efforts like “Save the Whales.” That’s not to say that the New World team was hostile to the thematic overtones of *Nausicaä*, but Miyazaki’s emphasis must have seemed somewhat alien to American sensibilities.²²⁹

Nausicaä will be further considered in light of its Cold War context in the next chapter. For now it is enough to note how its international release, which was redubbed for French, German, and British markets, made concerted efforts to rebrand it according to hegemonic images of American popular culture, and to excise aspects that might trouble the hegemony of those images. These efforts are in stark contrast to the Japaneseness that Ghibli would come to signify in the age of globalization.

II. Establishing a Global Brand: Sen and Chihiro Go to Hollywood

²²⁸ Ogihara-Schuck, Eriko (2014). “The Christianizing of Animism in Manga and Anime: American Translations of Hayao Miyazaki’s *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*”. *Miyazaki’s Animism Abroad: The Reception of Japanese Religious Themes by American and German Audiences*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Books. 133–146.

²²⁹ Rhodes (2012).

Meanwhile in Japan, Studio Ghibli's first official film, *Castle in the Sky*, won critical acclaim and several awards domestically. Its next two films, *My Neighbour Totoro* (*Tonari no Totoro*, 1988) and *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988), were released cinematically as a double-bill feature, with the former directed by Miyazaki and the latter by Takahata in his directorial debut for Ghibli. Importantly, both films eschewed the fantasy settings of *Nausicaä* and *Castle in the Sky* in favour of historical Japanese settings: *My Neighbour Totoro* is set in 1958, and *Grave of the Fireflies* in 1945. As well as domestically cementing the image of Studio Ghibli as a producer of excellent animation films, these films also directly introduced the associative image of "Japan's past" into the Ghibli assemblage for the first time, allowing the Ghibli label to become evocative of both the nation and nostalgia. The eponymous monster Totoro became especially iconic, and his image has become synonymous not only with Studio Ghibli (he is the studio's mascot and appears alongside the Ghibli logo at the start of each of their subsequent films), but with Japanese popular culture as a whole. However, as economic globalization had yet to significantly impact the processes of Japanese film production in 1988, for the time being Ghibli's impact on the popular imagination remained a domestic phenomenon.

In 1989, Tokuma made a deal with Japan Airlines to have *My Neighbour Totoro* dubbed into English and shown on flights – meaning that at this time, the only way a non-Japanese-speaking person could watch a comprehensible and unedited Studio Ghibli film would be if they were an English-speaking passenger on a Japan Airlines flight.²³⁰ This in-flight film was the extent of *My Neighbour Totoro's* international reach until the American studio Twentieth Century Fox acquired the rights to this dubbed version of the film and distributed it as a direct-to-video film in the United States in 1993. Employing the same direct-to-video strategy as New World Pictures (invest as little as possible in the hope of small returns), Fox did not strongly promote *My Neighbour Totoro* or expect it to do particularly well; it had a brief theatrical release, received mixed reviews, and remained a relatively obscure videotape, circulating mostly among children and

²³⁰ Beck, Jerry (2005). *The Animated Movie Guide*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press. 177.

animation fans.²³¹ It should also be noted that before the widespread use and integration of traditional media into the internet, such fan communities would have been relatively isolated, and unable to widely promote their enthusiasm for a niche Japanese film in the way that is possible today.

With the exception of television film *Ocean Waves (Umi ga Kikoeru, 1993)*, directed by Mochizuki Tomomi, and *Whisper of the Heart (Mimi o sumaseba, 1995)*, directed by Kondō Yoshifumi, Miyazaki and Takahata took alternating turns in the director's seat until Ghibli's twelfth film, Miyazaki's *Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi, 2001)*. For many international audiences, it was *Spirited Away* which marked the beginning of Ghibli's presence in popular culture, especially following the media event of its winning of an American Academy Award. *Spirited Away's* award for "Best Animated Feature" in 2002 was important for a number of reasons: firstly, it was unusual for non-English language films to win awards outside of the "Best Foreign Language Film" category. Secondly, the Best Animated Feature Award had only been established in 2001, signalling a change not only in one of the most important structures of the Hollywood apparatus, but in "Western" cultural acceptance of animation as an art form in general – the first winner of the award was the computer-animated *Shrek* (2001), which was promoted as being "for adults" as much as it was "for kids".²³² *Spirited Away* also won the Golden Bear (the top award) at the Berlin Film Festival, causing a buzz by being the first animated film ever to do so. By winning the second-ever "Best Animated Feature" Academy Award, *Spirited Away* positioned Japan at the vanguard of this new global acceptance of animation, and played a significant role in consolidating "Japanese animation" as an acceptably mainstream facet of global popular culture, rather than merely an export to be consumed by children and Japan specialists (including cult fans and academics).²³³ Its Hollywood celebration was also a significant event for Ghibli's

²³¹ "Tonari no Totoro (My Neighbor Totoro) – Reviews & Articles". *Nausicaa.net*. <<http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/totoro/impressions.html>> [02/02/2018].

²³² Tracy, Joe (2001). "Shrek: A Marketing Masterpiece". *Digital Media FX Magazine*. <<https://www.digitalmediafx.com/Shrek/shrekfeature02.html>> [02/02/2018].

²³³ Sharp, Jasper (2017). "Studio Ghibli: five essential films". *BFI: Film Forever*. <<http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/lists/studio-ghibli-five-essential-films>> [02/02/2018].

domestic role as global envoy of Japanese popular culture. Azuma Hiroki listed *Spirited Away's* Academy Award as one of the key events that allowed “otaku forms and markets” to “quite rapidly [win] social recognition in Japan” in the early to mid-2000s.²³⁴

The fact that, at the time of writing, *Spirited Away* remains the only non-American film to win this award is perhaps an indicator of how notable its success and acceptance by the Hollywood apparatus was. It is interesting to compare the reception of *Spirited Away* with that of *Rashomon* (1950), which won the Golden Lion (the top award) at the Venice Film Festival and the “Best Foreign Language Film” Academy Award in 1951, and is largely considered the film that marked an “opening up” of Japanese cinema to Western filmmakers and critics, who often praised the work’s originality in Orientalist terms.²³⁵ Tezuka writes that when *Rashomon* won the Golden Lion “just as the American Military occupation was ending, it signaled both Japan’s return to the international community after the war, and triggered the internationalization of Japanese cinema”.²³⁶ In 2001, most Western audiences were aware of Japan’s long history of animated visual media, but nonetheless, *Spirited Away's* success was in some ways articulated as a “beginning” for Japanese animation on the world stage, for example by being compared to Walt Disney’s first animated feature film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937).²³⁷ This is despite the many popular dubbed children’s television programmes such as *Dragon Ball Z* that had enjoyed widespread international dissemination for many years. However, *Spirited Away* can be said to be the text that marked not only a shift towards adult audiences but also towards identifying “Japaneseness” as a globally accepted attribute of anime, which previously had been stripped of its national context through dubbing and editing – indeed, most children in the world watching Japanese

²³⁴ Azuma (2009), xi.

²³⁵ Desser, David (2011). “Filming ‘Difference’”. *The Routledge Companion to Film History*. William Guynn, ed. London: Routledge. 104-106.

²³⁶ Tezuka (2012), 3.

²³⁷ “‘Spirited Away’ Bags Academy Award” (2003). *The Japan Times*.

<<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2003/03/25/national/spirited-away-bags-academy-award/#.WlhPBK2B3-Y>> [02/02/2018]; Russell, Jamie (2003).

“Spirited Away (2003)”. *BBC*.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2003/08/27/spirited_away_2003_review.shtml> [02/02/2018].

television shows in the 1990s likely had no reason to believe that the easily identifiable manga aesthetics of their favourite programmes were “Japanese” at all, thanks to the effects of dubbing. The globalization of the early 2000s therefore had the effect of consolidating the national as an attribute of Japanese animation and popular culture in general. Essentially, this new focus on the national was not a reactionary consequence to globalization but one of its constitutive elements, a point that will be returned to in the coming pages.

While *Princess Mononoke* (*Mononoke Hime*, 1997) had been a huge commercial and critical hit for Ghibli in Japan, becoming the most profitable domestic film at the box office ever and also becoming the first animated film to win a Japan Academy Award in 1998, its limited theatrical release in America in 1999 had little impact on popular culture in general, and on a global scale it seemed destined to become one of various “obscure critically-acclaimed Japanese animation films” like *Akira* (1988) and *Ghost in the Shell* (*Kōkaku Kidōtai Gōsuto In Za Sheru*, 1995). In contrast, *Spirited Away*’s American theatrical release (also quite limited)²³⁸ and Oscar win was accompanied with a media buzz which consistently referenced “Japan” and “America” as conceptual tools to making sense of the film. Using Orientalist rhetoric *The Guardian* reported that the “alien, exotic qualities” of *Spirited Away* made it “all the more intense for a non-Japanese audience”, apparently suggesting that foreign audiences would be more impacted by the film than Japanese ones.²³⁹ The review of *The New York Times* emphasized the combination of Japanese artistry and American business: “The title ‘Spirited Away’ could refer to what Disney has done on a corporate level to the revered Japanese animation director Hayao Miyazaki’s epic and marvelous new anime fantasy.”²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Hairston, Mark (2003). “Spirited Away by Miyazaki”. *Frames Per Second*. <<http://www.fpsmagazine.com/comment/spirited.php>> [12/01/2017].

²³⁹ Bradshaw, Peter (2003). “Spirited Away”. *The Guardian*. <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2003/sep/12/spirited-away-review>> [02/02/2018].

²⁴⁰ Mitchell, Elvis (2002). “Conjuring Up Atmosphere Only Anime Can Deliver”. *The New York Times*. <<http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9504E0DB1030F933A1575AC0A9649C8B63>> [02/02/2018].

Referring to the American animation company Disney in this way was somewhat unusual, however, for drawing attention not only to changing global images of “Japaneseness”, but also the role of Disney in bringing Ghibli to Hollywood, and by extension the rest of the world. Indeed, despite the fact that the nominated Disney film *Lilo and Stitch* (2002) lost the Oscar to *Spirited Away*, in a sense *Spirited Away*'s success was at least as significant a victory for Disney as it was for Ghibli. To understand Ghibli's move from domestic to global popular culture, it is therefore important to articulate its structural relationship to the American film industry in the form of Disney.

III. A Division of Labour: Transpacific Complicity and the Disney-Tokuma Deal

While the winning of the Academy Award remains the most vibrant image of Ghibli's rise in the global popular imaginary, and while it is arguably the most important media event in this regard, the more structurally significant event that instigated the globalization of Ghibli took place six years earlier, in 1996. In fact, the Disney-Tokuma deal of 1996 is of historic significance not only to Studio Ghibli, but to both the Japanese and American popular culture industries as a whole. The deal between the Walt Disney Corporation and Tokuma Publishing has not been made fully public, but the key agreements were made known at the time: Disney would gain the video worldwide distribution rights for eight Studio Ghibli films, including Miyazaki's yet-to-be released *Princess Mononoke* (*Mononoke Hime*, 1997); Disney would gain the theatrical distribution rights to screen *Princess Mononoke* in countries outside of Asia; and Disney would gain the worldwide distribution rights to several live-action domestic hit films produced by Tokuma Shoten and Daiei, including the *kaiju* (giant monster) science fiction *Gamera 2* (*Gamera Tsū: Region Shūrai*, 1996) and the drama *Shall We Dance?* (*Sharu wi Dansu?* 1996 – which not only performed well at the American box office, but received a Hollywood remake in 2004, two years after *The Ring* kick-started the remake economy described in Chapter Four). Although Disney had made a similar distribution-based deal with Jim Henson Productions previously, this was the first time it had made such a deal with a production company

outside of the United States, and the first time an American studio had invested so heavily in Japanese popular culture.²⁴¹ On the Japanese side, a film studio's relinquishing of "worldwide" distribution rights, including Japanese distribution, to a foreign company was also new in the context of popular culture. Tokuma Yasuyoshi, then president of Tokuma Shoten, described the Japanese benefits of the deal as such: "By entrusting Disney, with its strong distribution network in Japan, to distribute our films here, I believe we will see our sales increase dramatically. And internationally, we have no presence, so this is a great opportunity for us".²⁴²

This segregation of Studio Ghibli into Japanese production and American distribution marked a developing strategy of the Walt Disney Company. In 1989 it had first attempted to acquire the highly popular Jim Henson Company, creator of icons of American popular culture such as *The Muppets* and *Sesame Street*, through a company merger, but the process towards making a deal was fraught with disagreements, and marred by the sudden death of Jim Henson in 1990. While the original deal was abandoned, a compromised one took its place, in which Disney gained the video distribution rights to the entire collection of Jim Henson output, while agreeing to finance future productions from that company. By making a similar deal with Tokuma Shoten, Disney seems to have learned from its experience with the Jim Henson Company that a deal in which labour and power was divided along the lines of production and distribution could be more fruitful, and less invasive, than simply trying to subsume its competition. However, Ghibli's regional difference had the significant consequence of figuring the deal within a different context of power dynamics: the historical relationship of transpacific complicity between the U.S.A. and Japan, discussed in the previous chapter, in which both countries work to maintain a system whereby Japan produces nation-specific peculiarities which must flow through a Western, universalizing region in order to become part of global culture. Disney's

²⁴¹ Efron, Sonni (1996). "Disney Dives Into Japanese Film Business". *Los Angeles Times*. <http://articles.latimes.com/1996-07-24/business/fi-27371_1_japanese-film> [02/02/2018].

²⁴² Magee, Michelle (1996). "Disney to distribute Tokyo's top toon vids". *Daily Variety*. <<http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/disney/media-coverage.html>> [02/02/2018].

compromised strategies of achieving hegemony over the sphere of popular culture therefore unwittingly situate themselves within a geopolitical framework when coming into contact with the East Asia region, and especially Japan, given its postwar ideological consensus with the United States.

As in other cases, the structure of transpacific complicity is obscured by the popular “cartographic” images of Disney and Ghibli as different and complementary, with the former as American-universal hegemon and the latter as out-lying Japanese peculiarity. For example, this review of the Ghibli film *When Marnie Was There* (*Omoide no Mānī*, 2014) rather fancifully interprets an image from the film’s narrative as a statement on the nature of Studio Ghibli in popular culture:

“In this world, there’s an invisible magic circle,” narrates 12 year-old Anna as she gazes forlornly at all the children playing gleefully around her. “They’re inside. I’m outside.” Anna sees herself as a misfit — orphaned, unwanted and utterly alone. But if you’re a fan of Studio Ghibli, it’s hard not to feel she’s speaking for the revered Japanese animation house, too. Especially as *When Marnie Was There* is set to be the studio’s final feature. That “magic circle” contains dozens of pristinely computer-animated works: mostly action-packed comedy adventures, precision-engineered by US studios for global success. Outside the circle there is Ghibli.²⁴³

While this interpretation probably reveals more about the writer’s perceptions than it does Ghibli’s intentions, it nonetheless represents a recurring type of text in the Ghibli media assemblage which (in this case quite strikingly) reproduces the peripheral-centre design of Sakai’s “old cartography”, in which a particularistic Japanese artistry is on the periphery of the Western/American hegemonic centre. Ghibli is conceptualized as an artistic “outsider” to the soulless, corporate, and globally dominant film apparatus of the USA. However, this prevalent binary image of an opposition between Hollywood and Japanese film, or of Ghibli as the Other of Hollywood, masks the presence of transpacific

²⁴³ Jolin, Dan (2016). “When Marnie Was There Review”. *Empire*.
<<https://www.empireonline.com/movies/marnie-2/review/>> [02/03/2018].

complicity evident in the division of labour between Disney and Ghibli in bringing Ghibli to a global audience. In other words, transpacific complicity exists through an international structuring of power in which Ghibli's works (marked as "Ghibli" and therefore apparently "particularistic") are circulated in Disney's apparatus (unmarked and widespread, therefore apparently "universal"). As with other forms of transpacific complicity, this relationship is masked by the "old cartographic imaginary"²⁴⁴ of the popular discourse in which Ghibli is positioned as a unique, specifically Japanese outlier to the global norms of Hollywood cinema. It should be emphasized again that both the transpacific complicity embodied by the Disney-Tokuma deal and the popular image of a peripheral-particular Japan interacting with a central-universal America have their origins in the political imperatives of the postwar period.

The material consequences of the Disney-Tokuma deal are still unfolding, and its success may have been a factor in determining the further integration between the Japanese film industry and Hollywood, for example in the remake economy discussed in the previous chapter. The deal itself was apparently left open-ended so that its terms could adapt with changing times and technology. Michael Johnson, the president of Disney's Buena Vista Home Video which conducted the deal, has said "This relationship can expand as far as our creative energies will take us," and beyond that no specific changes have been made public.²⁴⁵ However, some changes in the deal are easily observable, such as Disney's eventual control over the entire Ghibli catalogue, as well as DVD distribution despite the fact that the original agreement only mentioned home video. The Disney-Tokuma deal is therefore better understood as a deep-rooted reconfiguration of power rather than merely a momentary transaction of money and rights. In contrast, after New Line Pictures' rights to *Nausicaä* expired (apparently in 1995),²⁴⁶ they simply reverted back to Ghibli, and once Fox's rights to *My Neighbour Totoro* ran out in 2004 they automatically went to Disney.

²⁴⁴ Sakai (2010 a), 28.

²⁴⁵ Karrfalt, Wayne (1996). "Disney will distribute Japanese animation". *The Hollywood Reporter*. <<http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/disney/media-coverage.html>> [02/03/2018].

²⁴⁶ LaPierre, James (2016). "When *Nausicaä* Became *Warriors of the Wind*". *Cinematheque*. <<http://cinema.wisc.edu/blog/2016/09/06/when-nausicaa-became-warriors-wind>> [02/03/2018].

Rather than ride the wave of Ghibli's new popularity in the West, *Warriors of the Wind* and the Fox version of *My Neighbour Totoro*, which had been released on DVD in 2002, both sank further into obscurity. Disney, on the other hand, redubbed both films with Hollywood stars as voice actors and reissued them in new DVD formats which included English subtitles and the original Japanese audio track. These versions were then exported to countries worldwide, becoming part of a globally accessible franchise along with the other Disney-distributed Ghibli films.

Warriors of the Wind and the Fox version of *My Neighbour Totoro*, confined within the national borders of their “non-universalizable” markets, thus stand as interesting historical artifacts, or intermediate texts, produced in the interstice of pre-globalized and globalized Japanese popular culture. Ironically, their rarity has transformed them into “collectors’ items”, and internet sellers give them higher monetary value than regular Ghibli films. The surpassing of old technologies with DVD, Bluray, and streaming services has also ensured that in Japan old domestically distributed Ghibli videos have become obsolete, and the only versions of Ghibli films that are widely available and consumed are those distributed by Disney. However, true to the “unmarked” nature of the U.S.A.’s role in transpacific complicity, for Japanese consumers there is very little in the way of branding or DVD format which would distinguish the products from Japan-distributed films, which is to say there are no markers of “foreignness” – although, unusually for Japanese DVDs, all of the Ghibli DVDs provide the option of an English subtitle track.

IV. “No Cuts”: Asserting Japaneseness in the wake of the Disney deal

The Disney-Tokuma deal was an important step in Disney's ongoing push to achieve hegemony within global popular culture. While the deal ensured Studio Ghibli's autonomy over production matters, Disney's control over distribution should be understood in the context of its progressive purchasing of studios that produce renowned or iconic cultural material: in 2006, Disney acquired Pixar Studios, which specializes in computer-animated hits such as *Toy Story* (1995) and *Finding Nemo* (2003); in 2009, Marvel Entertainment and its

superhero media ranging from comic books to an ongoing slew of blockbuster films; in 2012, Lucasfilm, best known for the *Indiana Jones* and *Star Wars* film-based franchises; and in 2017 it was announced that the entertainment branch of Fox, one of Hollywood's top studios, had been acquired by Disney, along with its many popular culture franchises, including *The Simpsons*, *X-Men*, *Die Hard*, *Alien* and *Planet of the Apes*. Notably, of these influential studios, all are American, and while Disney owns and does business with various international entertainment companies, so far the only film studio outside of Hollywood it has ever made a distribution deal of this kind with is Studio Ghibli.²⁴⁷ This not only seems to imply a special relationship between America and Japan, but also suggests that the rise of Japanese popular culture into the sphere of global popular culture has come at the expense of tethering one of its key properties to the American entertainment industry.

Conversely, the onward march of Disney has also had material effects on the popular culture industry of Japan. For example, Disney stores in Japan are traditionally gendered in an attempt to cater to female audiences, emphasizing products (including toys, make-up, accessories, and mobile phone cases) that feature the iconic "Disney princesses" of the company's animated films. Based on my own observations, since the purchase of Lucasfilm, there has been a proliferation of *Star Wars* merchandise on display, usually in its own section, despite the merchandise and style (science fiction and action) not fitting the "girly" image of the stores. It would be reasonable to assume that the marketing branch of Disney in Japan is aiming to use the ownership of *Star Wars* as a means to create a gendered boy-and-girl division of space in its stores, in the manner of many toy retailers in Japan (and elsewhere) that have spatially distinct boy and girl sections. Disney's purchasing of other studios therefore has the potential for material and spatial alterations to the everyday life of Japanese citizens, affecting perceptions of and identifications with gender and other ideological structures.

However, since the Disney-Tokuma deal, Ghibli has always asserted its independence from Disney, and, tellingly, these assertions often reference

²⁴⁷ Karrfalt (1996).

Japanese national difference. When asked if the deal would effect Ghibli's output, Miyazaki, who had been openly critical of Disney's films before,²⁴⁸ said

No. We can make films only our way. We live in Japan and we see things from here. [...] Disney has grasped that the Japanese market is different. They now think there might be some other markets that like films made for a Japanese audience.²⁴⁹

These assertions of independence show that the general perception of the deal was contextualised by culture and nation as well as business. In contrast, Tokuma Shoten remained an overseer of Ghibli production, but there was no media buzz around whether or not Ghibli was compromising its artistic principles as a result of corporate pressures, much less references to culture or "Japan". Miyazaki's mobilizing of images of a "Japanese market", a "Japanese audience", and "how Japanese people see things" against the threat of Disneyfication is a discursive example of how images of national integrity may be revived and emphasized through globalization, but do not actually oppose or work against globalization itself.²⁵⁰ The insistence of Ghibli as distinctly and unalterably "Japanese" was in fact the same strategy that Disney would use to market its films to international audiences.²⁵¹ As Joe Roth, the chairman of Walt Disney Studios, said at the time of the deal, "In the U.S., when people think of animation, they think of Disney; in Japan . . . they think of Miyazaki,"²⁵² a statement which clearly interpellates Japan and the USA as distinct cultural

²⁴⁸ Nakanishi, Nao (1997). "Disney turns to Japanese cartoonist for new look". *Reuters World Service*. <<http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/disney/media-coverage2.html>> [02/03/2018].

²⁴⁹ Nakanishi (1997).

²⁵⁰ Sakai (2010 b), 261.

²⁵¹ For example, the international trailers for Ghibli films emphasise the brand power of the studio's and Miyazaki's names and, remarkably for a world-famous corporation, eschew that of Disney. During the American trailer for *The Wind Rises*, the Ghibli name and logo is first shown, then Miyazaki's name, then stylized titles of previous Ghibli films for contextualization, and then text describing the film as Miyazaki's "farewell masterpiece". Finally, in small and unobtrusive font, the name of Disney's subsidiary Touchstone Pictures is placed alongside "Ghibli" and "Miyazaki" above the film's title.

²⁵² Efron (1996).

spheres. This sentiment has been repeatedly echoed in journalistic writing that introduces Miyazaki as “the Walt Disney of Japan”,²⁵³ which has the effect of introducing Japanese difference while at the same time subsuming it as a corollary within a pre-existing American cultural context. As Sakai argues, one of the effects of transpacific complicity is to put Japanese nationalism (a focus on the particular and distinct) in the service of American regional hegemony (a transnational network of power). The Ghibli assemblage is linked to this complicity not only through its regionalized division of productive and distributional labour, but also in the ways it is represented in the media (both Japanese and international) as a nationally distinct entity from the American/global sphere of popular culture. By not overtly marking its Ghibli DVDs with the Disney label, Disney allows its Japanese-marked products to support its own unmarked hegemony over global popular culture.

The image of Ghibli, and Miyazaki in particular, as fiercely committed to artistic, cultural, and national integrity in the face of global American corporate power has itself entered into popular culture as part of Ghibli’s international image. There is a popular story related on many websites, including Ghibli’s English-language Wikipedia page (at the time of writing), relating how, in response to Disney’s encharging of the two-hour *Princess Mononoke*’s theatrical release to Miramax, Miyazaki sent a traditional samurai sword in the post to company president Harvey Weinstein’s office in America with a two-word message: “No cuts”. This was allegedly in response to the treatment that *Nausicaä* had undergone a decade previously, or so the story goes. When asked in an interview about this story, Miyazaki claimed it was the producer Suzuki who sent the sword, but that he personally had had a confrontation with Weinstein over the editing of *Princess Mononoke*, the result of which was: “I defeated him.”²⁵⁴ There are a number of reasons why this story would be appealing to audiences, and why it has become a near mythical media appendage

²⁵³ E.g. Flood, Kathleen (2011). “Original Creators: Hayao Miyazaki, “The Walt Disney of Japan””. *Creators*.

<https://creators.vice.com/en_uk/article/gvd3kj/original-creators-hayao-miyazaki-the-walt-disney-of-japan> [02/03/2018].

²⁵⁴ Brooks, Xan (2005). “A god among animators”. *The Guardian*.

<<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2005/sep/14/japan.awardsandprizes>> [02/03/2018].

of the Ghibli assemblage. The association of the samurai sword with Japanese culture, “noble warriors”, violence, and the sardonic allusion to “cutting” a film provides an entertaining expression of national resistance against the homogenising practices of global American cultural and corporate hegemony. The specificity of Ghibli’s image – a traditional Japanese sword – being positioned as oppositional to the non-specificity of Hollywood’s image – a businessman trying to alter products in order to maximize profits – evokes the same cartographic image which masks transpacific complicity, in which Japanese culture confronts American corporatism, embodied in a David and Goliath-like confrontation that results in the underdog Ghibli ultimately “defeating” the imposing and powerful American film industry.

This story has recently been republished on a number of websites due to the global media event of Weinstein’s sacking in the wake of numerous sexual assault allegations.²⁵⁵ As a cultural text, the “no cuts” story gains an extra layer of intrigue and romanticisation when the apparently opposing forces of Ghibli and Hollywood are personified as Miyazaki and Weinstein. Miyazaki’s international public image is doubtless a result of the thematic content of his films, as well as his comparisons with Walt Disney: a benevolent and gentle genius, passionately committed to social causes, imagination, and inventing stories for children. Weinstein, on the other hand, bears the image of the ruthless businessman, predatory in his hounding of artists as well as in his assaults on women, an overweight bully, physically unattractive. The story of creative Japan standing up to corporate America is much more alluring to audiences when it can be represented by these characters that seem to come straight out of a children’s story themselves, reassuringly unambiguous in terms of morality. The new version of this internet story thus positions the love that many consumers of Ghibli feel for Miyazaki’s films as an antidote to the horror and sadness inspired by the Weinstein sexual assault allegations, resulting in an affective cocktail that finds its resolution through a fairytale version of transpacific complicity. For

²⁵⁵ In addition to retelling the story in the context of the sexual assault allegations, this article provides links to several other articles that do the same: Ashcraft, Brian (2018). “The Time Studio Ghibli Stood Up to Harvey Weinstein With a Katana”. *Kotaku*. <<https://kotaku.com/the-time-studio-ghibli-stood-up-to-harvey-weinstein-wit-1823223914>> [02/27/2018].

while Miyazaki may have defeated the forces of “cultural translation”, the accommodation of Ghibli as one of the limbs of America’s hegemonic culture apparatus remains obscured by the misleading image of two national styles and systems which are fundamentally at odds with each other.

To put it another way, the popular image of Ghibli as defiantly independent of American popular culture obscures the structural dependence of Ghibli on Disney’s economic strength and its modes of international distribution. Furthermore, this image depicts Japanese uniqueness and creativity as opposed to a prevalent American homogeneity, regionalizing the binary as one of national specificity standing up to global encroachment, when in fact Ghibli’s national particularity benefits Disney’s aim for extending its influence globally. Therefore, this popular image of Ghibli is analogous to a certain political discourse of Japanese nationalism which tends to express demands for independence from the U.S.A., while pursuing objectives (such as re-militarization) that would supplement or increase the U.S.A.’s structural hegemony (economic and military) in Japan and the East Asia region in general. Rather than view this analogue as a coincidence, we should consider both situations to be cultural and political expressions of the power relation that Sakai has identified as transpacific complicity.

V. Ghibli Decentralized: Controlling Merchandise and the Museum

While keeping this geopolitical dynamic in mind, let us now consider some of the ways in which globalization has decentralized the Ghibli assemblage. The term “decentralization” can connote both diversification (i.e. the Ghibli brand being extended to cultural texts beyond their core body of films) as well as the dispersal or devolution of power (i.e. the loss of central governance over Ghibli-related affairs). As can be gathered from the previous sections, Ghibli has strived to embrace the former connotation while resisting the latter. These two connotations of “decentralization” have analogues in the two previously discussed figures of extensive multiplicity and intensive multiplicity, although they are not the same: in both cases, the Ghibli brand has extended into new territories and assemblages. What is “intensive” in Ghibli’s decentralization is

more the structural change wrought on the studio that has occurred as a result of its extensions, and less a change in the content or brand image of the cultural texts themselves (as was the case with J-horror). How successful Ghibli has been in its aims to create an extensive multiplicity without sacrificing power can be judged by analyzing the proliferation of cultural texts beyond its main body of feature films.

After the success of *Kiki's Delivery Service* (*Majo no Takkyūbin*, 1989), Miyazaki's coming-of-age tale about a young witch set in a rural European area, Studio Ghibli's profitability had risen to an extent that fundamental changes were made to the studio with the primary aims of diversifying its sources of revenue and establishing itself as a brand.²⁵⁶ From 1990 onwards it began to loan out its animators to companies for television advertisements, such as its commercial for Nippon TV in 1992. It also invested in toys and merchandise, eventually striking a deal with the company Benelic which gained the official rights to distribute Ghibli merchandise – it remains the only company to have gained these rights on a non-temporary basis, as they significantly were not granted to Disney in the Disney-Tokuma deal. Benelic specializes in creating outlets for holders of popular intellectual properties, such as video game publisher Capcom and the owners of the Dutch picture-book rabbit Miffy. The deal with Ghibli resulted in the establishment of several outlets for the new store Donguri Kyowakoku (“Acorn Republic”), which is dedicated solely to Ghibli merchandise including toys, clocks, calendars, puzzles, keychains, towels, accessories, and all manner of other goods in addition to Ghibli DVDs and Bluray discs. There are currently 37 Donguri Kyowakoku outlets in Japan.²⁵⁷ Beyond these, there are only a few other official Ghibli merchandise stores in the world,²⁵⁸ including recently opened Donguri outlets in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and

²⁵⁶ Gaulène, Mathieu (2011). “Studio Ghibli: A New Force in Animation”. *INA Global*. <<http://www.inaglobal.fr/en/cinema/article/studio-ghibli-new-force-animation>> [02/27/2018].

²⁵⁷ “Shop Information”. *Benelic*. <<http://benelic.com/donguri/list.php>> [03/01/2018].

²⁵⁸ New official outlets occasionally appear in tandem with temporary Ghibli exhibitions and so on. For example, the US branch of the Japanese bookstore Kinokuniya has recently announced becoming an “official retail partner” with Ghibli and so will stock official merchandise for a limited time: “Studio Ghibli

Shanghai.²⁵⁹ Both televised commercials and the spread of merchandise have allowed the Ghibli assemblage to extend beyond its cinematic texts and to further permeate popular culture in a number of new texts, effecting the transformation from film studio to franchise.

There is also a Ghibli store in Japan which is administered not by Benelic but by Ghibli itself, and which was established as part of a larger project in Ghibli's expansion into non-filmic contexts. In 1998, planning for a Ghibli museum on the outskirts of Tokyo began, and the completed museum opened to the public in 2001. As a project, the museum is notable in the way it embodies the aims, both corporate and aesthetic, of its designer, Miyazaki. The positioning of the museum in a park in Mitaka, away from the metropolitan hub of Tokyo, was presumably not just a cheaper option, but one which positioned Ghibli away from the city centre and by implication closer to its symbolic Other, the countryside and natural world that is so often a setting and theme in Ghibli films. Ghibli's reputation for subtlety and artistry over showiness and bombast also lends itself to a choice of setting on the "periphery" rather than in the "centre" – a choice which reflects its previously discussed image within global popular culture.

Then there is the architecture, designed like one of the European-style buildings that populate Miyazaki's fantasy films – in fact, in addition to providing exhibitions and information, the building is intended as an interactive fantasy experience of sorts. This framing is emphasized in the texts one encounters before entering the museum, such as this "no photography" warning:

The Ghibli Museum is a portal to a storybook world. As the main character in a story, we ask that you experience the Museum space with your own eyes and senses, instead of through a camera's viewfinder. We ask that you

Collection" (2018). *Kinokuniya Book Stores of America*.

<<https://usa.kinokuniya.com/studioghibli>> [02/27/2018].

²⁵⁹ "Shop Information". *Benelic*. <<http://benelic.com/donguri/list.php>>

[03/01/2018]; Tiah, Corine (2016). "Studio Ghibli's First Official Store Opens in Shanghai". *Time Out Shanghai*.

<http://www.timeoutshanghai.com/features/Blog-Shopping_Style/36395/Studio-Ghiblis-first-official-store-opens-in-Shanghai.html> [03/01/2018].

<http://www.timeoutshanghai.com/features/Blog-Shopping_Style/36395/Studio-Ghiblis-first-official-store-opens-in-Shanghai.html> [03/01/2018].

make what you experienced in the Museum the special memory that you take home with you.²⁶⁰

In a manifesto-like statement regarding his aims for the museum, Miyazaki also made several points emphasizing the image of the museum as a fictionalized space arranged so that visitors are made to feel as though they are characters in a Ghibli-esque narrative. These include insisting that visitors are free to explore without being forced to take “predetermined courses” or set paths in the manner of many museums and exhibits, that “small children are treated as if they were grown-ups”, and that the building is not “magnificent, flamboyant, or suffocating” and that it is “put together as though it were a film”.²⁶¹ Regardless of the final execution, the artistic intent behind the museum makes it a cultural text that deserves to be considered alongside the studio’s feature films.

Obvious comparisons are to be made with Disney’s popular amusement parks – Disney Land, Disney World, and Disney Sea – which also aim to provide excursions filled with “enchantment” and interactive engagement with Disney’s body of films. However, in contrast to Ghibli, these places promote rather than shun images connoting “magnificence” and grandeur, and do not focus on the image of parks as “films” or aesthetic experiences in themselves. The broadest stylistic difference might best be summarized by noting that Disney’s image as family entertainment is promoted through its embodiment of values in an amusement park setting, and Ghibli’s image as environmental and educational is promoted through its embodiment of values in a museum setting. This image-building is important in understanding how both studios manage and maintain their identity and brand despite the proliferation of their texts. Disney World has many exhibits which lean towards education and moral values, such as the “Presidential Gallery” in which animatronic U.S. presidents discuss their role in the nation’s history, or the “It’s a Small World” boat ride which promotes a form of multiculturalism. The Ghibli Museum also leans towards entertainment by

²⁶⁰ “Information”. *The official site of Ghibli Museum, Mitaka in Japan*. <<http://www.ghibli-museum.jp/en/info/>> [03/01/2018].

²⁶¹ Miyazaki, Hayao (2017). “A Few Words From Executive Director Hayao Miyazaki”. *The official site of Ghibli Museum, Mitaka in Japan*. <<http://www.ghibli-museum.jp/en/004518.html>> [03/01/2018].

giving more attention to its child-friendly movies (like *My Neighbour Totoro*) than its more adult-oriented films (like *Princess Mononoke*), and provides activities for children such as a giant “Cat-bus” which they can enter and play in. However, both the American Disney and the Japanese Ghibli maintain the integrity of their brands through the images and spatial context in which these activities are framed.²⁶²

Furthermore, the museum is not only integrated into the body of Ghibli films by being designed and promoted as a “film”. By creating short films that are only shown at the museum,²⁶³ Ghibli has also used the museum space as a way to extend its filmic output in a controlled and carefully managed way. In an age where streaming services and internet piracy make filmic content readily available to audiences, Ghibli has attempted to resist these outlets through its museum-only, carefully guarded shorts. The museum is therefore not only an extension of Ghibli’s texts, but also a technology aimed at maintaining centralized control over both new texts and the studio’s image in general. By manufacturing the image that the museum itself is a new Ghibli film, which houses other museum-only Ghibli films, the studio aims to work against the logic of distribution in favour of cultivating mystique, originality, and grounded regionalization: the consumer must travel to the texts, the texts will not travel to the consumer. Furthermore, as different films screen on different days, only multiple trips on the appropriate days would ensure that a visitor could see all the films it has to offer: rather than promote the proliferation of texts, the museum deliberately makes texts difficult to access, thereby enhancing the sense of a unique experience for each visitor. Despite decentralizing the locus of Ghibli away from films and into other media spaces – in addition to films, there is now Ghibli architecture, Ghibli space, a Ghibli experience, Ghibli archives, and so on –

²⁶² There have been longstanding rumours about a forthcoming Ghibli theme park in Japan, but only recently (2017) did Suzuki officially confirm that such a project was in the process of being realized, and is scheduled to open in 2020. The fact that the project does not apparently have the involvement of Miyazaki, who has often advocated the creation of a Ghibli-endorsed nature park for children, seems to demonstrate that Suzuki is at the helm of Ghibli’s new direction in the sphere of popular culture, as will be argued further on.

²⁶³ “Welcome”. *The official site of Ghibli Museum, Mitaka in Japan*. <<http://www.ghibli-museum.jp/en/welcome/>> [03/01/2018].

the museum is notable in its reinforcement of control and localization; in other words, centralization. It serves both to expand the influence and texts of Ghibli and also to redirect power back towards a small central group of creators, and especially towards Miyazaki himself.

Other Ghibli texts that are both extensions of the brand and technologies of control include documentaries and books. Documentaries made by the studio and about the studio obviously provide exciting “insider” material for Ghibli’s many fans while at the same time retaining control over the studio’s public image. Meanwhile Ghibli’s publishing house focuses primarily on Ghibli-related material, but also has built a web of supplementary Ghibli texts by releasing books on iconic and influential Japanese culture such as the 1961 hit song *Ue wo Muite Arukou* (officially known as *Sukiyaki* in the West), as well as translations of English-language books on films by Pixar, the (now Disney-owned) American animation studio run by Miyazaki’s friend John Lasseter.²⁶⁴ By having old books on manga theory republished, Miyazaki also creates the context in which he wants his films to be read. He has previously claimed that his films are not “anime”, but rather “manga films”, which have an aesthetic and history distinct from mainstream anime (those aesthetics which were pioneered by Tezuka Osamu in the 1960s). Having his studio attached to the republishing of a book on manga theory therefore serves the same dual purpose as the Ghibli documentaries: on the one hand to impart knowledge to the public, and on the other to control the narrative and context of the studio in the public sphere. Like the museum, they are con-texts, framing devices that both extend and centralize power.

Through its museum, Ghibli has also created a means of extending its brand onto non-Ghibli animated films. Ghibli has purchased the distribution rights to a number of foreign films for the museum, and, under the “Ghibli Museum Library” brand, distributed these to the general public in Japan. The mascot for Ghibli Museum Library films is notably not Totoro, but a creature resembling one of the small soot fairies that appear in the Totoro film. Choosing a mascot which re-

²⁶⁴ “Atarashii Hon [New Books]. *Sutajio Jiburi Shuppanbu no Saito* [Studio Ghibli Publishing Department Website]. <<http://www.ghibli.jp/shuppan/>> [02/02/2018].

images a stylistically distinctive yet minor character from the film in which the main character symbolizes Ghibli's feature films is symbolic in itself, signalling a subdivision of Ghibli films, and a way to expand its control over filmic texts without compromising the integrity of the Ghibli brand itself. By moving away from production and into distribution, Miyazaki and Takahata were able to purchase the rights to their own work, the two *Panda! Go Panda!* films (*Panda Kopanda*, 1972; *Panda Kopanda Amefuri Sākasu no Maki*, 1973), which they had made together before establishing Ghibli, and which could now be rebranded as Ghibli Museum Library films. As a result of Ghibli's move into distributing non-Ghibli titles, both Ghibli DVDs and Ghibli Museum Library DVDs are usually stocked together and presented in stores to the general public on the same shelves, significantly expanding the content of the "Ghibli" section available to customers. Unlike Disney, which masks its status as distributor of Ghibli films, the Ghibli Museum Library films proudly promote their films under their own brand, even though, with the exception of *Go Panda Go!*, these films are only tangentially linked to the creators of Ghibli, perhaps as sources of inspiration or works that they happen to admire. Recently, *The Red Turtle* (*La Tortue Rouge*, 2017), a critically acclaimed animation film that Ghibli and the German-French distribution company Wild Bunch co-produced, has also appeared under the Ghibli Museum Library brand and on the Ghibli shelves of rental stores in Japan. In this way, what are presented to the general public as "Ghibli films" have greatly increased in number.

The difference in distribution strategy between Disney and Ghibli is notable here. True to transpacific complicity, the American distributor of Japanese films is unmarked and mostly invisible to consumers, while the Japanese distributor of foreign films is marked and contextualises those films within its own cultural and artistic frame of reference. This is not to say that U.S. distributors, when marketing to American audiences, do not attempt to ground foreign products in their own cultural frame of reference (such as was the case with *Warriors of the Wind*, or some of Disney's more contentious dubbing),²⁶⁵ but to note how in the age of globalization, Japaneseness tends to be marked or

²⁶⁵ E.g. Ogihara-Schuck (2014), 133–146.

emphasized, whether in Japan or in the U.S., whereas Americanness tends to become invisible.

VI. Ghibli Decentralized: Losing Control of Ghiblification

Similar to the “Ghiblification” evident in the Ghibli-branded distribution of non-Ghibli films, the video game *Ni no Kuni* (2011) was largely marketed as a new work from Studio Ghibli, thanks to the involvement of the studio. The project, however, was primarily that of Japanese video game company Level-5. After gaining approval from producer Suzuki, the animated sequences of the game were produced by Studio Ghibli, while the rest of the artwork was inspired by the studio’s films, and the score was partially composed by Hisaishi Joe, who regularly works on Ghibli films. The game’s story was already complete by the time Ghibli became involved, but many reviews of the game drew attention to its similarity to Ghibli works. The game, highly anticipated and then critically acclaimed, thrived off of commentary and promotional material that framed the gameplay as though it were an interactive Ghibli film experience: “playing *Ni No Kuni* feels like moving around inside of a Studio Ghibli film”.²⁶⁶ Practically all positive reviews of the game emphasized its strong point as its ability in evoking feelings and images associated with Ghibli films. The game’s sequel *Ni no Kuni 2* is scheduled to be released in 2018, and does not apparently involve Studio Ghibli (which is currently not working in production at all). However, both Hisaishi Joe and a former Ghibli character designer who worked on the first game will have the same roles, and the game will no doubt once again be marketed with many references to its Ghibli-derived aesthetic.

Unlike the Ghibli Museum and the Ghibli Museum Library, *Ni no Kuni* is an example of the proliferation of the Ghibli brand becoming de-attached from the centralized power of the studio. It is notable that it was Suzuki, the founding producer of Ghibli, who involved the studio with the video game, while Miyazaki helmed the design of the museum. Both projects reveal different strategies for

²⁶⁶ Webster, Andrew (2013). “The ridiculously charming world of ‘Ni no Kuni’, Studio Ghibli’s gaming masterpiece”. *The Verge*.
<<https://www.theverge.com/2013/1/23/3906010/studio-ghibli-ps3-game-ni-no-kuni>> [03/01/2018].

how the Ghibli brand should be applied and maintained, with Miyazaki clearly favouring artistic control over increased hype and promotion.

In recent years, the Ghibli brand has increasingly gone the way of *Ni no Kuni*, and been employed as a marketing strategy for works that the studio itself has little control over. In 2014, *Kiki's Delivery Service* became the first (and so far only) Ghibli film to be remade in a live-action format, although the filmmakers officially based their work on the original source material, a novel, thereby circumventing the need to acquire rights from Ghibli. The unlikely director of the project was Shimizu Takashi, the J-horror auteur most famous for *The Grudge* franchise, who himself expressed surprise at being approached for the child-friendly project.²⁶⁷ (For this dissertation, this tangential link is especially noteworthy because it makes the 2014 *Kiki's Delivery Service* possibly the only cultural text that brings the assemblages of J-horror and Ghibli into contact with each other.) The choice perhaps makes more sense when considering the fact that the film's executive producer was Kiran Bhakta Joshi, a Hollywood producer who had previously worked on Disney films such as *Aladdin* (1992) and *The Lion King* (1994). His experience in animation would have acquainted him with Ghibli and the financial potential in a remake, while his inexperience in the Japanese film industry would have made him see the advantage in hiring a Japanese director who had had great success in both Hollywood and in Japan. Shimizu's association with the remake economy also would have made him stand out as a choice of director for Joshi, and perhaps – although this is more speculative – the trend of Hollywood's blockbuster superhero films to be darker in tone and far less frivolous than their predecessors (e.g. *The Dark Knight* [2008], *Watchmen* [2009], *Man of Steel* [2013]) would have influenced the idea of a “darker” version of the story of Kiki the witch, and therefore made a horror director more acceptable as a choice. Whatever motivated the decision, the film remains another example of Ghibli-branded material being produced outside of Ghibli's control, in this case most likely as an indirect result of the remake economy that

²⁶⁷ Schilling, Mark (2014 b). “Live-action Ghibli remake delivers a new Kiki”. *The Japan Times*. <<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2014/03/06/films/live-action-ghibli-remake-delivers-a-new-kiki/#.Wpe8yK2B2gQ>> [03/01/2018].

had flourished between Japanese filmmakers and Hollywood producers in the 2000s.

Another significant example of how Ghibli's decentralization has resulted in a loss of studio influence over the Ghibli brand is the town of Jiufen in Taiwan. Jiufen is a tourist destination largely promoted for its likeness to the magical setting of Miyazaki's film *Spirited Away* – the streets lined with red lanterns, a maze-like criss-crossing of stairs going up and down a hillside, and an abundance of street food are all present in both the film and the town. The story goes that Miyazaki visited the town and was inspired by its architecture, especially that of a building known as the Grand Tea House, upon which he based the bath house where most of the action in the film takes place. Travel reviews, Ghibli fan forums, tourist information areas, and Asian popular culture websites all promote Jiufen as the place that inspired *Spirited Away*, with some building upon this and going as far as to say that the large variety of people that one can see may have inspired the spirits and magical creatures that populate the world of *Spirited Away*.²⁶⁸ However, not only are these rumours groundless, but Miyazaki himself has denied them in interviews.²⁶⁹ Jiufen is not alone in benefiting from Ghibli tourism: Yakushima, a Japanese island where Miyazaki and other animators went to draw inspiration for the scenery of *Princess Mononoke*, has woven this narrative into its promotional material, even going so far as to name part of its trekking area “Princess Mononoke's Forest”.²⁷⁰ In contrast, Jiufen is renowned as the “real life” version of a magical Ghibli setting despite not having any prior link to the films. Similar to how the Ghibli Museum promotes itself as “built like a Miyazaki film”, Japanese and other tourists continue to flock to Jiufen based on the allure of an interactive Ghibli experience, only in this case the promotion is entirely out of the control of Ghibli itself.

²⁶⁸ Koichi (2013). “Jiufen: The Real Life Spirited Away”. *Tofugu*.

<<https://www.tofugu.com/travel/jiufen-spirited-away/>> [03/01/2018].

²⁶⁹ “*Taiwan no kyūfun wa ‘Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi’ to wa Mukankei (Miyazaki Hayao Intabyū Yori)*” (2013). *YouTube*.

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkp6UtBcUns>> [12/10/2017].

²⁷⁰ “*Shishigami ga Sumikitama ga Kubi wo Furuwasu ‘Mononoke Hime no Mori’*”. *The World Heritage Yakushima – Trekking Navi*. <<http://www.yakushima-info.com/yakushima/shirataniunsuikyo/mononoke.html>> [03/01/2018].

How the rumour began remains a mystery, but perhaps one answer lies in Jiufen's recent history. An old mining town that had been largely abandoned, Jiufen suddenly became known throughout Taiwan after Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A City of Sadness* (*Bēiqíng chéngshì*, 1989) was filmed there. *A City of Sadness* was the first film to openly depict and confront the "White Terror" of the Kuomintang government, including the uprising and massacre of the February 28th Incident of 1947. It won the Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival and was a national hit, transforming Jiufen into a domestic tourist attraction in the process.²⁷¹ To tie in to the nostalgia of "old Taiwan" evoked by the film, the town was decorated with "traditional" style cafés, tea houses, and, of course, red lanterns.²⁷² Souvenir shops with the name "City of Sadness" were built around the town. As time went on and the film itself became a thing of the past, it seems that the town has once again made use of a cinematic connection to rebrand itself – while the "traditional" elements remain, now there are numerous bootleg Ghibli products to be found in the souvenir shops, and drawings of Ghibli characters on the free maps that are handed out to tourists. The fact that the town has built its reputation as a tourist spot on the popularity of two distinct films could be a coincidence, but it seems more likely that the town's promoters have simply modified the strategy developed in the wake of *A City of Sadness* to suit the more recent and more wide-reaching appeal of *Spirited Away*. This would make Jiufen an unparalleled example of self-Ghiblification, and therefore an important cultural text in the Ghibli assemblage.

Another consideration to take into account in Jiufen's use of Ghibli is the fact that many of the town's buildings were built under the Japanese occupation: in fact, the town originally prospered as a mining town under direct Japanese control, and during the war it was near the site of a prisoner of war camp which forced prisoners to work in the mines under brutal conditions.²⁷³ One might think that as the image of this dark past had apparently been muted by the "City

²⁷¹ Miyamoto, Junhaku (2017). "Jiufen". *Junhaku Miyamoto*. <<http://www.mcfw.jp/jiufen.htm>> [03/01/2018].

²⁷² Miyamoto (2017).

²⁷³ Flower, Sybilla Jane (2000). "British Prisoners of War of the Japanese, 1941-45". *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000*. Ian Nish and Yoichi Kibata, eds. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 149-150.

of Sadness” branding, to re-associate the town with Japan might be a risky or controversial venture. However, perhaps somewhat reflecting the general Taiwanese attitude to the Japanese occupation, the negative aspects of Japan’s influence are not promoted in the town (in fact, the POW site Jinguashi is now a mine-themed tourist attraction known as Kinkaseki in Japan), whereas the Japanese-styled tea houses seem all the more appropriate in the context of a Ghibli-based fantasy land.

Although cases like Jiufen are telling examples of how Japanese popular culture has become increasingly removed from the influence of their creators and from Japan as a whole, the fact that the dispersal of Ghibli’s images and aesthetic into the public domain has resulted in them being repurposed by other groups and to ends other than those dictated by the studio is perhaps unsurprising, given Ghibli’s current global appeal thanks to the methods of dissemination brought about by globalization. Perhaps more surprising is the way that Ghibli has managed to resist the decentralization of power while continuing to promote itself on the global stage. While carefully selling limited rights of distribution to companies like Belic and Disney, Ghibli has maintained tight control over its properties. In the era of globalization, Ghibli is a somewhat remarkable example of a small company going on to become a global brand while maintaining most of its power, i.e. corporate and creative control, in the hands of a small number of people in the region of its origin.

VII. Brand, Dynasty, and Aesthetic: Internal Tensions and *Tales From Earthsea*

I have shown how two of the three founders of Ghibli, Miyazaki and Suzuki, used different strategies in extending Ghibli’s texts and influence, with Miyazaki helming controlled and contextualizing projects like the Ghibli Museum, and Suzuki initiating hype-related and largely uncontrolled projects like the video game *Ni no Kuni*. This divergence of strategies is perhaps typical of the general interests of an artist and a producer, but is interesting in the context of Ghibli’s transformations as a global franchise. It also led to a highly publicized clash within the studio and a momentary exposure of the normally invisible

tensions between these two strategies, a fracture in Ghibli's usually carefully maintained image and operations that deserves articulation here.

In a public blog post, American fantasy author Ursula K. Le Guin relates how she was contacted by Miyazaki in the mid-1980s, around the time of Studio Ghibli's founding, and was asked if he could make a film based on her fantasy novel series known as *Earthsea*. Le Guin writes, "I did not know his work. I knew only Disney-type animation, and disliked it. I said no."²⁷⁴ Her answer is testament to Ghibli's pre-globalized status. While at least *Nausicaä*, if not *Castle in the Sky* and *Totoro*, would have gained Miyazaki acclaim and popularity in Japan by the time, his works were still bounded by national borders, and the mainstream image of animated films as light entertainment for children had yet to be transformed in the USA (despite some domestic works which challenged this status, like the films of Ralph Bakshi). It was only around the turn of the millennium that Le Guin was introduced to the works of Miyazaki, which made her a "fan at once and forever",²⁷⁵ and prompted her to reverse her decision and say she would be willing to engage in talks for the adaptation of her work into a film. By this point, some of Ghibli's films, especially *Spirited Away*, had already included images which seemed at least partially inspired by the *Earthsea* books, such as that of a sorcerer gaining power over someone by taking their name from them. This is just one of many ways in which globalized Ghibli can be said to have re-imagined and returned tropes of Western popular culture to their regions of origin.

Eventually, Le Guin began a correspondence with Suzuki to discuss how the project might take shape. Suzuki, however, chose to appoint Miyazaki's son, Gorō, to direct the new *Earthsea* Ghibli film, a decision which the elder Miyazaki vehemently opposed, claiming his son did not have the necessary experience to make a feature film for the studio.²⁷⁶ While Miyazaki Gorō's background lay in landscape design, he became involved with the studio by assisting with the

²⁷⁴ Le Guin, Ursula K. (2006). "Ged Senki Response". *UrsulaKLeGuin.com*. <<http://www.ursulakleguin.com/GedoSenkiResponse.html>> [03/01/2018].

²⁷⁵ Le Guin, (2006).

²⁷⁶ Ashcraft, Brian (2015). "Hayao Miyazaki Is One Tough Critic". *Kotaku*. <<https://kotaku.com/hayao-miyazaki-is-one-tough-critic-1736009858>> [03/01/2018].

design of the Ghibli Museum, and later became the Museum's director from 2001 to 2005. It was at this point that he became involved with the *Earthsea* project, so his father's concern at lack of experience does not seem ungrounded. While most of Miyazaki Hayao's Ghibli films took years to produce and had a long period of pre-production gestation, such as 1997's *Princess Mononoke* which he had been conceptualizing and sketching since the 1970s,²⁷⁷ the *Tales From Earthsea* (*Gedo Senki*) Ghibli film was completed in less than a year, and released in Japan in 2006. The Ghibli brand firmly established by this point, the film was unsurprisingly a great commercial success, beating the latest installment of the hit Disney franchise *Pirates of the Caribbean* to the number one spot at the box office. However, it differed from its predecessors in a radical way: it was largely panned by critics, and remains the only Studio Ghibli film to be widely considered "a bad film". The "Ghibli aesthetic", which included both carefully detailed artwork, episodic approaches to narrative development, and values such as pacifism, were largely absent from the film, and the environmentalist messages in the film were delivered almost entirely through dialogue that took the form of didactic speeches which could easily have been removed from the film without altering its narrative or style. In *Tales From Earthsea*, Studio Ghibli had made a film advertised by its brand but lacking its aesthetic. How, then, had this significant rupture between brand and aesthetic been allowed to happen?

The media focus on the film's reception predictably framed its production problems as a conflict between father and son. Allegedly Miyazaki did not speak to his son during the entirety of the project, despite the fact that Le Guin had given Miyazaki and Suzuki the rights to her novel in a meeting in her home where she claims she was "assured" that Miyazaki would oversee his son's film, which "would be subject to Mr Hayao's approval".²⁷⁸ While Miyazaki Gorō quoted positive reactions to the film from both his father and Le Guin on his public blog,²⁷⁹ both Le Guin and Miyazaki Hayao have voiced their deep

²⁷⁷ "Princess Mononoke". *Treasures From the Yale Film Archive*.

<<https://web.library.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Mononoke%20Notes.pdf>> [03/01/2018].

²⁷⁸ Le Guin (2006).

²⁷⁹ Le Guin (2006); Miyazaki, Goro (2006). "Kantoku Nisshi". *Studio Ghibli*.

<http://www.ghibli.jp/ged_02/20director/000625.html> [03/01/2018].

displeasure at the final result in other contexts. Besides the “white-washing” of the narrative by changing the ethnicity of the novels’ main characters to white, a notable concern that Le Guin raised was the film’s consistent use of violence to resolve conflict, a complaint that reveals her affinity with the elder Miyazaki’s aesthetic approach. However, the main crisis that *Tales From Earthsea* demonstrates is not one between these three artists, but rather one between Suzuki’s strategy and Miyazaki’s strategy for maintaining the Studio.

True to form, Suzuki had favoured hype-related and uncontrolled artistry in contrast to Miyazaki’s need for thematic and value-based integrity. In 2004, Studio Ghibli became independent from Tokuma Shoten, and Suzuki took on the role of president in Ghibli’s new status as a corporation, which may have influenced his decision to take a risk in production against Miyazaki Hayao’s wishes. From Suzuki’s perspective, establishing Miyazaki’s eldest son as a “family heir” to the studio was an imperative that apparently outweighed the costs of making a rushed film, whereas from Miyazaki’s perspective the studio’s image and/or reputation took precedence over establishing a family legacy. Miyazaki’s anti-dynastic stance seems clear from his statement that his son, having made one film, should now “stop” altogether.²⁸⁰ However, he would eventually work alongside his son for his second attempt at directing a Ghibli film, the better-received *From Up On Poppy Hill* (*Kokuriko-zaka Kara*, 2011).

Ironically, it was precisely Ghibli’s globalized success that led to Le Guin discovering the studio and accepting Miyazaki’s request from the 1980s, and doing so at a time when Suzuki wished to begin initiating a new member into its small circle of power. Despite Miyazaki Gorō’s lack of experience in filmmaking, his status as the eldest son of the revered Miyazaki meant that having his name attached to the film offered great opportunities for the studio’s marketing, brand, and legacy. The rise in global demand would also have made the need for new animators to eventually succeed Miyazaki more urgent. In a variety of ways, then, Ghibli’s globalization led to a scenario in which Miyazaki momentarily lost control of his studio’s production and image, something he had long been cultivating through projects such as the Ghibli Museum. However, by stepping back from his son’s film entirely, Miyazaki Hayao’s personal brand remained

²⁸⁰ Ashcraft (2015).

untarnished, and *Tales From Earthsea's* poor quality and critical failure did not spark a crisis for control of the studio. In fact, by proving the inadequacy of a film that had the Ghibli brand but lacked the Ghibli aesthetic, *Tales From Earthsea* may have reaffirmed the necessity of keeping artistic control and major project decisions exclusively in the hands of Miyazaki and Takahata. The film is therefore the embodiment of a rare rupture in both Ghibli's central management and its film quality as an indirect result of globalization. However, rather than a signal that the Ghibli central apparatus was falling apart, its exceptionality reveals how tightly managed Ghibli's general operations and commitment to craftsmanship were. *Tales From Earthsea* was a wobble, but not the beginning of the end for the studio.

VIII. Closing The Studio: Ghibli Nostalgia as an Affective Tool in *The Wind Rises*, *Princess Kaguya*, and *Mary and the Witch's Flower*

One of the reasons that Le Guin felt betrayed by Miyazaki's lack of involvement in *Tales From Earthsea* was that he had told her he was planning on retiring from filmmaking, which she understood as the reason he felt he could not personally direct the Ghibli film based on her work – but then he didn't retire.²⁸¹ Miyazaki has now become famous for announcing his impending retirement since *Princess Mononoke* in the late 1990s – “unsuccessful retirement” has indeed become a facet of his light-hearted image and public persona. However, the announcement that *The Wind Rises* would be his last film and that “this time [he's] serious”²⁸² seemed sincere in light of the film itself. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, *The Wind Rises*, both through context and the text itself, was marked with an air of finality. Such was Miyazaki's centrality to the studio, as evidenced by the critical rejection of possible heirs such as his son Gorō, that the prospect of his stepping down naturally suggested the closing of the entire studio as well. Comparisons with other animation studios are noteworthy, as they rarely centre their power and image on a single person to

²⁸¹ Le Guin (2006).

²⁸² Barnes, Brooks (2013). “Swan Song Too Hawkish for Some”. *The New York Times*. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/06/movies/hayao-miyazakis-film-the-wind-rises-gets-complaints.html>> [03/02/2018].

the extent that the person's stepping down would signal the end of the studio. Even Disney, which is not only a global animation studio, but like Ghibli relies on the figure of a mythic and benevolent patriarch as part of the company's image, had dispersed power (especially through its roles in production and distribution of non-animated films) to an extent that there was no question of its functionality being called into question once its patriarch was gone with no one to take his creative place. Studio Ghibli has, as Lamarre puts it, "a noticeable problem with succession".²⁸³

What was it about *The Wind Rises* that made it, unlike Miyazaki's previous "final" films, highly evocative of the studio's closing? Besides its evocations of the "wind" (*kaze*) previously mentioned, it was clearly a more personal film than anything Miyazaki had made before. By breaking with fantasy and turning to historical drama, Miyazaki showed both that he was trying something new and that his focus had turned to themes associated with adulthood and old age: looking back at one's life and one's country, rather than looking forward to new worlds as the children of *Castle in the Sky* or *My Neighbour Totoro* had.²⁸⁴ I will consider the ways in which the image of *The Wind Rises* as a personalized final offering from Miyazaki has affected the critical texts of the Ghibli assemblage in the next chapter; for now it is enough to note that many commentators²⁸⁵ have noted both the personal nature and suggestion of a culmination of Miyazaki's work in the text. While the word "wind" in the title created circularity with *Nausicaä and the Valley of the Wind*, the fact that Miyazaki and Takahata were both working on films at the same time and intended to release them alongside each other was certainly intentionally evocative of their original double bill, the double screening of *My Neighbour Totoro* and *The Grave of the Fireflies* in 1988, a formative event which greatly contributed to the studio's reputation

²⁸³ Lamarre (2009), 99.

²⁸⁴ Robinson (2017).

²⁸⁵ E.g. Napier, Susan J. (2013). "Sweet Dreams and Flying Machines: Miyazaki's *The Wind Rises*". *The Huffington Post*. <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-j-napier/sweet-dreams-and-flying-m_b_4288481.html> [03/02/2018].

domestically. Ultimately, Takahata's film *Princess Kaguya* (*Kaguya Hime*, 2013) ran over schedule and was released after *The Wind Rises*, but in the same year.²⁸⁶

Like Miyazaki's film, *Princess Kaguya* had an air of a life's cumulative work about it: narratively it was a variation of a Japanese folktale that had Takahata had previously depicted in *My Neighbours the Yamadas* (*Tonari no Yamada Kun*, 1999), and stylistically it combined many of the distinctive formal properties that had made Takahata's previous films stand out, such as the rough, sketch-like brush-strokes of *My Neighbours the Yamadas* and the empty, canvas-like spaces used to suggest incomplete memories in *Only Yesterday* (*Omoide Poroporo*, 1991). While the eponymous princess begins life as a child, she quickly matures to adulthood, and her concerns are not about how to exist in this world, but how she can leave it and return to something better, either in the form of her carefree childhood of rural poverty and happiness, or the magical "heaven" from which she originally came. In the folktale and the film, this heaven is literally depicted as the moon, but the film's narrative has heavy overtones of death and passing out of life and into stillness. While he had not announced retirement, Takahata had just turned 80 at the time of the release, casting doubt over whether he would produce any more films for the studio in his lifetime.

Both *The Wind Rises* and *Princess Kaguya* share these common attributes: they were strikingly different from their auteurs' previous works but combined many of their previous themes and images, they dealt with weighty and "mature" themes such as mortality, loss, and history in contrast to the auteurs' more light-hearted works, and they both were released into a milieu of media texts (including Miyazaki's retirement statement) that suggested the closing of Studio Ghibli. These two Ghibli films are therefore notable in the way that, in addition to being additions to Ghibli's main body of feature films, they function in the same way as the Ghibli Museum: they aim to be both new Ghibli texts, but also a frame of reference through which we can look back and articulate the Ghibli assemblage as a whole – in other words, a con-text. Especially in the case of the

²⁸⁶ "Takahata Isao Kantoku 'Kaguya Hime no Monogatari kōkai ga aki ni enki!' (2013). *Eiga.com*. <<http://eiga.com/news/20130205/4/>> [03/02/2018].

“autobiographical”²⁸⁷ *The Wind Rises*, the film differs from Miyazaki’s earlier works because of its partial reliance on a concept of “Miyazaki’s Ghibli”, or a looking-back towards Ghibli – in other words, the film functions as part of an affective circuit of Ghibli nostalgia. Just like the Museum, *The Wind Rises* therefore is another cultural text through which Miyazaki has employed his typical strategy of control over his studio’s image, which is to create an aesthetic lens through which he wants his previous work to be understood. Another possible strategy of control was the fact that he released his most fiercely critical statement against the Japanese government’s attempts to revise the pacifist clause of the constitution at almost the same time as his final film. I will consider *The Wind Rises* and the political image of Ghibli in the next chapter – for now it is enough to note how the concepts of closure and legacy were introduced into the aesthetic of Ghibli films as a sign that the central powers were stepping back from production.

Having consolidated its authority in the image of a couple of artists, it was unclear if Ghibli would, or could, continue without the presence of its most authoritative and iconic figures, around whom the studio’s artistic credentials and brand reputation had been established. One more Ghibli film was made, *When Marnie Was There* (*Omoide no Mānī*, 2014) perhaps as a way of posing this very question of its existence to audiences, with the hope of finding an answer in box office impact and critical appraisals. In both respects the film did favourably, although not to the degree of success achieved by Miyazaki’s and Takahata’s greatest films.²⁸⁸ Thus in 2014, Suzuki having relinquished his role of producer to Nishimura Yoshiaki but still heavily involved in Ghibli affairs, announced that Ghibli would stop the production of films and “restructure”²⁸⁹ in the wake of

²⁸⁷ Sugita quoted in: Swale, Alistair (2017). “Memory and forgetting: examining the treatment of traumatic historical memory in *Grave of the Fireflies* and *The Wind Rises*”. *Japan Forum*. Vol. 29, No. 4. London: Routledge. 529.

²⁸⁸ “Franchises – Studio Ghibli”. *Box Office Mojo*.

<<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/franchises/chart/?id=ghibli.htm>> [03/02/2018].

²⁸⁹ Suzuki quoted in: Lim, Megumi (2014). “‘Spirit’ fades for famed Japan animation studio after Miyazaki signs off”. *Reuters*.

<<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-film-japan-ghibli/spirit-fades-for-famed-japan-animation-studio-after-miyazaki-signs-off-idUSKBN0H20UL20140907>> [03/02/2018].

Miyazaki's retirement. The distribution and merchandising branches of the studio would continue to operate as normal, but filmmaking was, for the time being, at an end. Typically outward-looking and globalist, Suzuki suggested a future model in which labour was outsourced to other East Asian countries, such as Taiwan, while creative control remained in Japan. Under this new transnational Studio Ghibli (which has yet to materialize), "Ideas will be formed in Japan and the animation [...] will be 'Made in Asia'".²⁹⁰ This conceptual division of labour between "Japan" and "Asia" once again demonstrates that the Japanese film industry's apparently border-effacing or "transnational" projects rely on regionalized divisions of labour that form a continuity with ideological norms predating the new imperatives of globalization.

Miyazaki continued to be involved with the Ghibli Museum, and distanced himself from the closure of Ghibli's production team by saying, "All I did was announce that I would be retiring," and that he had had "no intention" of causing production to end,²⁹¹ although given his long-term cultivation of Ghibli around his personal projects, such a statement comes across as somewhat ingenuous. In any case, the closing of Studio Ghibli's production department in 2014 led to several of its employees moving to a new studio founded by the Ghibli producer that had been meant to take Suzuki's place, Nishimura Yoshiaki. Nishimura founded Studio Ponoc, which, echoing "Ghibli", takes its name for a European word connoting both a natural phenomenon and a fresh start: the Bosnian word *ponoć*, which means both "midnight" and a "the beginning of a new day". However, echoing Ghibli's image of a "new beginning" is highly ironic: given the use of the same producers and animators, as well as the unusual disyllabic name itself, the emphasis of Ponoc has so far been on continuity with Ghibli rather than newness and originality – all of which would make sense from a marketing point

²⁹⁰ Lim, Megumi (2014). "'Spirit' fades for famed Japan animation studio after Miyazaki signs off". *Reuters*. <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-film-japan-ghibli/spirit-fades-for-famed-japan-animation-studio-after-miyazaki-signs-off-idUSKBN0H20UL20140907>> [03/02/2018].

²⁹¹ Miyazaki quoted in: Keegan, Rebecca (2014). "Hayao Miyazaki isn't making features but is at work on manga". *Los Angeles Times*. <<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/moviesnow/la-et-mn-hayao-miyazaki-honorary-oscar-governors-awards-20141108-story.html>> [03/02/2018].

of view. Just as the video game *Ni no Kuni* and the Taiwanese town Jiufen promoted and defined themselves using the Ghibli brand, so too did Ponoc attempt to fashion itself in an image that would satisfy expectations of what “Ghibli” meant in the cultural sphere. To this end, various press announcements claiming that “Ghibli is back!”²⁹² in the form of Ponoc have contributed to the image of brand continuity that has been crucial to the formation of the new studio. Nishimura’s concern with the Ghibli brand in relation to his studio’s first film is clear from statements such as the following:

At the end of 2014, when the production division of Studio Ghibli was closed, there were those of us who wanted to continue to make good animation films, so we founded Studio Ponoc. There were basically two challenges that we had, making [our first film] *Mary and The Witch’s Flower*. One was that everybody knows Studio Ghibli’s high quality—everybody around the world has seen it. The fact that we had to start from zero and approach that quality with a much lower budget, that was a big challenge. We had to gather the staff, and we had to come up with a film that people who loved Studio Ghibli films would enjoy watching, in three years. Something that Studio Ghibli had a 30 year history of providing, presenting such films.²⁹³

Clearly, Nishimura is concerned not only with a continuation of Ghibli’s standards in filmmaking, but also the need to appeal to an audience that had certain expectations of what a “Ghibli film” was. Ponoc’s existence therefore depended on making something as close to a “Ghibli film” that they could manage, as well as evoking the “Ghibli nostalgia” that had been harnessed in the texts and contexts of *The Wind Rises* and *Princess Kaguya*. The production of *Mary and the*

²⁹² E.g. Collin, Robbie (2016). “Prepare to be spirited away: as if by magic, Studio Ghibli is back to make the world a brighter place”. *The Telegraph*. <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/0/prepare-spirited-away-magic-studio-ghibli-back-make-world-brighter/>> [03/02/2018].

²⁹³ Nishimura quoted in Grobar, Matt (2017). “‘Mary And The Witch’s Flower’ Director On Exploring World Of Magic Through The Eyes Of A Young Girl”. *Deadline*. <<http://deadline.com/2017/11/mary-and-the-witchs-flower-hiromasa-yonebayashi-oscars-interview-news-1202199618/>> [03/02/2018].

Witch's Flower (*Meari to Majo no Hana*, 2017) perhaps marks the moment that it became conceivable that “Ghibli films” were a brand and aesthetic that could continue independently not only of Miyazaki but of the studio itself, and as such it demonstrates the Ghibli brand surpassing its studio’s old structures of power. While Miyazaki has given the project his blessing, he has declined Nishimura’s invitation to watch Ponoc’s first film.²⁹⁴

IX. Nostalgic Beginnings: Ponoc, GKids, and the End of the Disney-Tokuma Arrangement

Nothing shows Ponoc’s reliance on the Ghibli brand more clearly than the style and narrative of their first film, *Mary and the Witch's Flower* (*Meari to Majo no Hana*, 2017). Like several Ghibli films (*Howl's Moving Castle*, *Tales of Earth Sea*, *Arriety*, *When Marnie Was There*), *Mary and the Witch's Flower* is based on a Western fantasy novel, and like several of Miyazaki’s films especially, it has a distinctly European countryside setting. Similar to Miyazaki’s *Kiki's Delivery Service*, the plot centres around a young preadolescent girl who finds herself in the role of a “witch”: riding broomsticks, befriending a black cat, performing magic, and so on. While the style and plots between these two films are very different, this basic similarity allowed for a publicity campaign that could rely on images reminiscent of Ghibli’s previous work. These “European pre-adolescent witch” signifiers also played into the media event of Ghibli’s recent closure: not only did the style evoke Ghibli, it evoked *old* Ghibli, or *past* Ghibli, at a time when the Japanese public felt Ghibli had just become a thing of the past. In other words, Ponoc’s first film was marketed (and possibly designed) to exploit the affect of Ghibli nostalgia. Once again, it is appropriate to class the film *Mary and the*

²⁹⁴ Miyazaki quoted in: “‘*Ore wa minai*’ to Miyazaki Hayao Kantoku ga Kanshō wo Kyōhi Shita ‘*Meari to Majo no Hana*’ – Jiburi no Jubaku Kara Kaihō Sareta Kantoku ga Tsukutta Mahō no Monogatari” (2017). *Sankei Nyūsu*.

<<http://www.sankei.com/premium/news/170702/prm1707020006-n1.html>> [03/02/2018].

Witch's Flower along with the video game *Ni no Ku*, the town of Jiufen, and Shimizu's remake of *Kiki's Delivery Service* as cultural texts that are largely defined by the Ghibli brand, and are therefore part of the Ghibli assemblage that have come into existence despite the lack of control from Ghibli's traditional power base.

The publicity campaign of *Mary and the Witch's Flower* was notable not just in how it attempted to frame the film as a "post-Ghibli but still Ghibli" film, but also in its promotion of other products, especially those of Japan's Morinaga milk company. In Ghibli's case, its television advertisements were almost always created as projects separate from their films – in fact, only two advertisements directly referenced the films. The first was a promotional tie-in between with the convenient store Lawson, and depicted the rare availability of Ghibli merchandise (given Ghibli's strict control over rights) to mark the release of *Spirited Away*. The advertisement only shows Miyazaki's characters in the form of toys that children can collect – not the characters themselves. In contrast, a promotional tie-in for *The Cat Returns* (*Neko no Ongaeshi*, 2002), directed by Morita Hiroyuki, depicts the characters from the film eating the food that is being advertised – the only time when Ghibli extended the borders of its fictional worlds to have its characters sell products to viewers. In contrast, Ponoc collaborated with Morinaga to produce several advertisements depicting the eponymous Mary consuming clearly labeled products from the Morinaga company, including yoghurt, ice cream, and cheese (Fig. 2). As well as the funding Ponoc no doubt received, perhaps connecting its campaign to that of a powerful and well-known food company would be seen as beneficial in creating hype for the film of a new studio. However, its blatantly consumerist strategy, as in the case of *The Cat Returns*, seems quite at odds with the spirit of Ghibli (especially Miyazaki and Takahata's films). It is hard to imagine one of the two auteurs' iconic heroines, such as Nausicaä, Chihiro, or Princess Kaguya, succumbing to capitalist imperatives by posing with a product, or asking audiences to buy such a product, especially one as mundane as a cheese. Whether or not this "heroine + product" image struck audiences as a breaking with the Ghibli brand image, as a strategy it certainly can be seen as a discontinuity with the imperatives of Miyazaki and Takahata, and a continuity

with the marketing strategies employed for *The Cat Returns*. In addition to exploiting nostalgia, increased commercialization can therefore be considered a new strategy for control over the Ghibli brand.



Figure 2: Mary enjoying Morinaga goods.

Another discontinuity with Ghibli at the structural level is one which brings Ghibli's globalization story full circle, in a sense: the involvement of Disney.²⁹⁵ While Disney had long marketed Ghibli as one of its intellectual properties in countries outside of Asia, as a result of the Disney-Tokuma deal its role had been primarily as distributor, despite the fact that it also contributed regularly to production costs in the years after the deal. In a sign that the old power relation has faded despite the continuation of the Ghibli brand, Disney did not gain the rights to distribute *Mary and the Witch's Flower* in Japan or any other territory. Those rights currently belong to Toho in Japan, and GKids in America. Furthermore, in July of 2017, the same month that Ponoc's film was released domestically, Disney sold the US distribution rights of all its Ghibli properties to GKids.²⁹⁶ It had previously granted them the US theatrical rights in 2011, but with the granting of home video rights, Disney has apparently

²⁹⁵ "Mary and the Witch's Flower (2017) – Company Credits". *IMDb*. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt6336356/companycredits?ref_=tt_ql_dt_4> [03/02/2018].

²⁹⁶ D'Anastasio, Cecilia (2017). "GKIDS Takes Over U.S. Studio Ghibli Distribution From Disney". *Kotaku*. <<https://kotaku.com/gkids-takes-over-u-s-studio-ghibli-distribution-from-d-1797730952>> [03/02/2018].

relinquished its old dominant role in the functioning of Ghibli at a global level. No doubt the studio's announcement that it had closed production was a major factor in Disney's decision to move away from the old transpacific distribution of power between the two companies.

However, Disney retains control over Ghibli distribution in Japan and many other countries, and with the advent of Ponoc it has new opportunities for gaining control over the Ghibli brand, which continues to generate great profits, as can be seen by *Mary and the Witch's Flower's* box office success. The film opened in second place in Japan, performing better than Ghibli's last film, *When Marnie Was There*, also directed by Yonebayashi Hiromasa. *Mary and the Witch's Flower*, hyped as a new incarnation of Ghibli, is expected to receive an international release in 2018.

This chapter has charted the structural and imagistic nature of Ghibli's globalization, from the haphazard and heterogenous international releases of *Nausicaä* and *My Neighbour Totoro*, to the global reach and transpacific complicity of the Disney-Tokuma deal, and to the un-anchoring of Ghibli's brand from its studio as its images became re-appropriated and its auteurs decreased productivity in their old age. Disney's relinquishing of Ghibli distribution rights in the USA may also be seen as a dissolution of the bonds that held together Ghibli's global dominance in popular culture, but for Miyazaki's part, the director has recently declared he has come out of retirement and is working on a new feature length film.²⁹⁷ Given that Ghibli had carefully only ever described the shutting of its production company as a "winding down" of its affairs, it seems certain that Ghibli will return for Miyazaki's next film. At the same time, GKids has just begun re-releasing all of Ghibli's catalogue in the USA under its label, including two films, *Only Yesterday* (1991) and *Ocean Waves* (1993), that Disney had chosen not to release.

In addition to the nostalgic affect tied to marketing and that exists in the very notion of a "re-release", the availability of these "new" films in international markets will no doubt help the assemblage spread further. Both the re-releases

²⁹⁷ "Studio Ghibli founder Hayao Miyazaki comes out of retirement" (2017). *BBC*. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/39079342/studio-ghibli-founder-hayao-miyazaki-comes-out-of-retirement>> [03/02/2018].

and the availability of new Ghibli films has prompted reviews and retrospectives in American media, refreshing and maintaining Ghibli's popular culture dominance in anglophone contexts, which will continue as more titles are re-released to international markets in 2018. At the same time, Studio Ponoc's film has also relied on both Ghibli nostalgia and the image of "newness" to contribute to this recent surge in Ghibli interest in Japan and abroad. How the Ghibli assemblage continues to develop – whether Miyazaki and Disney will attempt to reassert their old dominance, or whether the brand will continue to be reconfigured away from those traditional power bases – will no doubt be observable in the coming years.

Chapter Six

The Limits of Sympathy: Victimhood and Political Resistance in Ghibli's Films

As mentioned previously, despite the fact that their success and artfulness has made them appealing subject matter for both film critics and academics, criticisms of Studio Ghibli's films have been few and far between. In contrast to the general output of Hollywood films aimed at young or "family" audiences, Susan Napier believes that Ghibli offers a "cinema of de-assurance" in contrast to Hollywood's "cinema of reassurance".²⁹⁸ She cites social critique, the lack of narrative closure, and apocalyptic scenarios as some of the ways that Ghibli challenges rather than reassures its audiences. This seems especially true when taken in the international context of films produced for children. At the same time, approaches like Napier's problematically align themselves with the Orientalist discourse in which Japanese cinema is the Other of Hollywood,²⁹⁹ and obscure the existence of Ghibli's own "cinema of reassurance". Ghibli's cinema of reassurance comes to prominence especially in the context of domestic Japanese media, where discourses of power like environmental nationalism and victim consciousness (*higaishi ishiki*) have a region-specific history and resonance that is often lost on foreign fans and commentators. Naturally, different audiences will respond differently to the same films, but rather than merely relativise these cultural experiences, thereby dissecting the work in an artificial and essentialising manner (e.g. the American Ghibli experience versus the Japanese Ghibli experience), it would do better to identify the political and historical elements that work together to create difference within the films' milieu of affective forces. While Napier's binary of reassuring and de-assuring cinema is

²⁹⁸ Napier, Susan J. (2001 a). "Confronting Master Narratives: History as Vision in Miyazaki Hayao's Cinema of Deassurance". *positions*. Duke University Press (Fall 2001). 9:2. 469-471; Napier, Susan J. (2001 b). *Anime: From "Akira" to "Princess Mononoke": Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*. New York: Palgrave. 33.

²⁹⁹ Yoshimoto, Mitsuhiro (1993). "The Difficulty of Being Radical: The Discipline of Film Studies and the Post Colonial World Order". *Japan in the World*. Eds. Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunin. Durham: Duke University Press. 338-53.

useful and will be returned to, the reactionary or conservative elements within Ghibli films are in no way opposed or separate to the fêted pacifist, environmentalist, and humanist elements; on the contrary, I will argue in this chapter that both elements are developed so as to be mutually constitutive.

This chapter will problematise the prevailing image of Ghibli films as uniquely progressive in the sense of the values and concepts they convey to their often very young audiences, and more specifically show how they reproduce or align with conservative ideologies, and in doing so play a role in entrenching socially retrograde and nationalist positions. Focusing on details that might be lost when these films are considered outside of the context of Japanese cultural politics will reveal how international critics and audiences are often blind to Ghibli's conservatism. In addition, I hope that my analysis will prove to be a concrete example of how a body of films' affective force serves different political ideologies when exposed to different cultural milieus, despite an apparent consensus on the films' appeal. The notion of affect, while employed previously, is central to this chapter, as I believe it is the concept that goes furthest in accounting for how certain postwar ideologies persist in the images and aesthetics of contemporary Japanese popular culture, in this case the films of Ghibli. By viewing the Ghibli assemblage not merely as a collection of thematically homogenous cultural texts but as an affective circuit, the presence of postwar ideology will become apparent. I will argue that in various cases this affect is instrumental in perpetuating victim consciousness, and the dismissal of a self-critique regarding wartime culpability that it entails. By virtue of my main argument, I wish to show that the artistry, beauty, and immense popularity of Studio Ghibli does not render it immune to such a critique, and to encourage international film critics to become more aware to the fact that apparently progressive sentiments can promote conservative attitudes, and that the two often do not constitute diametrical positions in the context of global popular culture.

This chapter will consider six Ghibli films in the context of the discourse of victim consciousness, and its manifestation as "victims' history" in Japanese popular culture. The chapter is structured so as to evoke a shift away from representational thinking and towards the embodiment of ideology in affective

and multi-textual networks of images. Therefore, while I consider the first two films (*The Grave of the Fireflies* and *The Wind Rises*) as directly representative of victims' history, the second two films (*Nausicaä* and *Castle in the Sky*) are only indirectly representative of victims' history, and the last two films (*Spirited Away* and *Princess Mononoke*) are not representative of victims' history at all. However, all six films engage with notions of victimhood, pacifism, and sympathy in similar and complementary ways, suggesting their appropriate grouping together as an affective circuit of texts. That five out of these six films are directed by Miyazaki Hayao is not coincidental, given his personalization of the Ghibli brand and the artistic coherence between his works. His film *The Wind Rises* will be given the most attention here, especially because both the film and its para-texts imply its status as a means to conceptualizing Ghibli as a whole, as discussed in the last chapter.

I. Ghibli's First Victims' History Film: Problematic Pacifism in *Grave of the Fireflies*

As I have argued in previous chapters, the prevalence of the postwar ideology of transpacific complicity in popular culture has hitherto not received sufficient attention. However, one of its influential branches or facets, "victim's consciousness" (*higaisha ishiki*), has been described as a significant political force in Japanese popular culture by several commentators.³⁰⁰ As described in Chapter One, the necessity of instigating a victim's consciousness towards both the Japanese people and the Emperor in the wake of World War II was part of an explicitly political strategy to reconfigure national identity into a form that would be susceptible to American domination.³⁰¹ High-profile media events such as the Tokyo War Crimes trials and the Lucky Dragon Incident further

³⁰⁰ E.g. Orr, James (2001). *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan*. University of Hawai'i Press. Honolulu; Dower, John W. (1999). *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company/The New Press.

³⁰¹ Fujitani, Takashi (2000). "Reischauer no kairai tenno-sei koso". *Sekai*. March 2000: 137-46; Sakai, Naoki. (2010 b). "Transpacific Complicity and Comparatist Strategy". *Globalizing American Studies*. Brian T. Edwards and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, eds. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

emphasized that an oppositional divide between rash military powers, whether imperial Japanese or nuclear Americans, and ordinary Japanese people struggling to get by. This postwar discourse became embodied and reproduced in various examples of popular culture, including books and films.³⁰² Popular narratives such as *Twenty-Four Eyes* (*Nijū-shi no Hitomi*, 1954) and *I Want to Be a Shellfish* (*Watashi ha Kai ni Naritai*, 1959), produced in book, television series, and film formats from the 1950s to the present day,³⁰³ portray Japanese soldiers and civilians as unquestionably sympathetic, often oppressed by military superiors, and whose tragic lives form the emotional core of the narrative. Non-Japanese characters, if they are present, rarely have any significant role, and if they suffer then their suffering is objective and far-removed from the tragic subjectivity of the protagonist. These narratives have come to be known as examples of “victims’ history” due to their specific articulation of the World War II narrative for Japanese audiences.

However, as the name implies, victims’ history has thus far only been considered in the case of historical narratives, and accordingly only attributed to films set during or near to wartime. In other words, films that do not directly address Japanese history have not been considered as instrumental in fostering Japan’s self-victimising style of nationalism. Nonetheless, in the following pages I will draw on a wide range of Ghibli films, including those with fantasy settings, to consider a) how war is depicted as an abstract environment rather than a network of actors; b) how violent actors (whether robots, giants, or humans) are depicted as victims with no agency; and c) how victims’ consciousness is conflated with environmentalist, humanist, and pacifist themes by means of affect.

Before engaging with these topics, we should consider the two Ghibli films that do have Japanese wartime and prewar settings, and therefore can be classed as traditional examples of victims’ history films. Accordingly, we will first consider the most complete articulation of victims’ history in relation to Ghibli made thus far: Susan Napier’s account of *The Grave of the Fireflies* in her book on

³⁰² Orr (2001).

³⁰³ Most recently in 2008’s film version of *I Want to Be a Shellfish*, with pop star Nasai Masahiro, of the generation-spanningly popular group SMAP, playing the lead role.

anime.³⁰⁴ In this chapter, Napier's articulation of the political, historical, and cultural origins of victims' history is succinct and useful in understanding how she critically approaches *The Grave of the Fireflies*:

[Victims' history] is partly due to the collaborative American-Japanese efforts under the Occupation to create an image of a postwar democratic Japan that would free the Japanese from an inescapable fascist and militarist past. By shifting the burden of responsibility for a devastating war onto the military and the government, it was felt that the slate could be wiped clean and Japan could undertake the task of rebuilding, liberated from the dark shadows of war guilt and recrimination. Consequently, both official and cultural versions of the war have played down citizens' involvement with the actual machinery of combat and aggression to the point that they ignore or elide Japan's aggression against China, which began in 1931. Instead, official vehicles, such as textbooks and government ceremonies as well as popular and elite culture, emphasize the period from Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima, which, in Carol Gluck's neat phrase, "set a balanced moral calculus" essentially allowing the atomic bombing to cancel out responsibility for Pearl Harbor and simply glossing over the colonization of Korea and the previous ten years of aggression against China.³⁰⁵

Napier then goes on to explain how this history is embodied by *The Grave of the Fireflies*, listing both narrative and cinematic techniques. For example, in terms of narrative she mentions how the focus on children (rather than adults) as victims of war results in "an unproblematic response of heartfelt sympathy on the part of the viewers",³⁰⁶ and in terms of cinematography she discusses the spatial tension between horizontal lines and "defiant" vertical lines,³⁰⁷ in which the horizontal lines are formed by aerial bombers and the vertical are formed by the children's bodies, until bombs begin to rain down, and a series of downward

³⁰⁴ Napier (2001 b), 161 – 175.

³⁰⁵ Napier (2001 b), 162.

³⁰⁶ Napier (2001 b), 163.

³⁰⁷ Napier (2001 b), 164.

movements dominates/eliminates the children's spatial autonomy. These, and other techniques, contribute to a "nightmarish vision of passivity and despair".³⁰⁸ The war is thus embodied as "relentlessly oppressive" towards innocent Japanese children, and this relentlessness "shuts out the possibility for action".³⁰⁹

Napier stops short of highlighting the political implications of the aesthetic she lucidly describes. From the perspective of international film criticism, the despondency and passivity of *The Grave of the Fireflies* need not be problematic, indeed we can say that by exposing the horrors of war using a cinematic language of helplessness and hopelessness, the film's political leaning is profoundly anti-war. However, from the perspective of cultural politics, we must consider *The Grave of the Fireflies* as part of an interrelated network of domestic cultural media, in which anti-war sensibility is generally built upon a sense of Japanese victimhood, rather than, for example, Japanese wartime aggression, or other countries' victimhood. By following this trend *The Grave of the Fireflies* can be seen to have a political leaning towards a problematic cultural status quo, in which its version of pacifism, constituted as it is by Japanese victimhood, serves a nationalistic agenda in the context of domestic and regional politics, especially with regards to Japan's relation to its East Asian neighbours.

While both international and domestic media express admiration for the film, their ways of looking are not the same. The notion of transnational consensus here obscures the role of regional ideologies. The notion of affect, on the other hand, reveals ideology: affect implies that "sympathy" may be a kind of sensation available to all, but in order for it to be organized into meaning and emotion, it must interact with ideological and subjective systems (as described in Chapter One). In other words, while the film's affect of sympathy may contribute to a "cinema of de-assurance" in the context of Hollywood action and superhero films that glorify militaristic and violent conflict, in the context of domestic media that same affect of sympathy contributes to a "cinema of reassurance" by embodying the hegemonic postwar narrative of Japanese victimhood. Affect reveals that within an apparently universal sympathetic response to *The Grave of*

³⁰⁸ Napier (2001 b), 163.

³⁰⁹ Napier (2001 b), 165.

the Fireflies there exists an ideologically-based distinction between de-assuring and reassuring sympathies.

Furthermore, the definition of cultural hegemony reminds us that alternative modes of pacifism are contained or suppressed by films like *The Grave of the Fireflies*, which essentially not only evoke sympathy, but provide a narrative structure that *allows* one to sympathise, and an emotional guide to *how* one should sympathise. If an audience is exposed to pacifist thought founded on a variety of premises, it is hard to imagine how exposure to *The Grave of the Fireflies* contributes to a problematic conception of pacifism. If, on the other hand, an audience is exposed to pacifist thought founded on the same premise – that of Japanese wartime victimhood – over and over again, then *The Grave of the Fireflies* is clearly part of a problematic status quo that plays a significant role in shaping subjects and their values.

II. Ghibli's Second Victims' History Film: "The Tragedy of Engineers" and Resistance in *The Wind Rises*

Let us consider a more recent Studio Ghibli film which has also designated a space of wartime victimhood to be occupied solely by Japanese citizens, albeit in a different way from *Grave of the Fireflies*. Unlike most victims' history films, Miyazaki Hayao's *The Wind Rises* (*Kaze Tachinu*, 2013) arguably deals to some extent with the complicity and culpability of its Japanese hero in relation to the war effort. The film is based on Miyazaki's original manga, which combines the plot of a Japanese romance novel (also called *Kaze Tachinu*) first published in 1938 with the characterization of the historical figure Horikoshi Jiro, the designer of one of Japan's most successful warplanes. The narrative follows Horikoshi as he daydreams and works to design a new kind of plane, frequently characterizing him and his ambitions through surreal dream sequences and a blossoming romance with a woman he meets on the day of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the film received some criticisms for its depiction of Japanese prewar history from both sides of the political spectrum, as might be expected from a high-profile film dealing with such a topic in the contemporary political climate of East Asian international

tensions. Specifically these criticisms were from Japanese nationalists who viewed the film as unpatriotic, and South Korean commentators who viewed the film as circumventing Japan's war responsibility. However, as regards mainstream journalistic treatment and academic treatment of the film, almost all, if not all, responses have judged it as positive on the whole in relation to political concerns.

Before considering how this film relates to the existing body of victims' history films, let us consider the related para-textual phenomenon of what Matthew Penney identifies as a type of nationalism in *The Wind Rises*, what he calls "technological nationalism".³¹⁰ He points not only to the fetishization of planes in the film, but also to extra-textual materials – for example, a "triumphantly" nationalist story on Horikoshi's planes in a magazine capitalizing on the wave of interest generated by Studio Ghibli's film.³¹¹ Similarly, *The Japan Times* reported that the Tokorozawa Aviation Museum in Saitama, which had one of Horikoshi's famous Zero Fighter planes on display, received three times as many visitors than in the previous year thanks to the release of *The Wind Rises*.³¹² The fascination with planes and other wartime technology (such as the *Yamato* warship)³¹³ need not imply rightwing or revisionist attitudes towards history, and yet the overlap between the two, as seen from the magazine discussed by Penney, seems to be significant.³¹⁴ This example is instructive

³¹⁰ Penney, Matthew (2013). "Miyazaki Hayao's *Kaze Tachinu (The Wind Rises)*". *Asia Pacific-Journal*. Vol. 11 Issue 30, No. 2.

<<https://apjif.org/2013/11/30/Matthew-Penney/3976/article.html>> [03/03/2018].

³¹¹ Penney (2013).

³¹² Hongo, Jun (2013). "Hayao Miyazaki: Leave Constitution Alone". *The Japan Times*. <<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/25/national/miyazaki-leave-constitution-alone/#.Wovav62B0dU>> [02/02/2018].

³¹³ General information is displayed in the Yamato Museum in Hiroshima prefecture, while the influential science fiction anime *Space Battleship Yamato (Uchū Senkan Yamato, 1974-1975)* remains current in popular culture thanks to various sequels and remakes, the most recent being the anime film *Space Battleship Yamato 2202: Warriors of Love (Uchū Senkan Yamato Ni-ni-zero-ni Ai no Senshi-tachi, 2017)*.

³¹⁴ For example, there have been various discussions over whether or not popular franchise *Kantai Collection (Kantai Korekushon)*, which centres on World War II battleships anthropomorphized as young girls, exalts the Imperial Navy and promotes a fetishistic and jingoistic brand of nationalism among young

because we see how merely making a high-profile cultural text with a focus on Japanese war planes can have the effect of generating other texts that draw on and contribute to problematic ideologies. One must also consider that the existing body of Japanese films about war pilots often lean towards nationalism or victim's history, such as the controversial and highly successful *The Eternal Zero* (*Eien no Zero*, 2013) that came out shortly after Miyazaki's film. Miyazaki's response to *Eien no Zero* is notable: "They're just continuing a phony myth, saying, 'Take pride in the Zero fighter.' I've hated that sort of thing ever since I was a kid".³¹⁵ Clearly, Miyazaki regards *The Eternal Zero* as antithetical to his own values, and presumably to his own depiction of the Zero Fighter in *The Wind Rises*. However, regardless of the ideological content of *The Wind Rises*, its effect of generating the same kind of buzz and hype within conservative or war-fetishizing media that *The Eternal Zero* did is notable when thinking in terms of ideology and assemblages.

However, despite noting the "technological nationalism" present in and around the film, Matthew Penney mostly understands it within the pacifist context that chimes with director Miyazaki's own stated feelings.³¹⁶ When describing how Horikoshi reacts to his inventions being used as part of the war effort, Penney argues against any nationalist sentiment being expressed in the film, writing that "Horikoshi's face at this moment strikes me as being partway between confusion and loss but there is certainly no trace of triumph, of justified sacrifice".³¹⁷ However, while a "triumphant" style of nationalism is not represented, I would argue that a self-victimising style of nationalism is articulated via the affect of this scene: by means of the narrative as well as cinematic techniques such as close-up, the viewer is encouraged to feel sympathy for this Japanese inventor, for whom the intrusion of war into his engineering aspirations is saddening and confusing. While Horikoshi is not a

people. The franchise has expanded from games to manga, anime, novels, and cinema.

³¹⁵ Schilling, Mark (2014 a). "Debate still rages over Abe-endorsed WWII drama". *The Japan Times*.

<<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2014/02/20/films/debate-still-rages-over-abe-endorsed-wwii-drama/#.WlMsjq2B2u4>> [03/03/2018].

³¹⁶ Penney (2013).

³¹⁷ Penney (2013).

victim in the same way that the two siblings are in *Grave of the Fireflies*, nonetheless he occupies the space of sympathy that the film offers its viewers. Penney also writes that “[t]he tragedy of engineers who married their design ambitions to military production is at the heart of *Kaze Tachinu*”.³¹⁸ This is not a criticism, but Penney’s descriptive analysis of the film’s aesthetic, or “heart”. While the film is undoubtedly successful in exploring this tragedy of Japanese engineers, in the tradition of victims’ history films, the tragedy of non-Japanese people in the war is excluded from the allowed limits of sympathetic response. Indeed, the scenes of the film which show the tragedy of destruction always imply Japanese victimhood: firstly in the vivid (though not graphic) scene depicting the Great Kantō Earthquake, and then also in a harrowing dream sequence in which Horikoshi sees a Japanese plane, clearly marked by the Hinomaru flag, exploding into flames.

Both Horikoshi’s implied victimhood as a creative genius confined to a warmongering political climate and the images of destruction wrought on Japanese civilians and soldiers are enough to position *The Wind Rises* within the body of victims’ history films that extend from the postwar period to the present. However, *The Wind Rises* does break with the standard depictions of victimhood in these films in a number of ways. There are a few key scenes which, although minor in relation to the overall plot which is dominated by Horikoshi and his subjective reality, suggest an alternative and critical viewpoint outside of Horikoshi’s own worldview. In one scene, Horikoshi offers a cake he has just bought to a scruffy-looking child he sees on the street. His apparent selflessness and generosity is almost immediately undercut when his friend and coworker, Honjo Kiro, remarks that the reason children are going hungry on the street is because the government is investing in their own airplane projects at the expense of citizens’ welfare. Horikoshi remains silent, and it is unclear to the audience what his opinion is on the matter, or whether or not he has even registered what his friend has told him. Essentially, though, Honjo’s brief comment introduces a dialogic moment into the text which allows the audience to consider a subjective position, however fleetingly expressed, that aligns Horikoshi’s ambitions with those of the prewar state. From this perspective,

³¹⁸ Penney (2013).

whether Horikoshi is ignorant, deluded, or resigned to his fate, his character can be criticized as being complicit with the oppressive forces of the government. Similarly, later on in the film Horikoshi meets a mysterious German known as Castorp who ominously says things are going to “blow up”, things including “Hitler” and “Manchukuo”. Merely mentioning the Japanese invasion of China, even in this oblique context, could be seen as countering the normal imperatives of victims’ history narratives, as it introduces the possibility of thinking Japan as an aggressor and for there to be non-Japanese victims of the war.

What is interesting about these moments of resistance is not only their scarcity and their oppositionality to the general tone of the film, which is one of sympathy with Horikoshi and his dreams. It is also how carefully they are introduced to be as subtle as possible, therefore adding dissonant nuance rather than jarringly breaking or interfering with Horikoshi’s subjectivity, which is essentially the world of the film. In another of these rare examples, Horikoshi speaks to his dream-inspiration and muse, the Italian inventor Giovanni Battista Caproni. When urging Horikoshi to follow his imagination no matter what, he sounds as whimsical and two-dimensional as a character from a Disney film. However, the dream-advice becomes darker and more complex when Caproni invokes the Egyptian pyramids, saying that sometimes wonderful creations require great sacrifices.³¹⁹ The apparent connotation is of the many slaves who died in the construction of the pyramids, although even this is not completely obvious – it could also be read as the need for Horikoshi’s personal sacrifice. Horikoshi’s reaction to the statement, as it was with his friend who complained about the cake, is to remain silent and unexpressive. In this case, however, it is not Horikoshi himself but a dream avatar that reacts. Therefore, the idea that “the pyramids were worth sacrificing lives” is several times removed from Horikoshi himself: it is expressed by a character in his dream to a dream version of himself. There are therefore several subconscious layers that keep the troubling thought removed from Horikoshi’s consciousness, buried as though in a matryoshka: the statement comes from Caproni, Caproni speaks to Horikoshi’s avatar, and both Caproni and the avatar are contained by Horikoshi’s dream. This thought, which would align Horikoshi’s ambitions with the state’s war

³¹⁹ Miyazaki, Hayao (2013). *Kaze Tachinu* [film]. Studio Ghibli.

project, doesn't obviously change or impact Horikoshi's actions in real life, it just seems to exist as a vague concept somewhere in his psyche, and is arguably not even "his" thought. Moments like this, which resist the tradition of victims' history, are therefore so subtle and obscure that they are sure to pass unnoticed by many audiences. However, in the context of victims' history, these moments stand out precisely because they break with the problematic "tragedy of engineers" which truly is the main focus and "heart" of the film, as Penney describes.

When critics (including Miyazaki) defend the film's political stance, they tend to refer to ways in which Horikoshi's character appears to be oppositional to the war machine. For example, references are frequently made to the scene in which Horikoshi, perhaps jokingly, says that his design would be better if he could make the plane lighter by removing its guns, a statement which is met by the raucous laughter of his coworkers.³²⁰ The implication is that Horikoshi is invested only in making wonderful flying machines, and that his ambitions are at odds with the imperative to make killing machines. Indeed, this tension between the inventor and the state is woven through the entire film. In another key scene, Horikoshi is hidden by his boss to avoid questioning by the secret police after his meeting with Castorp, the film's only character who is openly critical of the war. This scene aligns Horikoshi with Castorp in their mutual persecution by Japanese authorities. However, this "oppositional" narrative that runs through the film merely positions Horikoshi as another innocent victim of the Japanese state, repeating the victims' history technique of building a film around the subjectivity of an innocent Japanese soldier or civilian who is forced into tragic circumstances against his will. The true moments of resistance in *The Wind Rises*

³²⁰ Akimoto, Daisuke (2013). "War Memory, War Responsibility, and Anti-War Pacifism in Director Miyazaki's *The Wind Rises* (*Kaze Tachinu*)". *Sōka daigaku heiwa kenkyū*. No. 28. 59;

Ehrlich, David (2013). "Review: *The Wind Rises*". *MTV*.

<<http://www.mtv.com/news/2771199/the-wind-rises-review/>> [03/03/2018];

Coleman, Sam (2014). "Complicity and Responsibility: Review of *The Wind Rises* (*Kaze Tachinu*)". *JPRI: Japan Policy Research Institute*. Vol. 20, No. 2.

<http://www.jpri.org/publications/critiques/critique_XX_2.html#N1> [03/03/2018].

are not when Horikoshi is seen as an innocent victim of the state, but when other characters such as Honjo, Caproni, and Castorp suggest his complicity. However, while these fleeting moments of resistance add nuance and tension, they are almost totally eclipsed by the film's reliance on the traditional tropes of victims' history.

III. Defending the Artist: *The Wind Rises* as Miyazaki's Personal Project

In addition to describing the oppositional relationship between Horikoshi's dreams and state imperatives as evidence for the film's progressive political role, critics frequently refer to the film in the context of Miyazaki's personal and artistic sensibilities. This is understandable, given that until recently, it was widely regarded as his final film, and, as discussed in the previous chapter, the film itself in many ways invites reflection on the auteur's personal works and ambitions as an animator. We will therefore consider these critiques, which function as part of the Ghibli assemblage under analysis, insofar as they defend the film's status as a political text in the context of its status as an aesthetic text.

To begin with, we may note Miyazaki's own interpretation of his work. He has said that in the film he is unable to "accuse" Horikoshi for the part he plays in Japan's war effort:

Jiro Horikoshi is also a pacifist. Because of the times he was living in, the only thing he was allowed to make was a fighter airplane. I can't accuse my father or Horikoshi of doing the wrong thing when they had to live in such dangerous times.³²¹

Miyazaki's aligning Horikoshi with both pacifism and his own father, who, as mentioned previously, worked in plane manufacturing during the war, is

³²¹ Miyazaki quoted in: Keegan, Rebecca (2013). "An unusual departure for beloved Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki". *Los Angeles Times*. <<http://articles.latimes.com/2013/nov/13/entertainment/la-et-mn-miyazaki-20131113>> [03/03/2018].

significant in showing how personal the project is for him, and also of showing his attitudes towards what it would mean to show complicity in the film: to portray Horikoshi as “doing the wrong thing” would be as though he were attacking his own father, a metonymic image in its relation to the general attitudes harnessed by victim’s history in popular culture – that is, one of feeling sympathy for one’s ancestors. However, to a large extent, Miyazaki seems to have created his fictionalized Horikoshi as a version of himself, rather than his father.³²² The way in which *The Wind Rises* is positioned as both a conclusion to his career at Ghibli and also an autobiographical narrative is discussed in the previous chapter.

This positioning of the film has largely shaped its reception and critical commentary. For example, Napier writes that when the film made her cry, her tears were for “the movie’s bittersweet love story”, “the news that *The Wind Rises* is supposedly Miyazaki’s last film”, and the film’s “insistent depiction of history over fantasy [that] suggested new directions that the director might have chosen, new roads that now would not be taken, thanks to his retirement from filmmaking”.³²³ Both the reception of the film and the creation of new critical texts within the Ghibli assemblage as a result of *The Wind Rises* can be seen to be influenced by the affective links between the film’s aesthetic and its significance to both Ghibli and Miyazaki as a filmmaker.

Indeed, some reviews of *The Wind Rises* took the opportunity to implicitly review the entire oeuvre of Miyazaki’s Ghibli films as a whole. This can be seen in reviews such as David Ehrlich’s, which states:

Miyazaki’s films are often preoccupied with absence, the value of things left behind and how the ghosts of beautiful things are traced onto our memories like the shadows of objects outlined by a nuclear flash. *The Wind Rises* looks back as only a culminating work can.³²⁴

³²² Napier, Susan J. (2013). “Sweet Dreams and Flying Machines: Miyazaki’s *The Wind Rises*”. *The Huffington Post*. <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-j-napier/sweet-dreams-and-flying-m_b_4288481.html> [03/02/2018].

³²³ Napier (2013).

³²⁴ Ehrlich (2013).

What is especially of note, alongside the positioning of *The Wind Rises* as “a culminating work” for the Ghibli auteur, is the use of the phrase “nuclear flash” in the articulation of a shared aesthetic in Miyazaki’s films. The phrase is revealing because it identifies the nuclear victimhood that thematically and affectively emerges in a number of Ghibli films, despite the fact that the atomic bombing of Japan itself is never directly depicted in Ghibli. Films such as *Nausicaä* and *Castle in the Sky*, which will be discussed in the following section, have plots which centre around the use of devastating weapons which, when employed, create mushroom-like explosions clearly evocative of nuclear warfare. However, that Ehrlich has used the image of “shadows of objects outlined by a nuclear flash” in his review of *The Wind Rises* is telling, given that it does not depict the wartime period at all, except for a short dream-like sequence at the end of the film in which Horikoshi sadly observes the wrecked bodies of his airplanes at the end of the war. Instead, Ehrlich appears to have picked up on the evocation of Japanese wartime victimhood in *The Wind Rises*, and described it using some of the most striking imagery associated with Japanese wartime victimhood – the nuclear bombings. His review therefore not only implicitly identifies the victims’ history of *The Wind Rises*, but it furthers the affective circuit of victimhood by adding the image of the atomic bombing of Japan into the critical context of the film, and indeed into the context of understanding Ghibli as a whole.

There is another consequence of the film’s position as both a culmination of Ghibli films and also an autobiography of Miyazaki, which might be called “the defence of the artist under political attack”. The problematic nature of *The Wind Rises* in the context of its regional political context is often approached through questioning the role of the filmmaker himself. For example, in her review of the film, Napier asks “What is Miyazaki doing here? Can he be both a militarist and a pacifist at the same time?”³²⁵ In order to answer her question, Napier considers *The Wind Rises* alongside Miyazaki’s statement, published around the time of the release of the film, denouncing the government’s attempts to revise the constitution. She claims, “In *The Wind Rises* and in his essay last summer Miyazaki is forcing his viewers and readers to confront a nasty truth about the

³²⁵ Napier (2013).

human condition”.³²⁶ She goes on to say that this “nasty truth” is that war machines can be exciting and inspiring, but also bring terrible death and destruction. This answer to her question appears to identify Miyazaki, and by extension the film, as pacifist after all. What I find remarkable about this is the positioning of Miyazaki’s political pro-constitution statement as an accompanying text through which we can understand the politics of the film itself. Indeed, many reviews and articles discuss the two texts alongside each other, which makes a case for their status as sibling texts in a shared media event. The release of a bluntly anti-war statement alongside the film may even have been an intentional strategy on the part of Miyazaki to create a context that would guide viewers to watch his new film in the way he wished it to be understood. Whether intentional or not, critics such as Napier have furthered the position of his staunchly pacifist text as a guide to understanding the politics of *The Wind Rises*, and even to understanding Miyazaki’s filmmaking in general. From this critical stance, political problems in the film text are resolved once they are framed within the context of both the filmmaker’s oeuvre and his political values and actions.

Taking a broader perspective, Alistair Swale organizes his critique of *The Wind Rises* around the question of “artists’ responsibility” in engaging with historical and political issues. Rather than focusing on Miyazaki’s personal values, Swale uses *The Wind Rises* to consider cinema’s relation to politicized representations of history in general. He asks, for example, “how far cinematic animation can reasonably be obliged to follow the kinds of historiographical concerns that inevitably arise when engaging with Japan’s militarist past”,³²⁷ and also “whether Miyazaki is entitled to treat an era with such clearly problematic ethical and political implications from such a perspective”.³²⁸ However, these questions reveal an underlying similarity with Napier’s approach: that of subsuming political problems in a text to the political role of its creator. Whether or not Miyazaki is “entitled” or “obliged” to do anything in *The Wind Rises* is a fair

³²⁶ Napier (2013).

³²⁷ Swale, Alistair (2017). “Memory and forgetting: examining the treatment of traumatic historical memory in *Grave of the Fireflies* and *The Wind Rises*”. *Japan Forum*. Vol. 29, No. 4. Routledge: London. 518.

³²⁸ Swale (2017), 529.

question, but Swale seems to use it, along with stressing the “personal” nature of the film, as a means to exonerate the problematic politics of *The Wind Rises* as a text.³²⁹ Similarly, providing *The Grave of the Fireflies* as context, Swale claims “we cannot demand ‘all the facts’ quite as we might like them”.³³⁰ Although not directly stated in regards to *The Wind Rises*, Swale’s argument about the relationship between testimony and art suggests Ghibli’s war-related films cannot be expected to tell anything other than victims’ histories. This characterization of the issue positions the critic arguing for the political conservatism of these texts as a person “demanding” the inclusion of other “facts”, such as Japanese wartime aggression, in texts like *The Grave of the Fireflies* or *The Wind Rises*, rather than a person taking note of the cultural and political nature of these texts as part of a longstanding discourse of power present in Japanese popular culture. Ultimately Swale’s response to the political role of *The Wind Rises* seems to be that as we cannot make political demands of artists or people giving historical testimony, we must resign ourselves to any role they may play in embodying problematic discourses. This approach places the role of Miyazaki-as-artist above considerations of how the film functions as a cultural text, thereby failing to engage with political power or ideology in a meaningful or realistic way.

A common complaint about the framing of films like *Grave of the Fireflies* or *The Wind Rises* as victims’ history is that they are not being considered on their own terms, or, especially in the case of *The Wind Rises*, on the terms of their creators. However, if we are to consider these texts as functional components in a larger assemblage driven by ideological discourses and contributing to subject formation, then it is using the terms of power, rather than the artists’ terms, that we must judge them. It has been many decades since Barthes declared the death of the author when it comes to contextualizing cultural texts, and yet, as we can

³²⁹ Swale (2017), 532-533: “A resolution of sorts is offered by the insight that Ricoeur’s theory affords with regard to the concept of overlap between literary imagination and historical imagination. [...] [W]e are perhaps forced to conclude, despite some degree of disappointment, that although Miyazaki has not grasped the political ‘nettle’ of his subject matter, he is at least retaining an artistic integrity that focuses on the ‘muthos’ [emplotment, configuration] of what drives him personally.”

³³⁰ Swale (2017), 525.

see frequently in criticism of Ghibli, the auteur apparently remains alive and well. In order to make an analysis of a text's politics as well as its aesthetics, it is crucial that one does not isolate artistic intent from the cultural and historical discourses through which the text is able to speak.

A key example of how the reading of the text as personal to Miyazaki obscures its reproduction of hegemonic ideology is the role of Horikoshi's partner and eventually wife, Satomi Nahoko. Satomi is sometimes read in the context of Miyazaki's relationship with his mother, who suffered from tuberculosis just as she does.³³¹ There is little exploration of how she breaks with the Ghibli tradition of strong female leading characters: her scenes are dominated by melancholy and illness, while her personality seems demure and without a strong sense of self-worth, as shown by the fact that she sees herself as a burden on Horikoshi that distracts from his important work. The traditional gender roles of the film are arguably appropriate for the time period, and yet they stand in contrast to Ghibli's previous depiction of active and determined women in historical periods (e.g. *Princess Mononoke*, *Only Yesterday*). Satomi's only precedent in Miyazaki's films is the mother of the two protagonists of *My Neighbour Totoro*, who is hospitalized and mostly absent from the film, despite her important influence on the protagonists. At the end of *The Wind Rises*, an image of Satomi, who has long since died of her illness, appears to Horikoshi beyond the ruins of his war-wrecked planes and implores him to "live" – her ghostly appearance therefore embodies the typical postwar depiction of the Japanese nation as feminized: on the one hand victimized and violated (by war and occupation), and on the other hand a life-bringer who could inspire renewal and care.³³²

However, conservative images of postwar nationalism are not merely present in *The Wind Rises*, they are central to its generation of affect. Tanaka Ran claims that "Even though there is a lot of history in the film, the main message is

³³¹ Knox, David (2013). "The Wind Rises, directed by Hayao Miyazaki." *The Japan Society*. <<http://www.japansociety.org.uk/36848/the-wind-rises/>> [03/03/2018].

³³² Saito, Ayako (2014). "Occupation and Memory: The Representation of Woman's Body in Postwar Japanese Cinema". *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Cinema*. Daisuke Miyao, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 327-362.

about following one's purpose and dreams in life".³³³ Responses like these echo the suggestion of Geoffrey Wexler, a Ghibli producer and chief of their international division, who believes "the film should be seen primarily for what it is — a love story, between two people and between a creator and his invention", and that Horikoshi "couldn't pick the era he lived in".³³⁴ However, it is important not to separate historical and ideological concerns from the main themes and affective power of the film, as though the former are a mere backdrop for the latter. Satomi's self-sacrifice of leaving Horikoshi so he can focus on his planes is a form of victimhood that allows her to inspire Horikoshi to keep living beyond the war and his disappointment – her "purpose and dreams in life" are depicted as adhering to a conservative gender role that reinforces the image of Japanese victimhood. Horikoshi must be understood the same way. He finds his path to self-actualization through an overcoming of his responsibility in the deaths of war victims as a result of his planes – "pursuing his dreams" relies on this personal struggle being overcome, and ultimately his growth is articulated through the affect of victimhood, specifically, Japanese victimhood in the context of World War II.

As well as using the image of the artist and a focus on "the main message" of the film as a means to dismiss or explain away political concerns, critics like Penney and Swale seem to base their distinction of texts that reinforce reactionary positions regarding Japan's role in the war as those that evoke "triumphant nationalism".³³⁵ Swale describes depictions of wartime Japan as "polarized" in the following way: "while some works have been overwhelmingly pacifist, with at times a strong emphasis on the Japanese becoming victims of wartime carnage, others have been remarkably unreserved in attempting to construct a positive narrative on a military disaster fought by a heroic and nobly

³³³ Tanaka Ran quoted in: DeHart, Jonathan (2013). "Miyazaki's *Kaze Tachinu*: Winds of History Fan Japan's Political Debate". *The Diplomat*. <<https://thediplomat.com/2013/08/miyazakis-kaze-tachinu-winds-of-history-fan-japans-political-debate/>> [03/04/2018].

³³⁴ Barnes, Brooks (2013). "Swan Song Too Hawkish for Some". *The New York Times*. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/06/movies/hayao-miyazakis-film-the-wind-rises-gets-complaints.html>> [03/02/2018].

³³⁵ Penney (2013).

self-sacrificing populace”.³³⁶ By positioning victimhood/pacifism in a binary opposition with heroism/nationalism, Swale reasserts a paradigm based on a Japanese *wartime* ideology, which did indeed maintain this dichotomy even after the war, when, for example, antiwar and socialist movements protested the state by drawing on narratives of Japanese victimhood.³³⁷ However, through work such as Napier’s chapter on *Grave of the Fireflies*, or Orr’s depictions of various postwar cultural texts, it has become obvious how the political power driving images of victimhood has been appropriated into a conservative and nationalist status quo, a situation reflecting the political power relation of transpacific complicity described by Sakai. Critics who rely on the logic of Japanese wartime ideology to determine whether or not a text is problematic fail to consider the development of postwar ideology that casts “the victim as hero”,³³⁸ and builds pacifist sentiment out of an exclusive and limiting sense of Japanese victimhood.

In this section I have shown how *The Wind Rises* has been discursively positioned as emblematic of both Studio Ghibli and Miyazaki’s politics and art, and how that positioning has led to critics defending its political status on the basis of Ghibli and Miyazaki’s reputation and values. In addition, I have addressed key criticisms of the labeling of *The Wind Rises* and other films as victims’ history: firstly the assertion that one cannot make political demands of artistic treatments of history, and secondly the use of the wartime ideological divide between victim and hero as a means to determine a work as pacifist or nationalist. These approaches are inadequate in their failure to address firstly the context of ideology (which is by definition not determined by artistic intent), and secondly the presence of the tropes of the well-documented postwar discourse of victims’ history that recurs throughout Japanese popular culture.

IV. Victim’s Affect: Historical Allegory in *Nausicaä*

When considering what constitutes the body of victims’ history films in Japanese popular culture, only films which directly represent the War (even if

³³⁶ Swale (2017), 519.

³³⁷ Orr (2001), 8.

³³⁸ Orr (2001), book title.

only in flashback) are normally considered as belonging to this group. However, as I have made clear in my analysis of *The Grave of the Fireflies* and *The Wind Rises*, what is most essential to these films as victims' history films is the way in which their affects, which stimulate sympathy and desire-for-pacifism, are constructed through images of Japanese prewar and wartime suffering. Therefore, the apparently unproblematic themes of sympathy and pacifism become problematic when they are repeatedly constructed in line with a discourse of power (victim's consciousness) associated with nationalism as a function of transpacific complicity. If the construction of affect is the defining quality of this discourse, then it becomes possible to imagine its textual reproduction beyond images which directly depict the wartime historical past. As I will argue, the same problematic "victim's affect" – in other words, sympathy and desire-for-peace constructed using politically-derived expressions of victimhood – is present in other Ghibli films, despite the fact that they do not depict World War II settings or themes.

To begin with, the film that led to the founding of Studio Ghibli, *Nausicaä*, allegorizes Japanese victimhood in a number of ways. Despite its fantasy setting, when the film is contextualized within the framework of international political tensions at the time of its release in the 1980s, images of Japanese Cold War anxiety begin to emerge. The plot concerns a small kingdom, the titular "Valley of the Wind", which is threatened by what is effectively an arms race between two larger kingdoms: Tolmekia, which is "to the West", and Pejite. The Pejiteans discover an ancient weapon, which was used in the far past to destroy most life and render much of the planet "toxic", which prompts the Tolmekians to steal it from them. However, their airship crash-lands in the Valley of the Wind, prompting Tolmekian reinforcements to prepare and restore the weapon to its full power there in the small kingdom. The hero of the story, Nausicaä, is the princess of the Valley of the Wind, aiming to resolve the conflict through taking pacifist and environmentalist action. There are clearly analogues between the rival kingdoms and the U.S.A.-U.S.S.R. standoff, between the coveted weapon and the atomic bomb, and between the Valley of the Wind and Japan. The characterization of the Valley of the Wind and its people is therefore worth considering in light of the political tensions of the film and of the wider world.

Unlike the warmongering characters from the other kingdoms, the people of the Valley are depicted as homogenously pleasant and good-natured. When they are introduced in the film's opening, they are helping each other build windmills, gossiping excitedly in the street, expressing their devotion towards Nausicaä, grumbling about how she must not put herself in danger, and so on. There are only two characters who could be considered warrior-like who are associated with the Valley. Firstly, there is Lord Yupa, who is renowned as a great warrior throughout the land, and yet in the film we never see him harm anyone: in the first moment when he is involved in conflict, he puts his own body between two fighters, allowing himself to be wounded so that they will stop and he can negotiate peace; in the second moment, he uses his athletic abilities to dodge opponents until he can capture and threaten the enemy's leader, forcing them to surrender. The second "warrior" character of the Valley is Princess Nausicaä, who is characterized as having a great affinity with the natural world, who is conducting experiments in a secret garden in an attempt to purify the parts of nature that have become toxic, and who consistently meets violence with pacifist self-sacrifice. One of the key images of the film is a scene near the start in which she befriends a "fox-squirrel": the animal bites her in fear and the viewer sees a flash of blood, as well as a twitch in her benevolent expression suggesting repressed pain. However, she continues to treat the animal kindly, until it realizes its mistake and licks the wound it has given her. This messianic scene of self-sacrifice and meeting violence with compassion is repeated several times in the film, as Nausicaä allows herself to suffer the violence of first Tolmekians, then Pejiteans, and finally the gigantic insects called Ohmu, and in each case her sacrifice brings conflict to a peaceful resolution – the final scene of the film shows Nausicaä sacrificing her life for the people of the Valley, only to be resurrected by the natural powers of the Ohmu.³³⁹ The only time Nausicaä is violent towards others is after she finds her father murdered by Tolmekians – she skillfully dispatches enemy soldiers until Yupa causes her to stab him, and

³³⁹ See also Ogihara-Schuck, Eriko (2014). "The Christianizing of Animism in Manga and Anime: American Translations of Hayao Miyazaki's Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind". *Miyazaki's Animism Abroad: The Reception of Japanese Religious Themes by American and German Audiences*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Books. 133–146.

the horrified and then shameful expression she has when she sees his blood on her sword suggests that she realizes she has made a terrible mistake.

It is this scene and the one which follows it which especially evoke a Japanese historical context, specifically the defeat of Japan in World War II, thereby politicizing the theme of self-sacrifice (or self-victimizing) as a means to defeat violence. After the Tolmekians have invaded them, the people of the Valley of the Wind, depicted as a worried crowd, are distressed and angry when they learn that king, who the film depicts as physically weakened by sickness but noble in character, has been murdered. Someone shouts, "He was helpless!" However, Nausicaä, having just unintentionally stabbed Yupa, calms the people, saying that she doesn't want more violence, and that "we must submit to these people". The people sadly resign themselves to their valley's occupation by the Tolmekians. Both Nausicaä and her father King Jihl fulfill the role of an Emperor-figure. On the one hand the patriarch of the nation has been vanquished, causing anger and distress to his subjects who appear to unanimously and unconditionally love him. On the other hand, their love for Nausicaä and respect for her royal authority allow her to pacify them with her voice, which asks them to submit to occupation just as the Japanese Emperor had done in his radio address at the end of the war. Perhaps most noteworthy is the evocation of resignation in the face of a foreign occupying power. As for the Tolmekians, as well as being described as coming from the West, their occupation of the Valley is depicted as brutal, misguided, but not evil. Their aims are to secure and develop the great weapon that has landed in the valley, until they can use it against the giant insects that they see as a threat to all humankind. The second-in-command of their forces incredulously asks his general, "You can't be proposing to build a nation here?" to which she replies, "And what if I am?" The notion of building the Valley of the Wind into a new nation to suit the Tolmekian agenda of developing the great weapon correlates significantly with the US strategy to rebuild Japan as a cooperative democracy that would provide an essential base for the American military in the Cold War period.

Images of nuclear victimhood are also evoked in relation to the people of the Valley of the Wind. Nausicaä's grandmother, simply called Obaba, is a "blind seer" character, a popular figure culture with origins in the figure of Tereisias of

Greek myth. Just as Nausicaä's self-sacrificing love appropriates Christian themes in a Japanese historical context, so too does Obaba's character transpose the Tereisias figure. As well as introducing the prophecy of the coming of a future hero (eventually revealed to be Nausicaä) who will save the Valley, Obaba repeatedly warns of the dangers of using the great weapon, chastising the leader of the Tolmekians and saying that the planet's toxicity is a result of these weapons being used many years ago. While Obaba can be seen as representative of an older generation of Japanese people who had directly experienced the suffering of the War, the sickness brought on by the toxic spores is also only seen in characters who live in the Valley of the Wind, and brings to mind popular images of *hibakusha* (atomic bomb victims) who suffer from radiation sickness. An old man shows the Tolmekian leader his rough hands, saying, "Look at these hands. This is what Jihl had. In six months they will be stone. But the princess said she liked these hands. They were the hands of a hard worker." This scene is important in two respects: firstly, it portrays the idea of respect and perseverance in the face of a chronic illness caused by the fallout of a powerful weapon, reproducing the prevalent image of the *hibakusha* in a popular culture form. Secondly, it repeats the image of a person of the Valley sharing their experience, knowledge, or way of life with the Tolmekian leader in an attempt to persuade her to change her strategy. Similarly, Obaba and Nausicaä never express a desire to overthrow or force out the Tolmekian leader, but rather for her to learn from their knowledge/experience of victimhood. This discursive pattern in *Nausicaä* resonates with both *hibakusha* discourse and also the transpacific complicity implied by criticisms of America's policy which nonetheless take for granted its dominant position in the East Asia region.

However, the film is far from being a direct allegorical tale: eventually the good-natured people of the Valley of the Wind rebel against their occupiers, whose incompetence has caused their valley to become infected by toxic spores. It might be tempting to find further parallels in Japanese history to suit the context, such as the wide-scale protests of the 1960s against the renewal of the American Security Treaty, or to say that the rebellion in *Nausicaä* is representative of anti-American wish-fulfillment. However, such a project is destined to shift further and further into speculative interpretation, and is of

little use to the issues at hand. What I aim to do by drawing attention to these parallels is to show how key images of the film draw on historical material and memory to reinforce sympathy with the values of pacifism and environmentalism based on self-sacrifice. While the film does not offer simplistic metaphors that allow one to say “Tolmekia is America” or “the Valley is Japan”, the parallels that do surface are noteworthy, especially given the repeated image of the Valley as an essentially peaceful land whose community lives in harmony with nature, but is victimized by foreign powers and unwittingly drawn into a power struggle for weapon-based dominance. Even if children who watch *Nausicaä* do not recognize its relation to historical events, the way in which the film encourages a very specific emotional response to its narrative has the potential of influencing future emotional responses if and when audiences are confronted with similar narratives, including historical ones. Therefore the relationship between victim’s affect and popular culture texts such as *Nausicaä* is highly relevant when considering both the development of political attitudes to history and subject formation in general.

V. Victim’s Affect: Kind Robots and Bad Government in *Castle in the Sky*

Studio Ghibli’s first official film, *Castle in the Sky* (*Laputa*, 1986), reproduced the style and themes of *Nausicaä* in a number of ways. The similarities between their opening scenes is especially noteworthy: an opening scene of fantasy peril and fast-paced action, followed by opening credits accompanied by a soaring orchestral score and still images whose animation breaks with the style of the film, suggesting they are extra-textual pictures outside of the narrative. The progression of these images depict an advanced civilization eventually destroyed by powerful weapons, and then the return of society to a pre-modern state. Although these narratives are initially oblique and only become clear as the films progress, they reveal an overarching structure of both narratives, in which a post-apocalyptic world approaches the repetition of its pre-narrative apocalypse, meaning that the overarching plot’s tension depends on whether or not the violent past will be repeated. As Thomas Lamarre describes *Castle in the Sky*:

Weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) have already led to global destruction in the distant past. Although people have largely forgotten those events, the WMDs remain. No one knows how to locate and deploy them, and yet the danger remains that someone will rediscover and use them.³⁴⁰

The same dramatic narrative that aligned *Nausicaä* with Japan's anti-nuclear and pacifist victim's history narrative is therefore repeated in *Castle in the Sky*, and the same arguments apply regarding the structuring of emotional responses to these narratives via affect.

Another relevant similarity with *Nausicaä* is the way in which various groups with their own agendas interact and clash with each other. While in *Nausicaä* these groups were politicized as representing different nations as well as different values and strategies, in *Castle in the Sky* these groups are divided by profession, character, and circumstance rather than national boundaries, reflecting the overall more child-friendly style that Miyazaki employed for his new studio's first film. These competing groups begin their story, as in *Nausicaä*, in a fantasy world of European architecture, agrarian settings, and post-industrial flying machines, where they struggle to unlock the mysteries of a mythical floating island called Laputa (a concept lifted from the 18th-century novel *Gulliver's Travels*, an appropriate match for Miyazaki's work, given its strange dual status as scathing social critique and popular fairy tale for children). The groups that eventually reach the island can be divided into four: first, Pazu and Sheeta, the child protagonists, a working-class boy and the princess of Laputa; second, the pirates, good-natured ruffians whom we see to be compassionate despite their desire for Laputa's gold; third, the military, a faceless mass of soldiers led by a greedy and incompetent general; and fourth, the black-glasses (*kuromegane*), an organization that controls the military and therefore takes the role of a government, represented by three men in suits. While the "good" pirates eventually get their loot, their stealing is never shown onscreen. Conversely, the military are shown destroying the natural beauty and

³⁴⁰ Lamarre (2009), 47.

architecture of Laputa to ransack and loot; we see them crawling over each other like ants in their haste and greed. The government men, though, are not interested in gold but another prize: Laputa's great weapon, which can be used to destroy entire countries (its blast is clearly meant to evoke that of an atomic bomb). The military is shown to be under the command of the government, but their alliance is shaky, with the general constantly rebuking his orders. Three types of greed are articulated by the film: the pirates' lust for gold, which is depicted as playful, not excessive, and balanced and forgiven by their comradeship and care; the soldiers' violent pillaging of Laputa, driven by foolishness; and the government's malicious desire for power through the acquisition of the great weapon. Pazu and Sheeta are not greedy, and are motivated by pacifism, love for each other and the environment, and (in Pazu's case) fulfilling his father's aviator's ambition of discovering the floating island. Focusing on these groups, we can see another version of victim's history being played out: the army does "bad things" as a foolish mob, but the true evil can be traced to the small number of men that are directing them. In fact, the general himself is portrayed as foolish, and two of the government officials have the role of henchmen to the third, so in fact the entire ransacking of Laputa is figured as the work of one evil man, Muska.

Therefore we can say that while *Nausicaä* drew on the historical narrative of Japan's role as a victim in the international context of the Cold War, *Castle in the Sky* draws on the national narrative of Japanese victimhood articulated in the postwar period as part of transpacific complicity. Just as this internationally-developed national narrative shifted culpability from Japanese civilians and the Emperor onto the image of a few warmongering officials who misled the country, so too does *Castle in the Sky* frame evil as "a bad person being power". The military's ransacking of Laputa may be presented as bestial and loathsome, but their mob-like behaviour is a side-effect of the true villain's plot to rule the world by acquiring a weapon of mass destruction. What's more, the figure of the "misled soldier" is even more directly imaged in another group of characters. Through following Pazu and Sheeta, we learn that the island is inhabited only by robots, most of which have ceased to function or are lying dormant. The film invests a significant amount of time in portraying these robots as both

sympathetic creatures and highly effective killing machines. The robot found earlier in the film only wishes to protect Sheeta, but its malfunctioning powers cause great destruction all around it – its eventual death is a truly heart-breaking moment. The functioning robot found on Laputa is portrayed as a gardener, tending to the graves of its fallen robot comrades and making friends with the floating island's wildlife. Sheeta sheds tears for both robots, and through her compassion we as viewers are invited to open our hearts to their sad plight as well. So it is that when Muska gains control of the island and the robots begin killing the soldiers, we understand intuitively that the robots themselves are “good” creatures being mechanically forced into aggressive acts by one evil power-hungry man. Their killing is shown from a distance and is not graphic (emphasizing the target audience of young children), so even though their acts of violence are scary, the viewer understands that the aggressors are entirely not to blame for their actions – they are, in a sense, just as much victims as the people (all soldiers) they kill.

In fact, the aesthetic strategy of cultivating sympathy for killer robots is a development from a climactic scene in *Nausicaä*. The weapons of mass destruction in that film are an ancient race of “giant warriors”, cyborg-like in their bodily mix of metal and flesh. Thus as the Tolmekians attempt to prepare their giant warrior for use, it is seen incubating as though it were a fetus. At first, these depictions of the weapon are an effective way of generating a sense of horror in the viewer, and fear which can be applied to weapons of mass destruction in general. However, when the Tolmekians are forced to use the weapon by a stampede of enraged Ohmus, the giant warrior is released from incubation prematurely, and as it struggles to move the viewer sees its body falling apart in a visceral manner. It follows the Tolmekian general's command to kill, unleashing violence on the Ohmus, but there is nothing triumphal about its violence. The scene shows the giant warrior to be merely a tool of Tolmekian desire rather than an evil being, and its pitiful death is depicted so as to inspire sympathy rather than fear. The robots in *Castle in the Sky* repeat the image of killing machines with no agency, but are depicted in such a way that the viewer's sympathy for them greatly enhanced. When the first robot on Laputa approaches Pazu and Sheeta both they and the viewer are unsure how it will react to their

sudden intrusion onto its island, but when it reaches them it simply moves their crashed plane in order to protect a bird's nest, full of eggs, which they had unwittingly disturbed. Feelings of unease towards this potentially violent machine dissipates as we realise it has no hostile agenda and merely wishes to protect the natural environment of Laputa. This relief is part of the affective construction that will ensure that when the robots begin killing soldiers, the tragedy of the robots will be that these peaceful creatures are forced into violence against their will, rather than the violent acts themselves. By portraying active aggression rather than hopeless passivity as in films like *The Grave of the Fireflies*, this reproduction of the victim's history narrative is quite different from most cases, as it focuses on people (both the military and the robots) being "misled" into violence, rather than people merely suffering it.

The victimhood of soldiers in *Castle in the Sky* is interesting in two respects. Firstly, when considered outside of the context of Japanese popular media, there is clearly a progressive political position being articulated by the film: that war is not constituted by "good" soldiers versus "bad" soldiers, but rather by innocent beings manipulated and coerced into fighting each other through unseen power struggles – in this case, Muska's desire for world domination. That such a sophisticated position is articulated in a film for children is surely commendable, on one level. On another level, of course, we must understand it within the context of Japanese media, and see how its exoneration of all players from warfare by placing culpability on a single individual, Muska, is a continuation of an effort to impose a specific image of war that can be seen in both fictional and historical narratives, such as narratives of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal.

Secondly, we must note that, the representational links between historical narratives and the film's narrative are probably even more removed in *Castle in the Sky* than they are in *Nausicaä*. Once again, the primary affiliation between victim's history and the film is *not* through realistic or even symbolic depictions of historical narratives. Neither the soldiers nor the robots can be said to represent Japanese soldiers directly, and Muska cannot be said to represent either Japanese leaders or American ones – there is no direct mapping of the fantasy narrative onto a historical one, and the story is only allegorical in an

oblique sense. *Castle in the Sky* is not “about” the war, or about Japan. Rather, the affect that the film cultivates is the means by which ideological concerns from the historical narrative are embodied in the fictional one. Sympathy, excitement, and fear are variously evoked in *Castle in the Sky* by drawing on the moral logic of victim’s history. It is better, therefore, to speak of victim’s affect in the case of *Castle in the Sky*, and to consider that this functioning of political ideology on the level of an affective circuit across many texts, including but not limited to those that represent history, may make it all the more insidious in its penetration of everyday life.

VI. Moral Metamorphosis: Radical Sympathy in *Spirited Away*

We have seen that the relevance of films like *Nausicaä* and *Castle in the Sky* to postwar ideology becomes apparent when they are considered both within the context of Japanese popular media, and beyond the context of representational analyses. The impact of these different contexts on how the films of Ghibli are watched and how they are read will be further explored as we consider the films *Princess Mononoke* and *Spirited Away*. I will argue that while these films entirely depart from narrative representations of victims’ history, they are still informed by the ideological imperatives that underlie victims’ history, and embody those imperatives through structures of affect rather than representation. To understand this relation, we must outline the Ghibli trope of transforming villains into friendly or sympathetic figures.

We have already seen how the giant warrior of *Nausicaä* transforms from a threatening monster to a pitiful creature, and how the robots of *Castle in the Sky* transform from being scary in their destructive power to unambiguously sympathetic creatures when left alone and not programmed to kill. The pirates too initially take the role of antagonists, pursuing Sheeta as she holds the key to finding Laputa. However, eventually they are revealed to be the romantic sort of pirate, fun and determined to find treasure and adventure, and when Pazu and Sheeta join their crew the film’s moral universe reveals its complexity by allowing threatening characters to be revealed as not only unthreatening, but kindhearted heroes. This technique of moral shifting, in which characters that

seem “bad” become “good” once we get to know them, would eventually become a distinguishing feature of the aesthetic of Studio Ghibli films, and a marker of its identity. An interviewer, comparing the Studio Ponoc film *Mary and the Witch's Flower* with the films of Ghibli, saw the main distinction as such:

One of the things that most distinguishes this from a Studio Ghibli film is the villains. Ghibli villains usually transform into friendly figures, but this movie has people with authentically bad intentions, who do terrible things.³⁴¹

Tellingly, the Studio Ponoc director Yonebayashi rejected this analysis, and suggested that his film actually continued the Ghibli aesthetic or value of moral ambivalence towards antagonists. However, the transformative aspect of this trope, in which a villain becomes friendly and sympathetic, is absent not only from Ponoc's film, but also in the simplistically evil figure of Muska in *Castle in the Sky*. In fact, Muska is quite exceptional as an antagonist in a Miyazaki film, and is perhaps indicative that the director's approach to villains was still developing at that early stage.

The Miyazaki trope of antagonists-becoming-friends is particularly notable in *Howl's Moving Castle* (*Hauru no Ugoku Shiro*, 2004), which altered its source novel by having the villains lose their villainy. The author, British fantasy writer Diana Wynne Jones, responded to this change in an interview by saying, “I really do believe there are some people who are just irredeemable. But yes, Miyazaki is much more genial about the human race than I am.”³⁴² However, the trope is probably executed most powerfully in *Spirited Away*, in which the young Chihiro finds herself in a magical world where almost everything seems hostile to her to a varying degree. Part of the film's world-renowned excellence lies in the way it subtly and gradually reverses this situation until its ending, when both

³⁴¹ Robinson, Tasha (2017). “How Studio Ponoc made the break from Studio Ghibli”. *The Verge*.

<<https://www.theverge.com/2017/10/25/16539532/studio-ghibli-ponoc-mary-and-the-witches-flower-interview>> [02/02/2018].

³⁴² Diana Wynne Jones quoted in Bradshaw, Nick (2005). “He saw my books from the inside out”. *The Telegraph*.

<<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/3646735/He-saw-my-books-from-the-inside-out.html>> [03/04/2018].

the antagonistic characters and the world itself have lost their hostility, and Chihiro in turn has become confident and assured of her place there, making her ultimate “escape” take the form of a bittersweet farewell.

The main antagonist of *Spirited Away*, Yubaba, is a witch who conscripts Chihiro as a worker in her bath-house, and as part of the contract steals half of her name: the second *kanji* (Chinese character), leaving her only with the first half “chi”, or “sen” as it is alternatively pronounced. Thus the two protagonists of the Japanese title, “Sen and Chihiro”, are in fact the same person before and after Yubaba steals part of her identity. (The idea of a sorcerer having power over someone by knowing their true name is central to the American author Ursula K. Le Guin’s fantasy novels *The Earthsea Trilogy*, which, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Miyazaki had wanted to make into a Ghibli film. His appropriation of this concept into a Japanese context through the use of *kanji* and their different readings is another example of Ghibli’s weaving of foreign ideas into a national context.) However, Chihiro’s dual identity is mirrored by the creatures she meets in the magical world – not least Yubaba herself, who has an identical twin sister, Zeniba, of a much gentler disposition. When Chihiro visits Zeniba, the contrast between her kindness and her appearance, which the viewer has come to associate with Yubaba’s wickedness, is almost shocking, and forces one to visually disassociate Yubaba’s wickedness from the character image that appears on the screen. After this part of the film, Yubaba herself ceases to be threatening to Chihiro, and when she loses a wager with her she gives her back her name without resistance. Yubaba’s transformation is not predicated on the logic of the plot, but the visual disassociation that has taken place through introducing the “good” character of Zeniba.

Then there are lesser antagonists, whose position from “bad” to “good” shifts more rapidly than Yubaba’s: an old man with many spider-like limbs gruffly ignores Chihiro at first, but eventually becomes one of her closest allies; Yubaba’s gigantic, spoiled baby is large enough to break Chihiro’s bones and threatens to do so, but is transformed into a rodent that follows her around and eventually learns to take care of itself and other magical creatures; and the mysterious ghost-like creature “No-Face” (*Kao Nashi*) stalks Chihiro and attempts to acquire her companionship with gold but becomes a horrifying and

hungry monster when she rejects him, only to wither and then follow her sadly from a distance until Zeniba takes him in so that he can better himself. No-Face's rehabilitation is particularly interesting given the prevalent interpretation (both from critics such as Machiyama Tomohiro and as an online "urban legend") of the character as a sexual predator, with various critics noting that prostitution had historically taken place at bath-houses in the Edo period.³⁴³ While No-Face's monstrous lust is not obviously sexual in the film, in any case it reaffirms the film's logic that all forms of evil will result in their perpetrators being forgiven rather than punished, and that "people who are just irredeemable" are not present in this and indeed almost all Ghibli films. With its focus on doubles and characters undergoing metamorphosis, *Spirited Away* thematically resists the concept of fixed identities in general, and by extension resists the concept of identity as a source of morality. A large part of the film's drama lies in its gradual revelation that there are no "good" or "bad" people in its world, just networks of conflicting desires into which "evil", in the form of deeds and persuasions, can enter.

Spirited Away therefore constructs an affective experience of radical sympathy, in which traditional borders between who the viewer should sympathise with and who the viewer should fear dissolve, and are replaced by the opportunity to feel sympathy or love for all of the film's characters. The emotional structuring of *Spirited Away* is therefore a development and more nuanced version of the same structures that ask the viewer to sympathise with killer robots and military figures (even the warmongering Tolmekians) in *Nausicaä* and *Castle in the Sky*, and perhaps also partially explains the inability of *The Wind Rises* to resolve the tensions of Horikoshi Jiro's role in the war effort with anything other than the attempt of a highly sympathetic portrayal. However, *Spirited Away* goes further than any of these in presenting a world where any apparently threatening character will reveal itself as "good" if given patience and care, a concept which is radical in the context of fantasy, adventure, children's

³⁴³ Machiyama, Tomohiro (2004). "Sen to Chihiro' ha Naze 'Yuna' Nanoka". *Eiga Hyōron-ka Machiyama Tomohiro Amerika Nikki*.
<<http://d.hatena.ne.jp/TomoMachi/20040314>> [03/04/2018].

films, and popular narratives – and yet does not challenge the status quo in the context of postwar ideology in Japanese popular media.

Within this context, the idea that what seemed “bad” at first is fundamentally “good” is surely, to quote Napier again, a re-assuring rather than a de-assuring concept. There is no reason to think that this radical sympathy could not be applied in such a way so as to be “de-assuring” in the context of victim’s history in popular culture: for example, a Ghibli film which drew on representational tools, such as the realism of *Grave of the Fireflies* and *The Wind Rises* or the allegory of *Nausicaä*, to depict a scenario forcing the viewer to feel sympathy for Chinese or Korean characters in a World War II setting. Perhaps Ghibli will make a film like this one day, although given its apparent lack of interest in this regard, such a film seems unlikely. In any case, the radical sympathy of *Spirited Away* is not better or worse in the context of victim’s affect – it is simply the example par excellence of Ghibli’s characteristic attachment of positive emotions to rehabilitation over remorse or culpability, thereby aligning itself with the affective circuit of other cultural texts that draw on victim’s affect.

VII. “The Tragedy of Not Being Evil”: Political Polyphony in *Princess Mononoke*

Miyazaki’s cinema of radical sympathy is constructed using a wide variety of narrative and cinematic techniques, but there is one technique he repeatedly employs in his films that warrants articulation here. This technique is one of generating polyphony, which is to say different subject positions and logics interacting and connecting with each other in a milieu that, to varying extents, resists hierarchy. In his analysis of the novels of Dostoevsky, Bakhtin creatively adapted “polyphony”, a piece of musical terminology denoting overlapping melodies, to describe the “interrelationship of consciousnesses” that deny the synthesis of a text into an overarching and monologic authorial voice.³⁴⁴ Polyphony is embodied in some of Miyazaki’s films by the presence of different “tribes”: in *Nausicaä*, there are the people of the Valley of the Wind, the natural

³⁴⁴ Bakhtin, Mikhail (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Caryl Emerson, trans., ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 10.

world of the Ohmu, the Tolmekians, and the Pejiteans; and in *Castle in the Sky*, there are Pazu and Sheeta, the pirates, the military, and the government. *Spirited Away* eschews tribal politics in order to generate polyphony through an array of metamorphosing characters, whose distinct logics and trajectories intersect without synthesizing into a coherent authorial voice – but as in the previous films, the young protagonist’s subject position is clearly that which the viewer is invited to sympathise with the most, and therefore maintains narrative dominance over other potential subject positions. In fact, through its tribalism, it is *Princess Mononoke* that goes further than all other Ghibli films in its generation of polyphony. By this I mean that the varying subject positions in *Princess Mononoke* are the most distinctly developed, non-dialectical, and non-hierarchical than in any other Ghibli film. Therefore we must give consideration to the role that *Princess Mononoke*’s polyphony plays in Ghibli’s aesthetic of radical sympathy in the context of postwar ideology.

A facile summary of *Princess Mononoke* might describe a war between humans and the gods of nature set in what appears to be Japan’s feudal Muromachi period, although many fantasy and anachronistic elements are also present. While this overarching conflict is present, rather than a binary division between opposing sides, *Princess Mononoke* presents a network of social units, each with their own desires and strategies which lead to various conflicts and alliances. This non-binaristic approach is emphasized by the fact that both the highest authority of the realm of nature, the *shishigami*, and the highest authority of the realm of humans, the Emperor, are not given their own spaces of subjectivity in the film – the *shishigami* is a mystical creature apparently uninvolved in the conflicts, and the Emperor, while represented by a small faction of humans, never appears. Instead, the film develops the subjectivities of Moro, the Wolf God, and her adopted human daughter San, as the leaders of the wolf tribe that employ guerilla-like tactics against the people of Irontown, who cut down trees and manufacture weapons. This is in contrast to the boar tribe and their god, Okkoto, who are preparing for a retributive full-scale assault on humankind even if it causes their own destruction. This brings them into conflict with Moro, whom they distrust for rearing and giving privilege to the human San, and who also insists that a full-scale war would bring death to all the forest. The

Ape Gods have yet another stance, preferring to plant trees in an attempt to restore what the humans have destroyed, and abhorring both the wolves and the boars for exacerbating the violence brought upon their forest. They also believe that eating rather than killing the humans might give them the strength to resist their invasion, suggesting that their hatred for humans is partially shaped by envy, unlike the other gods.

The humans are equally divided and driven by their own agendas – an early scene subverts *jidai-geki* (period drama) notions of heroism by depicting a band of samurai ruthlessly killing farmers. The most well-developed subjective positions on the human side are given to two characters. Firstly there is Prince Ashitaka, who drives the narrative as a protagonist: he has left his village to discover if the curse cast on him by a dying god can be cured, and also to find out why such curses are spreading. While his village or tribe only appears at the start of the film, he can be seen as representative of their agenda.³⁴⁵ Secondly there is Lady Eboshi, the leader of Iron Town and sworn enemy of Mora, who has developed a dangerous new kind of gun which is capable of killing the gods of the forest (echoing the theme of apocalyptic weaponry in *Nausicaä* and *Castle in the Sky*). However, rather than being cast as a villain, Eboshi is shown to have the best interests of her tribe at heart: Irontown is populated by outcasts, namely women originally sold to brothels who now work in the factories, and people suffering from leprosy who work as blacksmiths making weaponry. All show gratitude, and even love, for Eboshi for improving their lives and giving them a community. Then there is the absent Emperor, who desires the head of the *shishigami*, said to grant eternal youth. The monk Jiko Bou leads a ninja-like organization called the Shisho Ren which seems to work as an intermediary between the Emperor and Irontown – although it is also possible that they are merely using the image of the Emperor as a legitimating cover to get the head for themselves. The Shisho Ren have lent a group of gunners, called Ishibiya Shuu, to Irontown in exchange for Eboshi's help. However, when Eboshi leaves Irontown to hunt the *shishigami*, she warns her people that they could face threats from

³⁴⁵ The way in which some modern Japanese viewers may identify with this group is impacted by the fact that they are referred to as Emishi, a group outside of the Yamato people: Ashitaka can therefore occupy a position of both the Other and the indigenous as regards notions of heritage and national continuity.

both Lord Asano's samurai, who want their iron, and the Ishibiya Shuu, if they turn against her.

By building this complex network of tribes and motivations, *Princess Mononoke* represents power as that which flows through negotiations between a diverse group of bodies with different methods of governance – in other words, power in *Princess Mononoke* is political, and not dependent on the identity of individual subjects. This representation of power relations is especially relevant to the film's ending: while all of the chief gods are killed in apocalyptic scenes, much of the political structure between tribes remains, with San now representing the wolves and the forces of nature. While there are clearly new alliances forged between San and Ashitaka, and between Ashitaka and Eboshi, at the film's end tensions also exist between all of these characters based on their already-formed political positions. In *Nausicaä* and *Castle in the Sky*, we can clearly distinguish one tribe among the polyphony which we are compelled to subjectively align ourselves with: Nausicaä and the people of the Valley, and Pazu and Sheeta. In *Princess Mononoke*, San and Ashitaka appear to partially fulfill this role of desirable subjective alignment, as they are both intermediaries between nature and humans – San via her human body, and Ashitaka via his pacifist philosophy, a reinforcement of the traditional gendered divide between women as physical forces of nature and men as rational creatures of thought.³⁴⁶ However, the divide between the two is further emphasized at the end of the film when each character returns to their own tribes, saying that they will meet each other “sometimes”. While Nausicaä is reunited with her people and Pazu is reunited with Sheeta at the end of their films, by denying the union of San and Ashitaka *Princess Mononoke* retains its non-hierarchical polyphony to the very end, eschewing both narrative closure and a final coherent subject position with which viewers can satisfyingly align themselves.

Saeki Junko considers the film's polyphony as an expression of globalization, or “‘internationalization’ [*kokusaika*] in which countries continue to maintain their identity while accepting the inevitable need for exchange with

³⁴⁶ Butler, Judith (2006). *Gender Trouble*. London: Routledge. 17.

the Other”.³⁴⁷ In an analysis which could be considered complementary, Kobayashi Kyuzo suggests *Princess Mononoke* expresses “the collapse of the Cold War structure” and the new plurality of voices that emerged from that collapse.³⁴⁸ While not denying these claims that the film expresses a diversifying of subject positions resonant with the historical and political events at the time of its production, I believe that the polyphony of *Princess Mononoke* also develops themes that have been present in Ghibli since its inception, and that these themes are derived from a specific postwar ideological stance. The threat of apocalypse as a result of advanced human technology is clearly present, but this theme is quite popular across Japanese and non-Japanese popular culture, and is not the most noteworthy example of an expression of the nuclear pacifism strand of postwar ideology. More relevant is the way that polyphony in *Princess Mononoke* leads to an overcoming of subjective moral agency: the film depicts bad actions rather than bad subjects, and evil as a force (or curse) that enters systems when there is a failure of communication and negotiation between the components of that system, rather than through the presence of an evil component. Pacifism is therefore to be achieved not through identifying villains but through understanding why actors are motivated to commit evil acts. As Napier puts it, “Eboshi is in some ways a tragic figure, but her tragedy is that she is not actually evil. Instead, she is coerced into her destructive attack by her natural desire to protect a utopian collectivity”.³⁴⁹ The fragmentation of heroic or villainous subjective positions into differing people just trying to do what’s right is therefore a repetition of the images of dispersing culpability and disrupting notions of villainous subjects that were originally formed as political imperatives in the postwar and Cold War periods.

Of course, that this structuring of images and affect has a cultural legacy stretching back to the postwar does not mean that it furthers those political imperatives today. *Princess Mononoke* was a hugely popular film, the most watched domestic film in Japanese cinemas until the release of *Spirited Away*,

³⁴⁷ Saeki, Junko (1999). “*Nijuseiki no onnagami, saibōgu=goddesu*”. *Hayao Miyazaki (Filmmakers 6)*. Yoro Takeshi, ed. Tokyo: Kinema Junposha. 143.

³⁴⁸ Kobayashi, Kyuzo (1998). “*Shichinin no samurai kara no ketsubetsu o kuwadate*”. *Mononokehime o kaku kataru*. Comic Box 3. 152-153.

³⁴⁹ Napier (2001 b), 185.

and the reason it resonates with so many people is undoubtedly the way in which its polyphonic structuring of subjective positions relates to their own lived experiences. One fan writes how watching the film as a child helped her embrace her mixed race identity, for example.³⁵⁰ The disruption of fixed identity positions in both *Spirited Away* and *Princess Mononoke* can be seen as reinforcing various progressive political positions, such as the need to embrace rather than reject stigmatized identities, whether they are present in others or in oneself. The example of the fan also shows how Ghibli films have helped form subjectivities, often of very young people, that are based on the progressive values of self-love and diversity. However, similar to the way in which pacifism is built out of an exclusive model of victimhood in *The Grave of the Fireflies* and *The Wind Rises*, the sympathy and self-actualizations of *Spirited Away* and the polyphony of subject positions in *Princess Mononoke* are both constructed by removing culpability from agents and onto wider systems. These latter two films do not represent victim's history, nor do they directly embody victim's affect, and yet they are enabling to both. To put it another way, the progressive values of these films rely on the same modes of expression that are used to generate victim's affect within Japanese popular culture.

VIII. Universal Values in the Context of Politics and Affect

The film *Mephisto* (1985), a coproduction between West Germany, Hungary, and Austria which, like *Spirited Away*, won an Academy Award, tells the fictionalized story of renowned German actor Gustaf Gründgens, who continued his career under the Nazi regime unlike the many artists who fled. His fictional self, Hendrik Höfgen, is revealed to have similar aspirations to Miyazaki's fictionalized Horikoshi Jiro from *The Wind Rises*: both men want to create "beautiful things", both stay true to their dreams despite the pressures of the times, and both reveal a degree of tension or uncertainty in the face of their complicity with their nation's wartime agenda. However, *Mephisto* is clear that

³⁵⁰ Coomes, Nina (2017). "What Miyazaki's Heroines Taught Me About My Mixed-Race Identity". *Catapult*. <<https://catapult.co/stories/fans-what-miyazakis-heroines-taught-me-about-my-mixed-race-identity>> [03/05/2018].

Höfgen, despite being a mere theatre actor, has lent his talents to a terrible political project, and the tragedy of the film is that he is wrong to think his art can exist separately from his country's politics. If we feel sympathy for Höfgen, it is because we know his arrogance has led him to make a terrible mistake. In *The Wind Rises*, Horikoshi, who is not an artist but a designer of war planes, is more clearly intended to be sympathetic, as the film's tragedy is "the tragedy of engineers" of war: that their beautiful dream had to be attached to a terrible political project is not a matter of complicity or culpability, but one of fate. If we feel sympathy for Horikoshi, it is because we know he did the best he could during a difficult time. As Philip Brophy puts it, Horikoshi "unswervingly follows a very non-European line of aesthetic enquiry predicated on a stoic dislocation from all socio-political causality".³⁵¹ These two films clearly draw on different aesthetic, cultural, and ideological resources, and it is not the aim of this chapter to say that one type of film is better or "more progressive" than the other.

However, given that *Mephisto* refuses to pardon its artist, the reading of *The Wind Rises* as an autobiographical text is interesting, especially given the fact that in its manga version Miyazaki explicitly compares the act of creating animation with Horikoshi's own inventions.³⁵² It is tempting to draw this comparison between the two men further than Miyazaki probably intended it, and to say that his response to South Koreans who expressed their dislike of *The Wind Rises* on the internet – a statement explaining why Horikoshi was a pacifist³⁵³ – revealed the same inability to sympathise with victims of Japanese wartime aggression that characterized his portrayal of Horikoshi. And if Miyazaki wishes us to see his Ghibli film products as analogous with Horikoshi's planes, Miyazaki's insistence that American distribution and Japanese

³⁵¹ Brophy, Philip (2014). "The Wind Rises". *Frieze*.
<<https://frieze.com/article/wind-rises>> [03/05/2018].

³⁵² Napier (2013).

³⁵³ McCurry, Justin (2013). "Japanese animator under fire for film tribute to warplane designer". *The Guardian*.
<<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/23/hayao-miyazaki-film-wind-rises>> [02/02/2018].

production were entirely separate phenomena³⁵⁴ in the wake of the Tokuma-Disney deal can be compared to Horikoshi's own mental separation of his planes as inventions of the imagination and tools used for warfare – both men are only interested in production, and are not concerned with the apparatus through which their products will be disseminated in the world. Given Miyazaki's invitation, it is certainly tempting to class both him and his fictionalized Horikoshi as idealists who are unable or unwilling to reconfigure the contexts in which they wish their works to be understood – a context which frees them from the responsibility of unpleasant consequences.

However, this chapter has rejected the prevalent trend in reading *The Wind Rises* and other Ghibli texts as personal expressions of the auteur. Instead, it has traced an ideological continuity between six Ghibli films, five of which were directed by Miyazaki. While the problematic nature of victim's history is apparent to various observers in films like *The Grave of the Fireflies* and *The Wind Rises*, the filmmakers themselves seem oblivious or confused by the links made between their films and a nationalist agenda. Similarly, filmmakers and fans alike might be perplexed by the inclusion of *Nausicaä*, *Castle in the Sky*, *Spirited Away*, and *Princess Mononoke* in a conversation about victim's history. In what way could these fantasy worlds relate to a one-sided depiction of suffering in World War II, except perhaps through a politically-motivated interpretive approach of “reading too much into things”? This typical line of questioning relies on the same representational framework usually employed for discussion of victims' history that I have attempted to overcome in this chapter.

As I have shown, while the first two films directly represent war-related historical issues in their narrative, the next two indirectly represent these issues through allegory, and the last two do not represent them at all. However, all six films draw on the affective resources provided by victims' history, and all six films reproduce an ideological stance which is consistent with victims' history. The fact that the Ghibli films I have discussed seem not only far removed from the conservative and nationalist ideology of victims' history, but actually appear

³⁵⁴ Efron, Sonni (1996). “Disney Dives Into Japanese Film Business”. *Los Angeles Times*. <http://articles.latimes.com/1996-07-24/business/fi-27371_1_japanese-film> [02/02/2018].

to oppose this kind of ideology through their radical and progressive values, is testament to the hegemonic status of victim's history in Japanese popular culture. As with all hegemonic ideologies, its status is maintained by passing as normality, and remaining fundamentally unchallenged even in cultural texts which are widely considered to be disruptive. It is not unusual that even the most radically progressive film produced in a cultural milieu engenders an emotional or cognitive response aligned with some kind of conservative ideology, but it is important to identify the relationship where it exists.

Ghibli, like most other bodies of films, has elements that are both reassuring and de-assuring. Its films often end with changed things refusing to return to their original state – Jiji the cat never recovers his voice in *Kiki's Delivery Service*, Sophie is not magically cured of her curse in *Howl's Moving Castle*, and villains in all its films never go back to being “bad” once their kindness is uncovered – this is de-assuring in the context of popular cinema in general. It is problematic for Napier to contrast Ghibli with Disney in this regard,³⁵⁵ replicating both the othering discourses of Orientalism and the cultural agenda of transpacific complicity, when things like Ghibli's radical sympathy is de-assuring in the context of mainstream popular culture in both America and Japan. Conversely, in this chapter I have shown that some of the reassuring components of Ghibli *do* seem to be bounded by Japan-specific forms of nostalgic nationalism and victim's affect. This is important when assessing the apparent homogeneity between reception in Japanese and international reception of the films.

However, Napier and many other critics tend to highlight the “universal values” of Ghibli, “such as humanity, courage, and respect for the environment”.³⁵⁶ At the same time, Napier writes that Disney uses non-American settings in its films in order to project culturally-specific American values as *though* they were universal.³⁵⁷ The idea seems to be that globally hegemonic Disney films fake universality but are actually nationally specific, whereas Japan's Ghibli defies this imperative by actually being universal. This positioning

³⁵⁵ E.g. Napier (2001 a), 472-473; Napier (2001 b) 191-192, 282.

³⁵⁶ Napier (2001 b), 282.

³⁵⁷ Napier (2001 b), 282.

of Ghibli as the mirror-image of Disney is not only problematic in itself, but also obscures the aspects of Ghibli films that conform to hegemonic ideologies and culturally-specific values. It is the very universality of concepts such as pacifism and environmentalism that makes it all the more important to ask how they are given affective force in cultural texts, through what historical narratives and strategies they are shaped, and how they could be mobilized to achieve non-universal aims – including political ones.

Today in Japan, the Liberal Democratic Party mobilizes victim's affect in an attempt to justify its plans to revise the country's constitution. As well as statements from the prime minister comparing the nuclear threat from North Korea with the threat Japan faced in World War II,³⁵⁸ state technologies further the political aim of engendering a sense of victimhood reminiscent of wartime, including disruptions to train schedules during North Korean missile tests, creating protocol for responding to missile launches during formal events such as university exams, and missile alerts sent to citizens' mobile phones as drills to prepare for the case of an actual missile attack.³⁵⁹ While it is unclear how much use these alerts would be in the case of a real attack, it is very clear that they serve the purpose of reminding citizens of the danger of foreign invasion. A technology aimed at protecting Japanese citizens therefore also serves the purpose of reinforcing the victim's affect of popular discourse, which is conducive to the conservative political agenda of remilitarization. Miyazaki and Takahata may be staunch critics of the LDP and defenders of the constitution's peace clause, but the victim's affect mobilized or enabled by their work is also conducive to the LDP's conservative agenda. The ways in which Ghibli is ideologically aligned with state imperatives is therefore just as important a topic as its disruptive or challenging status in popular culture. Indeed, identifying this

³⁵⁸ McKirdy, Euan and Junko Ogura (2018). "PM Abe says nuclear North Korea greatest threat to Japan since WWII". *CNN*.
<<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/04/asia/abe-north-korea-comments/index.html>> [03/05/2018].

³⁵⁹ See also Campbell, Charlie (2017). "'This Is All We Can Do': How the Japanese Are Preparing for a North Korean Nuclear Attack". *TIME*.
<<http://time.com/4949262/north-korea-japan-nuclear-missiles-drills/>> [03/05/2018].

alignment is the first step towards imagining a body of popular culture texts that can break with it.

Chapter Seven

J-Horror, Ghibli, and the Ideological Continuities of Global Cinema

The past chapters have summarised and analysed the rise and demise of two thematically distinct assemblages of Japanese popular culture in the context of globalization and ideology. My main focus has been on the adaptation of hegemonic ideologies, namely Orientalism, gender norms, transpacific complicity, and victims' consciousness, in response to the various transformations each assemblage has undergone. This final chapter divides my findings into seven parts. The first two sections compare the two assemblages in order to show their shared role in the creation of a new infrastructure between the Japanese film industry and Hollywood. The third section will distinguish these assemblages as "global cinemas" in contrast to other global assemblages of Japanese popular culture. The fourth section will shift the focus to image production, and consider the consequences of ideological difference in an international context. The fifth section will reconsider the findings of the J-horror chapters in light of the theory of victims' affect in Chapter Six, while the sixth section will articulate the relationship between the Japanese film industry and the American film industry in the context of both globalization and postwar ideology – which is to say, it will ask to what extent the evidently radical ruptures of the former have transformed or re-configured the functioning of the latter. In the seventh section, I will give some final thoughts on the role of the audience in these assemblages. Ultimately, in addition to re-historicising the phenomena of both J-Horror and Studio Ghibli, this chapter's focus on the transmission of ideology aims to account for the persistence of certain "styles of thought" in the international production, distribution, and consumption of Japanese popular cinema.

I. J-Horror and Studio Ghibli: Structural Convergence

Until the advent of J-horror, Japanese cinema has never been a 'global cinema' except for *anime* (Japanese animation) and some *auteur* films

circulated via various international film festivals. J-horror's border traffic represents a significant departure from the cinema's long-standing failure in foreign markets. [...] Outside of the occasional art-house film, there have been few attempts to export Japanese cinema in a commercially viable way, much less create a global cinema. The influence of Japanese popular culture has, instead, largely been in the commodities targeted at children, such as television animations and video games.³⁶⁰

As was remarked at the outset, beyond the stark contrast in the content of J-horror and Ghibli films, there are structural differences between the two bodies of films that may seem to defy the sense in comparing them. "J-horror" is an ambiguously defined term which refers to an indeterminate number of films and is derived from fan culture, marketing, and aesthetics. "Ghibli", on the other hand, is a label agreed on by a small group of creators to identify their studio and the films it produces, as well as a presumed shared aesthetic between these films and their Studio-related para-texts. However, when we consider both terms as denoting an assemblage of cultural texts and processes not limited to the central bodies of films, various similarities begin to emerge. Both J-horror and Ghibli began in a pre-globalized age, growing to become domestically widespread as a result of box office hits like *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and *Ring* (1998). At the end of the 1990s they both began to gain renown internationally, thanks largely to capturing new markets emerging as a result of technological changes (the internet and DVDs) and structural changes that further integrated the Japanese film industry with the American film industry. These changes, most prominently in the form of the Disney-Tokuma deal and the remake economy, show that top-down industrial maneuvering accompanied the bottom-up transformations of emerging international audiences for Japanese popular cinema throughout the 2000s. Through their shared evolution at the turn of the millennium, it appears that what J-horror and Ghibli have in common is not just a shared status as globalized Japanese films, but also certain shared structural properties, in terms of both production and distribution, that allowed them to achieve that global status.

³⁶⁰ Wada-Marciano (2009), 28.

Therefore let us consider this process of how a Japanese popular cinema, trendy in foreign subcultures, could expand to become a “global cinema”, distinct from both previously internationally popular Japanese films and the traditionally successful commodities and franchises targeted at children identified by Wada-Marciano in the quotation above. As shown in Chapter Two, the J-horror boom of the 1990s rode a wave of radical decentralization from traditional structures of film distribution. The domestic boom took place at just the right time to take advantage of technological change: as pirated copies gained fans on the internet, new DVD distributors sprang up and saw the potential in marketing genre Asian cinema abroad by tapping into Orientalist ideology that depicted East Asia, and especially Japan, as dark, strange, exotic, and obscene. Brands like “J-horror” and “Asia Extreme” became widespread through the success of these marketing campaigns. The spread of J-horror films therefore had no central power, much like the ghosts of the films themselves, their reproduction occurred in the form of a virus, through new companies, word of mouth, and illegal internet streaming and downloads.

In contrast, Studio Ghibli seemed to resurrect the importance of the studio, especially in the Japanese context of the drawn-out demise of its once-great studios like Toho, Shochiku, and Daiei. By virtue of its centralized control over production, distribution, and merchandise, as well as its image of auteur projects and artistic integrity, Ghibli’s domestic success seems the polar opposite of the uncontrolled spread of J-horror. However, as outlined in Chapter Five, with global success came an increased decentralization of power, with the term “Ghibli” evolving and moving towards the kind of indeterminate and free-floating signifier that “J-horror” was from the outset.

Let us consider in detail how the processes of centralization and decentralization of power brought these two structurally distinct assemblages into alignment with each other. From the beginning of J-horror’s rise, the question, “What is J-horror?” has been appropriate, given the way in which the label becomes attached to products for a variety of reasons, usually with the aim of describing a certain aesthetic or with the aim of assigning brand value to a new product. This latter tactic is practiced by producers (like Ichise Takashige), distributors (like Tartan), and also critics (journalistic and academic) who wish

to contribute works to the discourses of J-horror. The label itself demands questioning, as it problematically nationalizes films based on aesthetic or ethnic factors (including non-Japanese films like *The Ring* [2002, USA] or *The Eye* [*Gin Gwai*, 2002, Hong Kong]), and which “genrifies” films that either have little aesthetically in common with horror (like *Joint Security Area* [*Gongdonggyeongbiguyeok jeieseuei*, 2000, South Korea]) or have traditionally been contextualised in different frameworks (like *Ugetsu Monogatari* [1953, Japan]).

Despite its centralized control, from the outset Ghibli has had something of this ambiguity through works such as *Nausicaä*, technically not a film produced by Studio Ghibli yet generally accepted as one, and the Ghibli Museum, which Miyazaki intends to be understood as “a film”. As the power of Ghibli’s brand has grown, the tendency to attach it to new products outside of the control of the Studio has increased, including only partially-controlled texts like the video game *Ni no Kuni*, and entirely uncontrolled texts like the Taiwanese town of Jiufen or the new Studio Ponoc. The decentralization of control over Ghibli’s brand has meant that the question, “What is Ghibli?” has now become quite appropriate too, given the increasing number of texts unrelated to the Studio that are characterized by its Ghibli brand image. In this sense, the two strategies of control personified by Miyazaki and Suzuki both have led to a Ghiblification which has transcended its studio of origin in the manner of Sadako’s virus, “infecting” new media products and projects as it spreads. In addition, since the 2010s both the J-horror and Ghibli brands have been used to promote new texts which rely on nostalgia as part of their affect. The use of nostalgic affect in texts such as *Sadako Versus Kayako* (2016) is discussed in Chapter Three, and its use in texts such as *The Wind Rises* (*Kaze Tachinu*, 2013) or *Mary and the Witch’s Flower* (*Meari to Majo no Hana*, 2016) is discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

We can therefore say that, despite the contrast between Ghibli as a studio with centralized power and J-horror as an ambiguous denotation of genre films, the decentralization of power over Ghibli’s brand has led to its assemblage bearing a structural similarity to that of J-horror. Conversely, as Ghibli decentralized, the popularity of J-horror was employed by Ichise Takashige to fund new projects under its banner, and his role in the Hollywood remake

economy saw a further centralization of the brand's power as it became harnessed by Japanese and American producers. The reeling-in of J-horror's radical dispersal into the control of traditional powers of Japanese and American film industries is another way in which the J-horror assemblage came to be more similar to the Ghibli one, which had become integrated into the American film industry as a consequence of the Disney-Tokuma deal of 1996. Both the dispersal of brands to connote new texts in international contexts and the integration of foreign cinemas into the globally hegemonic Hollywood apparatus are processes that were taken to new extremes in the assemblages of J-horror and Ghibli. Rather than characterize these processes as *symptomatic* of globalization, it is more appropriate to characterize them as the very material changes and arrangements which the term "globalization" has come to denote.

To begin to describe all of the conditions that had prevented these processes from happening sooner would be a momentous task which lies outside the scope of this thesis. However, Wada-Marciano suggests that a key reason the Japanese film industry did not focus on exporting its films to other countries was an "intrinsic condition of Japanese cinema's coexistence with Hollywood" which divided the domestic market into Hollywood-imported films and domestically produced films.³⁶¹ Wada-Marciano argues that the only way these domestic films could compete with Hollywood films was by embracing "culturally specific genres" that distinguished them from Hollywood aesthetics.³⁶² This pressure from the American and Japanese film industries on Japanese filmmakers to make "Japan-specific" films could also be framed as a form of transpacific complicity that preceded the rise of global cinemas, but which would be replicated during the remake economy of the 2000s. It also produced the industry assumption that "Japan-specific" films would fail in international markets. However,

J-horror, exemplary of Japanese genre cinema, would change those assumptions. Thanks to DVD distribution, it managed to traverse the historical boundaries that shaped Japanese cinema as a fundamentally

³⁶¹ Wada-Marciano (2009), 30.

³⁶² Wada-Marciano (2009), 30.

domestic product. J-horror, thus, followed the model of Japanese *anime* videotapes of the 1980s.³⁶³

While J-horror followed the anime model of international exports, it transformed this model by spear-heading a wave of new Asian cinema which proved (or arguably created) the existence of mass international demand for Japan-specific films. In the case of Ghibli, things are quite different: while it followed the anime model of exportation for *Nausicaä* (1984, which became *Warriors of the Wind*) and *My Neighbour Totoro* (*Tonari no Totoro*, 1988), these exported films met with little success. This was because their international release preceded the Japan-specific interest that emerged in international markets at the turn of the millennium.

In other words, while J-horror transformed the anime model of international exports due to accelerating methods of distribution and the cultivation of (sometimes Orientalist) hype, Ghibli's first films came too early to become involved with this movement. Instead, Ghibli's path to international markets was a re-configuration of studio dominance through its complete relinquishing of domestic and international distribution powers to the American film industry (as a function of transpacific complicity). J-horror and Ghibli therefore embody two distinct paths to the creation of global cinemas, the first a bottom-up transformation of distribution methods, and the second a top-down integration of a Japanese studio into the global Hollywood apparatus. The later remake economy can be understood as the Japanese and American film industries establishing top-down system over J-horror's popularity.

II. A Short History: Industrial Filmic Assemblages At the Turn of the Millennium

What both events reveal is a significant restructuring of Japanese and American film industries as a consequence of the material forms of two assemblages of Japanese popular cinema. If we take the key events of industry restructuring discussed in this thesis and put them on a timeline together, a

³⁶³ Wada-Marciano (2009), 30, her italics.

back-and-forth pattern emerges between the top-down changes of studios and producers and the bottom-up changes of technology, distribution, and consumer demand (Fig. 1). Firstly, we can see the emergence of a new aesthetic that develops and breaks with previous Japanese popular culture forms and also gains commercial success, in both the *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* film (and franchise) in 1984 and the *Honto ni Atta Kowai Hanashi* direct-to-video film in 1991. While *Nausicaä* was financed and instigated by a major company, Tokuma Shoten, *Kowai Hanashi* was a very small and cheap project put together and financed by Tsuruta Norio. The success of *Nausicaä* led to the founding of Studio Ghibli in 1985, ensuring that the same producers and experienced filmmakers would continue the successful formula of their new aesthetic as a team. In contrast, *Kowai Hanashi* brought together a number of inexperienced filmmakers to each take control over one section in a series of aesthetically similar vignettes, meaning that while they developed a shared aesthetic, they were never really working

Fig. 1: J-Horror and Ghibli: Global Cinemas at the Turn of the Millenium

Big in Japan	1984 - <i>Nausicaä</i> domestic phenomenon funded by Tokuma Shoten Tartan Films (British distributor) founded
	1985 - Studio Ghibli founded (under Tokuma Shoten) <i>Warriors of the Wind</i> video released internationally
	1989 - Ichise Takashige founds production company Oz
	1991 - <i>Honto ni Atta Kowai Hanashi</i> video tapes <i>Ring</i> novel published
	1996 - Disney-Tokuma Deal (first of its kind)
	1997 - <i>Princess Mononoke</i> reaches number one at domestic box office Disney gives <i>Mononoke</i> limited theatrical release in the USA Disney releases <i>Nausicaä</i> VHS in USA

Global Booms	<p>1998 – <i>Ring</i> (start of J-horror boom in East Asia, later Europe and America)</p> <p>2000 – Disney releases DVD of <i>Mononoke</i> in USA</p> <p>2001 – <i>Spirited Away</i> Ghibli Museum opens Tartan Films founds Asia Extreme DVD company/brand</p> <p>2002 – <i>The Ring</i> (start of remake economy between America and Japan) <i>Spirited Away</i> international release</p> <p>2003 – <i>Spirited Away</i> wins Academy Award Disney international releases of <i>Spirited Away</i> and <i>Castle in the Sky</i> on DVD and VHS</p> <p>2004 – Shimizu Takashi’s <i>The Grudge</i> (first Japanese-made Hollywood film; Shimizu Formula begins) Ghibli becomes “independent” company from (Japanese) Tokuma Shoten but still reliant on (American) Disney 20th Century Fox’s rights to <i>Totoro</i> expire</p> <p>2005 – Disney’s dub of <i>Totoro</i> premieres Disney releases <i>Nausicaä</i> DVD in USA and Europe (many more follow)</p> <p>2006 – Ichise Takashige makes three-year deal with 20th Century Fox</p>
Winding Down	<p>2008 – Tartan Films closes</p> <p>2012 – Ichise Takashige’s production company Oz goes bankrupt</p> <p>2014 – Studio Ghibli stops production (for now) Shimizu Takashi’s <i>Kiki’s Delivery Service</i> (American-produced Japanese remake)</p> <p>2017 – Disney sells Ghibli’s US distribution rights to American company GKids</p>

as “a team”, and after the film each went off to create their own films independently of each other. Thus from the outset, Ghibli was characterised as a tight-knit and corporate-backed filmmaking apparatus, whereas J-horror was a loose and floating assemblage of unaffiliated independent filmmakers with similar ideas.

In 1996, the Disney-Tokuma deal saw an unprecedented alliance between Hollywood and the Japanese film industry, in which the American studio gained control over the distribution of Ghibli in Japan, America, and Europe. The next year *Princess Mononoke* was released and became the number one film at the Japanese box office, as well as gaining critical acclaim there – however, Disney gave it only a limited theatrical release abroad with limited financial gains, showing the divide that still existed between domestic and international markets.

Ghibli's retention of the rights of merchandising no doubt contributed to Disney's reluctance to promote Ghibli abroad.³⁶⁴ In contrast, when *Ring* became a domestic hit and cultural phenomenon in 1998, it began gaining international buzz through its reception in international film festivals and East Asian theatrical releases, where it inspired the creation of new low-budget horror films and remakes in a similar style. In addition, new DVD companies such as Tartan began buying distribution rights to films like *Ring* that could be branded as J-horror – the sub-division of Tartan known as Tartan Asia Extreme was founded in 2001. The J-horror boom led to Roy Lee purchasing the story rights of the Japanese film for Hollywood, which released its relatively low-budget remake *The Ring* in 2002. The surprise success of the remake marked the start of the remake economy: an informal arrangement in which Japanese filmmakers would strive to produce original horror films so that they could sell the story rights to Hollywood. This arrangement mirrored the Disney-Tokuma deal by promoting Japanese creativity and cultural specificity in the service of the American global distribution apparatus.

In 2003, *Spirited Away* won an Academy Award and Disney finally began to promote Ghibli abroad in earnest: in that year both *Spirited Away* and *Castle in the Sky* were released on VHS and DVD in North America. While Ghibli became an “independent” company in 2004, all this entailed was that it no longer required the backing of its main Japanese corporate sponsor, Tokuma Shoten, while it remained reliant on Disney's control over distribution. This “independence” was really no more than a shift away from a Japanese company in favour of an American one, although importantly it also resulted in producer Suzuki becoming president of the new Ghibli company. Also in 2004, the American remake of *The Grudge* was released, and was notable for marking another phase of integration between Hollywood and Japanese filmmakers: for the first time, a Japanese producer (Ichise Takashige) and director (Shimizu Takashi) were given control over a Hollywood film, resulting in what could be called the world's first “Japanese-made Hollywood film”. A final important event of 2004 was the expiration of Fox's rights to distribute *My Neighbour Totoro* in the USA, clearing the way for Disney to release its newly dubbed version in 2005, along with the

³⁶⁴ Hairston (2003).

DVD versions of *Nausicaä* and Takahata's *Pom Poko* (*Heisei Tanuki Gassen Ponpoko*, 1994) in Europe and North America. It continued to release the rest of Ghibli's catalogue for international audiences in the following years.

What this timeline reveals is how the bottom-up forces of new technology and distribution methods led to J-horror becoming a global cinema, but that the top-down forces of film industry reconfigurations were key to the global successes of both Ghibli and J-horror. It is important to note that these top-down imperatives were often driven by bottom-up cultural change in the first place – for example, Hollywood's acceptance of animation as more than just "entertainment" began with the success of American films like *Toy Story* (1995) and *Shrek* (2001). These imperatives were also driven by individuals who saw the potential of further integration of Japanese cinema into the Hollywood apparatus, such as Roy Lee, Ichise Takashige, and John Lasseter (who pushed for Disney's involvement with *Spirited Away*). What is perhaps most notable of all is the very short amount of time in which these radical changes took place: from the Disney-Tokuma deal of 1996 to the release of *The Grudge* in 2004, the relationship between the Japanese film industry and Hollywood had undergone radical change. Thus the joint development of these two assemblages is illustrative of the upheavals of globalization at the turn of the millennium, but also the adaptability of the Japanese and American film industries' hegemonic powers in the face of change.

III. Global Cinemas and Otaku Culture: Two Strands of Globalised-Japanese Popular Culture

Another outcome that is perhaps surprising is the revelation that it was J-horror, and not Ghibli, that followed the path of anime in achieving international prominence. Given the similarity of form, it might seem at first that Ghibli adapted anime successes into a new global phenomenon, whereas J-horror's

Kowai Hanashi had already broken with anime traditions when it subverted traditional *shōjo* aesthetics (outlined in Chapter Three) back in the early 1990s. However, in many ways J-horror is the true successor to anime as a cultural product in the age of globalization. In comparison, Ghibli is far more distantly related to anime and related Japanese popular culture franchises, such as *Pokemon* or Sanrio's "Hello Kitty" character, which have remained internationally popular from the pre-globalized years to the present. By furthering the understanding of how J-horror and Ghibli fit into the context of globalized Japanese popular culture in general, it is important to explain not only their original points of departure from anime aesthetics, but also how they have developed to be categorically different from other franchises in a number of ways.

It has already been noted (Chapter 5) that Miyazaki and other commentators do not consider Ghibli films as "anime" films – indeed, Ghibli creators tend to view anime as entertainment and their own work as cinema, a stance which Lamarre refers to as "the Ghibli bias against limited animation".³⁶⁵ In his book *Otaku*, Azuma Hiroki writes that in the history of anime there came a split in the 1970s, in which animators like Takahata and Miyazaki became interested in "the aesthetics of movement"³⁶⁶ in contrast to other animators who followed manga pioneer Tezuka Osamu by focusing on more economic and stylized means of depicting narratives – for example, relying on a lexicon of symbolic or exaggerated gestures and images to depict emotion or intensity, in contrast to the realism of the nascent Ghibli animators. Azuma goes on to say that "[i]t was precisely this latter direction that brought Japanese anime to the heart of otaku culture in the 1980s and sprouted a genre with a unique aesthetic far removed from the 'animated films' made in the United States".³⁶⁷ Therefore the characteristics of anime-derived popular culture which are commonly recognized as "Japanese" belong to this strand that also characterizes otaku – "a subculture that emerged in Japan in the 1970s and gave rise to a massive

³⁶⁵ Lamarre (2009), 190.

³⁶⁶ Azuma (2009), 12.

³⁶⁷ Azuma (2009), 12.

entertainment industry producing manga, anime, and video games”.³⁶⁸ In contrast, Azuma writes that Miyazaki and Takahata “fully realized the ideal” of their own animation aesthetic in “the second half of the 1980s”;³⁶⁹ in other words, the early years of Studio Ghibli. This separation of Ghibli from anime aesthetics and therefore the otaku subculture entails the absence of Ghibli works under discussion in Azuma’s book.³⁷⁰

This is important because globalized Japanese popular culture is to a large extent synonymous with otaku culture. As well as anime and manga, J-pop girl groups and other otaku-derived images of femininity such as “maid cafes” have been prominent in defining “Japaneseness” in the sphere of popular culture since the processes of globalization took hold in the 2000s. The aesthetic said to unite these various cultural texts has been called “*moe*”, a word which roughly refers to desirable character attributes in the context of otaku culture, especially “cute” signifiers like big eyes or cat ears on young girls. The context of otaku culture as dominating the image of “Japaneseness” in global popular culture is notable in that both the Ghibli assemblage and the J-horror assemblage are entirely excluded under this framework, despite their global successes.

They stand apart not only in their lack of *moe* content, but also in the way in which they are consumed: Ōtsuka Eiji’s theory of narrative consumption states that in Japan in the 1980s, increasingly consumers of popular culture were not interested in particular products as valuable in themselves, but only insofar as they provided insight into a greater fictional narrative, fragmented among many different media texts.³⁷¹ In the United States, the primary term used to denote this fragmentation of narrative has come to be “transmedia storytelling”, which describes almost the same phenomenon as Ōtsuka does. Azuma further adapts this concept by claiming that “[i]n the multimedia environment of the 1990s, it is only characters that unite various works and products”.³⁷² This phenomenon can

³⁶⁸ Azuma (2009), vii.

³⁶⁹ Azuma (2009), 12.

³⁷⁰ For a discussion which details and problematizes the distinction between these two strands of anime history, see Lamarre (2009), 186-190.

³⁷¹ Ōtsuka, Eiji (2010). “World and Variation: The Reproduction and Consumption of Narrative”. Marc Steinberg, trans. *Mechademia*. Vol. 5. University of Minnesota Press. 99-116.

³⁷² Azuma (2009), 53.

be seen in franchises such as the popular *Evangelion* series, whose protagonist Ayanami Rei is frequently marketed in various forms, including in non-consumable forms such as on billboards promoting products in convenient stores. Azuma argues that consumers are not invested in buying products associated with Ayanami Rei because these products form part of an overarching narrative, but rather that they are invested in the character herself.³⁷³ This mode of consumption seems to apply beyond *moe*-related otaku culture to older popular franchises such as *Pokemon*, *Dragon Ball*, *Ultraman*, or *Godzilla*, whose characters and monsters continue to be attached to products such as action figures, trading cards, video games, and accessories, which are less “spin-offs” of an overarching fantasy narrative than desirable as characters in a “database” of popular images and information. Azuma argues that the “database consumption” of otaku culture is metonymic of postmodern global culture as a whole.³⁷⁴

However, both Ghibli and J-horror do not fit this theory well, despite having produced iconic characters such as Totoro and Sadako. In Ghibli’s case, this is clearly in part to do with the studio’s control over merchandise and its refusal to use its characters in promotional material for non-Ghibli products (as discussed in Chapter Five). Although one can buy a toy of a Ghibli character in a Ghibli-licensed store, the films and their narratives are undoubtedly “the main product” which give meaning and value to merchandise. Similarly, Azuma emphasizes the role of fans in producing their own content, rather than passively consuming it, and that this fan-created content can be as valuable as the “original” works themselves.³⁷⁵ Thanks to Ghibli’s control over its brand, while a fan could attempt to make their own Ghibli-style products or films, they will never have the value of an official Ghibli text. This is especially important in a global context, when fans of many nationalities produce work which adheres to the “Japanese” aesthetics of otaku culture. For example, new cheap software now allows lay-people to engage in simple programming to make an otaku-style video game known as a “visual novel”, which is mostly text and images of “cute” characters to accompany it. The software provides character templates which mean the

³⁷³ Azuma (2009), 37-38.

³⁷⁴ Azuma (2009), 53-54.

³⁷⁵ Azuma (2009), 33.

developer does not even need to have the artistic skills required to produce anime-style images, and, if she were to hire a translator to publish her work in Japanese, there would be nothing to distinguish her otaku culture video game from a Japan-made one. Increasingly, products like these invite consumers to become producers of “Japanese” popular culture. In practical terms, the consequence of Japanese popular culture gaining global popularity is the rapid separation between cultural content and localized production.

This image of “Japaneseness” as a free-floating, globally accessible style is largely absent from the Ghibli assemblage. It has become apparent in cases where the Ghibli label is appropriated by non-Japanese people as in the case of Jiufen, and while Chapter Five shows these cases have been increasing, the decentralization of the Ghibli brand from its company has not matched the pace of the decentralization of “Japanese popular culture” from Japan. This dispersal was prefigured by the “viral” multiplicity of J-horror (and its problematic use of “Japan” as a signifier), and J-horror is clearly closer in this sense to Azuma’s theory of database consumption and anime consumption in general. In contrast to Ghibli, apparently anyone in the world can make a J-horror film, simply by evoking the right atmosphere and casting Japanese actors, as in the case of the American-made *Tales From the Dead* (2007). J-horror’s media-hopping curses also prefigure the image of a constantly re-iterating female (ghost) character as the vehicle for her narrative to reach new media, the inverse of the traditional image of characters contained by a narrative – an image upon which Ōtsuka’s theory of narrative consumption relies. The recent “kawaiiification” of J-horror in the form of using ancillary *kawaii* texts to promote films (discussed in Chapter Three) also draws the assemblage closer to Azuma’s theory of database consumption, or “narratives and coffee mugs as the same class of merchandise”³⁷⁶, especially in the case of *Sadako Versus Kayako*. For many consumers, the diverse and entertaining promotional material, including a fake Instagram account with regular amusing updates for those who subscribed, were likely just as worthy of consumption as the film itself, if not more so given that they came with no price tag. It is the cinematic yet decentralized nature of both J-horror and Ghibli brands that keeps them uncomfortably suspended between

³⁷⁶ Azuma (2009), 39.

Ōtsuka's theory of narrative consumption and Azuma's theory of database consumption.

In general, though, for both J-horror and Ghibli there is a clear hierarchy of a core body of film texts over all other sub-texts. It is precisely their status as cinematic assemblages that has kept them apart from the simulacral trends of Japanese popular culture in the age of globalization. While popular franchises such as Pokemon have transitioned to accommodate these new modes of production and consumption, J-horror and Ghibli – despite having gone through several transformations themselves – have more or less remained on the border between pre-global and globalized modes of consumption. While the ways in which their assemblages changed were testament to the emergence of new modes of production and consumption, their entrenchment within the film industries of Japan and America has caused them to remain separate from wider changes in the popular culture industries. J-horror, always more flexible a category than Ghibli, reflected these changes more directly, but this was at the same time as it dwindled in popularity and relevance, thanks in part to the low quality of the films produced during the remake economy. Ultimately, J-horror and Ghibli not only reveal the material changes defined as globalization in the film industry, but they also encapsulate a moment of change in a way that other Japanese popular culture texts – by virtue of their flexible transmedia narratives and characters – do not. They therefore are both representative of a fundamental change in Japanese popular culture while at the same time being distinct from other popular cultural assemblages at the time. As this distinction was primarily a result of the centrality of their filmic texts, it is appropriate to categorise both assemblages as Japan's first global cinemas.

IV. "When Marnie Was Queer": Images and Ideology in an International Context³⁷⁷

³⁷⁷ "When Marnie was Queer" is the title of a Ghibli fan's public blog post: Douglas, Abi (2016). "When Marnie Was Queer". *What the Douglas*. <<http://www.whatthedouglas.com/blog/2016/1/14/when-marnie-was-queer>> [03/05/2018].

In the sections of this thesis that have focused on image-production rather than film-production, various terms and concepts have been repeated, chief among these victimhood and sympathy. For example, while Chapter Four introduced the concept of a “space of subjectivity” in the Shimizu formula by outlining some of the cinematic and narrative techniques used to align the viewer’s subjective experience of the film with a given character’s experience, Chapter Six discussed a “space of sympathy” to denote the cinematic and narrative techniques used by Ghibli films to allow viewers to feel sympathetic towards characters without necessarily understanding or experiencing things as they did, such as in the case of Horikoshi Jiro in *The Wind Rises* or No-Face in *Spirited Away*. Despite their differences, both concepts suggest the manufacturing of a type of positive receptiveness in viewers towards certain characters or situations, a practice common in film. I have identified these filmic “spaces” in an attempt to show how they are inhabited by discourses of power, especially those that form a continuity with the postwar ideology identified by Naoki Sakai and others: transpacific complicity and its offspring, victims’ consciousness.

Another important issue developed in Chapter Six is the notion that the impact of these ideologies on consumers is largely determined by the contexts of regional popular culture texts, showing the need to focus on international border-crossings rather than globally homogenous or universal texts and audiences. As I have argued, the universally positive reception of Studio Ghibli has contributed to its image as a purveyor of universal values, an image which obscures the relation of its values to Japan-specific ideology like victims’ consciousness. Even in the case of *The Wind Rises*, which clearly demonstrates the tropes of victims’ consciousness as previously described by various academics, there is a tendency amongst critics to defend it on artistic grounds, and to make no observation of its pacifism as a historically constituted affect. I believe it would be more fruitful to conceptualize the existence of “pacifisms”, of which *The Wind Rises* only articulates one victim-centred variant. Rather than position the film in the context of Miyazaki’s artistic development and personal philosophy, I have positioned *The Wind Rises* and indeed all of the films I discuss in Chapter Six in the context of the images of pacifism and sympathy as derived

from victims' consciousness that permeate the domestic popular culture industry in Japan. In this context, the consumption of Ghibli films becomes less universally progressive than the consensus might lead one to believe.

In this regard, I believe there has only been one Ghibli film aside from *The Wind Rises* for which the “universality” of its ideological underpinnings has been called into question due to its reception in internationally diverse cultural contexts. Discussing it here will therefore be of use in emphasising the importance of international context to ideological concerns outside of the context of victims' consciousness. In *When Marnie Was There (Omoide no Mānī, 2014)*, a Japanese girl Anna makes friends with the Western girl Marnie – blonde hair, blue eyes – who appears to be a ghost or memory from an earlier time. Anna is an introverted girl filled with self-loathing and feelings of alienation from her foster mother, and through her relationship with Marnie she gradually overcomes these internal struggles. Their friendship deepens in intensity as the film progresses, and their trust and care for each other develops much in the way of a romance: Anna apparently becomes jealous when she spots Marnie dancing with a boy, she blushes when Marnie holds her arms to teach her how to row a boat, and finally they confess their love for each other in an emotionally charged scene. In the film's final scene, when Anna has become more confident as a foster child and has come to accept her foster mother's love, it is revealed that Marnie was in fact the ghost (or half-forgotten memory) of Anna's biological grandmother, as she had been when she was young. This revelation confirms earlier hints that part of Anna's anxiety stemmed from being mixed race (her own eyes are a little blue, and when this is pointed out she becomes defensive), furthers the theme of reconciliation with her family and her heritage, and removes the romantic tensions that the film had established between her and Marnie by replacing them with familial love.

However, this “happy ending” came as a disappointing shock to various English-speaking Ghibli fans, who voiced their feelings on the internet.³⁷⁸ These viewers praised the film's artistry, and praised its depiction of what had seemed

³⁷⁸ E.g. Douglas (2016); Veronica (2015), “Queer Childhoods in When Marnie Was There (Omoide no Marnie)”, *Baby Dyke Diaries*, <<https://babydykediaries.wordpress.com/2015/07/17/queer-childhood-in-when-marnie-was-there-omoide-no-marnie/>> [03/05/2018].

like a lesbian love story. It should be noted that even before Marnie is introduced, Anna is by far the most boyish-looking female protagonist of a Ghibli film to date – an androgyny appreciated by those with an investment in the representation of LGBTQ characters in popular culture. The revelation that Marnie was family seemed to these fans a cruel twist of fate, and the film’s framing of this as a happy ending made it all the more unsettling. In a Western context, the ideologically progressive mode of resolving a same-sex love story in the mid-2010s would have been to treat it in the same manner as an opposite-sex love story – whether or not the couple remains together, their romantic love would be affirmed in some way, as seen in recent Hollywood dramas like *The Danish Girl* (2015) or *Carol* (2015). In contrast, the Japanese popular culture context generally positions female same-sex love as a transient circumstance of youth³⁷⁹ – and in this case, one which has its transience “fixed” by the revelation that Marnie is a family member. (The plot resolution is especially striking when compared with another Ghibli film, *From Up on Poppy Hill* [2011]: in that narrative, a young boy and girl have feelings for each other but are not sure if they are related or not. The romantic tension is finally resolved when it is revealed that they are *not* family, freeing them to follow their hearts.) For the disappointed fans, the need to “fix” a same-sex relationship into another kind of relationship was understood in the context of traditional heteronormative media as opposed to progressive and inclusive media, and seeing their beloved Ghibli suddenly switching from the latter to the former only added to their frustration. In the context of what has come to be mainstream progressive ideology in a Western context, Marnie and Anna would be offered the same kind of resolution as an opposite-sex couple, whereas in the context of mainstream Japanese popular culture, the two situations are fundamentally different and therefore require different resolutions.

Another interesting disjunct between Japanese and non-Japanese contexts of reception lies in Anna’s status as mixed race. As of yet I have not found a single English-language commentator that takes note of this, despite the

³⁷⁹ Robertson, Jennifer (1992). “The Politics of Androgyny in Japan: Sexuality and Subversion in the Theater and Beyond”. *American Ethnologist*. Vol. 19, No. 3. Blackwell Publishing. 427.

fact that in Japan *haafu* (“half”) and other Japanese people with non-normative ethnicities are a significant minority group that are largely unrepresented in popular media, and when they are it is often in a fetishistic or stereotyped way.³⁸⁰ Thus when a character comments that Anna’s eyes are pretty and then tries to get a better look at them, Anna’s violent reaction makes sense in the context of this fetishization of “pretty” *haafu*. Indeed, Ghibli’s choice of having a mixed race protagonist, especially one that doesn’t conform to stereotypes, is highly progressive in the context of Japanese popular media. To have Anna find solace and self-worth in embracing her past is a typical (and nostalgic) narrative resolution, but to have that past be non-Japanese heritage is unusual and commendable – and yet it is either unnoticed or not seen as noteworthy by non-Japanese commentators. Similarly, the double standard of not resolving Anna and Marnie’s love for each other in the same way that opposite sex narratives are resolved was no doubt invisible or unimportant to the filmmakers of *When Marnie Was There*. This film is therefore a rare counter-example to the “universalizing” image of Ghibli values, as what seems progressive in a Japanese context is lost on many Western audiences, and what seems natural in the context of Japanese popular culture becomes conservative in the context of Western popular culture.

Therefore, in introducing the different approaches to same-sex love and mixed race heritage in *When Marnie Was There*, my aim is not to open a new comparative investigation into how these representations relate to historical, cultural, and ideological discourse. *When Marnie Was There* stands outside of my analysis in Chapter Six not only because it is not related to postwar ideology, but also because of contrasting *audience receptions* based on different readings of ideological content as a result of international contexts, a difference that calls into question any easy categorisation of what is “progressive” or “universal” in Japanese popular culture. However, my argument has been that while reception has not diverged for films like *Spirited Away* or *Castle in the Sky*, these films ought to be understood in the same way that *When Marnie Was There* is: they too

³⁸⁰ Oshima, Kimie (2014). “Perception of *Hafu* or Mixed-race People in Japan: Group-session Studies Among *Hafu* Students at a Japanese University”. *Intercultural Communication Studies*. Vol. 23, No. 3. Kangawa University. 27.

are purveyors of ideology that takes its strength from regional contexts, and as such they too have different ideological roles depending on if they are consumed by Japanese or international audiences. The upset Ghibli fan reaction to *When Marnie Was There* made visible the importance of regional contexts as necessary considerations when analyzing the ideological content of global cinemas. This importance persists despite the current invisibility of Ghibli's relationship to victims' consciousness.

V. Radical Sympathy: New Aesthetics, Old Victimhood

Naturally the same argument applies to J-horror as well. Both J-horror and Ghibli provided alternative and fresh visions of female subjectivity – both in the context of international film, and in the context of Japanese popular culture's dominant forms of *shōjo*, *aidoru* (music idols), and other *moe*-derived images. This variance is presumably one reason why many critics have paid special attention to gender in both J-horror and Ghibli. In both cases, but especially J-horror, an emphasis on female subjectivity has also been one of the means to creating spaces of sympathy towards protagonists and antagonists alike, as discussed in Chapter Three and Chapter Six. Therefore the ways in which both J-horror and Ghibli reproduce and challenge the ideology of gender is in many ways related to the postwar ideology of victims' consciousness and its thematic incarnations as suffering, rehabilitation, and agentless acts of tragedy.

Chapter Three focused on gender primarily insofar as it related to a new genre configuration of drama and horror – in other words, to understand gender in the context of the development of J-horror aesthetics. It stressed the ways in which J-horror's focus on feminine mental spaces, while arguably misogynistic by inviting its audiences to feel unease or fear when exposed to these spaces, was also radical in its generation of sympathy. This sympathy was often shared between female protagonists and female ghosts, who were often both victims of patriarchal oppression or a "curse" for which no individual could be said to be directly responsible for. For example, in my discussion of the vignette of *Kowai Hanashi* titled "The Music Box", I observe that while the narrative of a teacher inviting his student back to his house replicates the threatening scenario of

sexual assault in a number of ways, both the girl *and* her teacher become victims of a violent male ghost. The teacher may have unwittingly summoned this abstract and de-individualised source of male violence, but the source of threat comes from the scenario, or social site. One of the innovations of J-horror was to do away with the image of the monster and to replace it with abstract, inevitable tragedy – the construction of affect for these films therefore aligns with the imperatives of victims’ consciousness in a similar way to films like *Spirited Away*, in which radical sympathy depends on a systematic dismantling of the dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed. The affective generation of radical sympathy can be said to be one of the defining features of the J-horror aesthetic, just as it was a defining feature of the Ghibli aesthetic. While its emergence in these bodies of films can be framed as a “progressive” sensibility developed from a cultural milieu saturated with victims’ consciousness, the ways in which it reinforces that particular ideology also implies its complicity with a conservative form of nationalist discourse.

In addition to radical sympathy, the “non-originary aesthetics” that Kinoshita recognizes at the core of J-horror are also well-suited to this form of nationalist discourse. According to Kinoshita, non-originary aesthetics are premised on the affect generated by surfaces, or formal properties, rather than the disclosure of knowledge that Noël Carroll claims to be essential to the aesthetics of horror films (i.e. the need to solve a mystery or “get to the bottom of things”).³⁸¹ In key J-horror texts, fear is narratively and cinematically positioned as emanating from images, and the origin (or history) of these images is either incidental or irrelevant to the films’ overall aesthetic. In other words, J-horror emphasized the power of images themselves, rather than whatever strange things those images represented.³⁸² This turn away from the horror of an individual to the horror of an image serves the same purpose of de-attaching “fear” from individuals that radical sympathy does – once again, it is J-horror’s shift away from monstrous individuals and narratives that allows for a victims’ affect to supersede depictions of a particular agent as a cause of victimhood. The female ghosts are less objects of fear, and more tragic figures trapped in fearful

³⁸¹ Kinoshita, Chika (2009). 111-112.

³⁸² Kinoshita, Chika (2009). 113-114.

images – a structuring image that perfectly matches the hegemonic image of Japanese wartime victimhood.

Unlike the four Ghibli films shown as having representational connections to World War II-related history (*Grave of the Fireflies*, *The Wind Rises*, *Nausicaä*, and *Castle in the Sky*), there are hardly any representational texts like this in J-horror, despite its number of films far exceeding that of Ghibli. A simple answer to this is the budgetary and aesthetic requirements of making films set in the present day. However, the few films that do reference the war tend to contribute to victims' affect, such as a vignette in *Kowai Hanashi* in which a strange girl in a karaoke building is revealed to be the ghost of someone who burned to death in the Tokyo fire-bombings. In Chapter Four I also mentioned the use of an air raid siren to signal oncoming supernatural threat in the video games *Silent Hill* and *Forbidden Siren* – these two can be seen as referencing wartime victimhood as a means to generate fear.

The only J-horror-related text I have found that draws on Japanese wartime *aggression* as a source of horror is a manga called *Gyo* by Ito Junji, whose work was frequently adapted into films during the J-horror boom. In *Gyo*, it is related that at the close of the war, the Japanese army dumped experimental biological weapons that it had used against China into the sea to avoid detection by the Allies. These weapons were walking machines driven by a bacterial organism that eventually evolved to become parasitic with fish, leading to a present-day invasion of Japan by fish on mechanical legs. The machines also expel a gas in which the protagonist sees ghost-like forms whom he guesses to be “the victims of the army’s weapon”.³⁸³ The directional force of the horror as it sweeps across the nation is also relevant: the fish go from Okinawa to Kyushu, and the narrative finally culminates in Tokyo. The movement is not just from periphery to centre, but from West to East, from Asia to Japan, and from the most notoriously war-affected southern regions to the governing capital. Notably, this is also the planned route the American invasion would have taken, if Japan had not surrendered in August 1945. After Okinawa, an invasion of Kyushu was scheduled for November 1945, and then an invasion of the Kantō/Tokyo area in the spring of 1946.

³⁸³ Ito, Junji (2003). *Gyo* [manga]. Viz Media LLC.

However, at the end of the manga it is suggested that perhaps the invading creatures have nothing to do with the war at all, and are simply the result of the evolution of some kind of Lovecraftian sea creature. The lack of narrative certainty de-politicises this potentially radical text to a large extent. Nonetheless, by at least partially depicting victimhood and horror as results of Japanese wartime aggression against Asia, and furthermore by depicting Asian “ghosts” haunting Japanese citizens, the manga shows a narrative mode of generating affect in Japanese popular culture texts that is entirely lacking from both the J-horror films and the Ghibli films. *Gyo* therefore comes close to being a true counter-example to the ideological continuity I have explored in this thesis, and proof that different kinds of engagement with postwar ideology are possible in the context of Japanese popular culture.

VI. Transpacific Complicity: Global Hollywood and Local Japan

I have used various concepts throughout this dissertation which refer to the ways in which J-horror and Ghibli are discursively framed in opposition to Hollywood. This conceptualization has been important in the ways that it aligns with or reproduces pre-existing international power structures: for example, much of the marketing and criticism during the J-horror boom relied on Orientalist depictions of Japan and the East as the Other of the West, and the notion of Ghibli as a “cinema of deassurance” in contrast to Disney as a “cinema of reassurance” functions within transpacific complicity by positioning a Japanese company as the artistic opposition to a bland but powerful American company, when in fact the two companies work together to maintain these contrasting dynamics within the overarching structure of American global hegemony. A general finding of this thesis is therefore that both the J-horror and the Ghibli assemblages include many critical texts which figure Japan and the West as two different conceptual spaces, as well as stable and distinct sites of cultural production. These texts often reveal a continuity with the project of the post-structuralists discussed in Chapter One, in which writing on Japanese culture and cinema became “part of a search for an alternative mode of

representation” to that of the West and Hollywood.³⁸⁴ Indeed, although Orientalism precedes World War II, the way in which Japanese culture in particular was discursively construed as the West’s Other in the years following the war suggest it would be appropriate to label this trend in criticism as another continuity with postwar ideology.

As well as ideological continuities maintained by critical texts, I have focused on the presence of these continuities in the core components of the J-horror and Ghibli assemblages: the films themselves, and the filmmakers and industries that produce them. In particular, I have been interested in detailing the material processes of the reconfigurations of power known generally as globalization, and how hegemonic ideology has adapted to or resisted these reconfigurations. A particularly illuminating example of this process is to be found in Tezuka Yoshiharu’s analysis of the making of *The Grudge 2* (2006), a Hollywood film made as part of the remake economy. Although Tezuka’s account relies on a different framework from my own, through it we can clearly see the relationship between the new configurations of power established by globalization and the old configurations of power established by postwar ideology.

According to Tezuka, the success of J-horror led to producer Ichise Takashige and director Shimizu Takashi becoming “the first Japanese to join the ranks of globally successful filmmakers – the TCC [Transnational Capitalist Class] of the film world”.³⁸⁵ However, in comparison to the “seven-digit fees” earned by Ichise and Shimizu,

wages for the Japanese crews were kept to a modest level. In [principal cinematographer] Yanagijima’s case, *The Grudge 2* paid him even less than he would normally be paid on Japanese productions. In fact, what Yanagijima was paid monthly was not much more than what a standard American cinematographer would be paid weekly.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ Yoshimoto (1993) quoted in: Ko, Mika (2010). *Japanese Cinema and Otherness: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and the Problem of Japaneseness*. London: Routledge.

³⁸⁵ Tezuka (2012), 136.

³⁸⁶ Tezuka (2012), 137.

In addition, Tezuka writes that the American actors worked much less hours than the Japanese crew was due to the protections of American union regulations.³⁸⁷ Tezuka claims that the gap between fees, working conditions, and experiences of being on the set was evidence of a division between what he calls “globals” and “locals”: the former being “the main creative core of the production – producers, the director, and American actors” and the latter being those “who worked in technical or in a more mundane capacity – mostly the Japanese crews and cast”.³⁸⁸ What this situation apparently reveals is a new, post-regional division of power in line with the common border-effacing image of globalization.

However, this new configuration is still largely in line with national borders – only a couple of Japanese people were included in the category of “globals”. In addition, as the status of Shimizu and Tezuka proves that it is possible for Japanese filmmakers to join an elite “transnational capitalist class”, there is an incentive for other Japanese filmmakers to work as “locals” on these projects despite their lower pay and undesirable working conditions. Although they agreed on the better pay and working environment of domestic films, the members of the Japanese “locals” that Tezuka interviewed said they would accept future offers of work on Hollywood films in the hope of gaining “new opportunities”.³⁸⁹ Tezuka frames this new incentive on Japanese filmmakers as a means of sustaining the power divide between globals and locals, and yet, paradoxically, the emergence of a “transnational capitalist class” clearly maintains regional divisions as well. In Tezuka’s account, it is the Japanese line producers – those who organize the local sets – that are incentivized to set crew wages “at the same level as Japanese low-budget independent productions”³⁹⁰ in order to promote their own reputation in running cost-effective “global” productions. In this case, the shared strategy between American and Japanese producers in paying low wages to their local workers may seem like a clear divide between “globals” and “locals”, but the material reality is that it is entirely the Japanese team – both production and crew – who receive the negative effects

³⁸⁷ Tezuka (2012), 136.

³⁸⁸ Tezuka (2012), 137.

³⁸⁹ Tezuka (2012), 138.

³⁹⁰ Tezuka (2012), 134.

of these practices, with the exception of Shimizu and Ichise. Given the active participation of the Japanese team in this state of affairs, it would be wrong to identify it as American exploitation of a smaller country, as globalization is sometimes framed. Instead, this phenomenon is perfectly accounted for by Sakai's theory of transpacific complicity: both Japanese and American industries actively work together to maintain a division of labour between Japan and America, in which each region has its own role to play in order to secure an American hegemony from which Japan may benefit.

The fact that Japanese producers are complicit with Hollywood producers is therefore not merely evidence of the new global/local divide that Tezuka identifies. It is *also evidence of a reassertion of a division along national lines*, and more specifically a re-affirmation of the postwar arrangement between Japan and the USA in which Japan functions as a particular component in the USA's universal network of power. While Ichise and Shimizu's acceptance into the Hollywood elite position of power might seem to mark a radical break with international divisions of power, the very fact that they were "invited in" by American producers reveals the actual state of affairs more clearly. Add to this the exclusivity of their positions – as evidenced in the way that an American producer approached Shimizu, rather than any other Japanese director, to direct the remake of *Kiki's Delivery Service* (2014) as described in Chapter Five – and the appearance of Japanese people in a new "transnational capitalist class" seems like less of a radical change and more of a strategy in maintaining the old nation-based structures of power. The only possibility for filmmakers to become "globals" is by way of Hollywood invitation.

Throughout this thesis I have described a number of practical arrangements between the Japanese film industry and Hollywood that embody both globalization and the effects of transpacific complicity reconfigured and reaffirmed as an organizational structure. Both the J-horror remake economy and the Disney-Tokuma deal put Japanese production in the service of American global distribution, with the remake economy in particular leading to new images in popular culture of Japanese creativity put in opposition to Hollywood blandness – charging the common saying that "the original is always better than the remake" with cultural and national implications. Similarly, common

perceptions of Ghibli position it as an opposing force to Hollywood, as Napier and others do. However, these perceptions of an opposition between Japanese film and Hollywood masks the complicity between the two, just as Tezuka's emphasis on the divide between globals and locals masks the reassertion of national borders in the processes he describes. In contrast to both, Sakai's framework of transpacific complicity recognizes both the structural agreements between Japan and the West as well as the way they are regionalized through the separate roles they are assigned.

My approach has been to describe the new international arrangements between film industries in the context of globalization, but at the same time I have aimed to show the continuity that these arrangements have with hegemonic postwar ideology. It may seem paradoxical to describe on the one hand how these processes have led to uncontrolled, decentralizing forces such as the DVD technology that brought J-horror to a global market or the increasing use of the Ghibli brand by non-Studio agents, and on the other hand how these processes have been underpinned by ideology that reasserts a static image of Japan and the West as contained, complementary, and clearly-defined regions. Indeed, this tension tends to reassert itself between critical texts, as discussed in Chapter One. I believe Sakai provides an answer to both critics who articulate globalization as the rise of regional cultures and those who articulate globalization as the furthering of Western hegemony, by saying "it is no longer possible to continue to disavow that the West is floating and dispersing (with the side effects of domination); but it is equally important to note that the West is *not* declining".³⁹¹ Similarly, while the J-horror and Ghibli assemblages became increasingly free-floating and dispersed, the domination of postwar ideology did not decline. While this postwar ideology has in some cases reasserted the structural dominance of the USA as it was originally intended to (such as in the case of the remake economy and the Disney-Tokuma deal), in other cases it reasserted the affective structures of that old order, as in the creation of new kinds of victims' affect and radical-but-limited sympathy. However, the presence of victims' affect in Japanese popular culture has always been in the interests of the USA's continued military dominance of the East Asia region, even when that

³⁹¹ Sakai (2010 a), 35.

victimization has been superficially “anti-American” in tone – as Sakai writes, Japan’s inherited style of conservative nationalism is fundamentally aligned with the objectives of American foreign policy.³⁹²

Therefore, it is my hope that the introduction of Sakai’s frameworks into the study of popular cinema has not resolved but accounted for the tensions inherent in the radical changes of globalization and the persistence of postwar ideology occupying the same discursive space. In addition, by relying on the form of the assemblage to illustrate this, it should be clear that the entwined forces of globalization and postwar ideology have impacted these assemblages at varying levels: in film production, in image production, and in critical reception. Given the pervasiveness of these forces, it would be strange to imagine that consumers, another important part of the assemblages, would be unaffected by them. The impact of these forces on subject formation is therefore a final concern which I will turn to now.

VII. Young Producers: The “Audience”

As well as Ghibli’s primary target audience of children, it should be recalled that since its inception J-horror has been made to appeal to schoolgirls. Both developed a much wider audience and both produced works which many would consider too “adult” for a young audience – in the case of horror this is obvious, but for Ghibli some of Takahata’s films especially seem to invite adult audiences (such as the relentlessly grim *The Grave of the Fireflies* or the slow and meditative *Only Yesterday*). However, neither have forgotten their young demographic, with Miyazaki’s *Ponyo* (*Gake no Ue no Ponyo*, 2008) apparently aimed at young children and modern J-horrors like *Gekijōban Zero* (2014) featuring and targeting schoolgirls as an audience. The youth of the audience is important because, as mentioned previously, young people are more and more frequently engaging with cultural texts as both consumers and producers, making them important components of the assemblages under discussion. While I have frequently referred to both “consumers” and “audiences”, these words suggest a passivity in relation to cultural texts that is largely misleading.

³⁹² Sakai (2010 b), 261.

In Chapter Six I mentioned, for example, the blog post of a Ghibli fan who articulated how the film *Princess Mononoke* helped her to come to terms with her mixed race identity. My aim was to show how the texts I am discussing play an important role in the subject formation of young people. At the same time, this example reveals how young people contribute new cultural texts to the assemblages under discussion, and also how the global rise of Japanese popular culture in general has facilitated thoughtful and sometimes academic-level discussions through the new connective technologies that have come to dominate as conduits for social interaction. While this greater connectivity may also lead to a more rapid reproduction of the various ideologies discussed in this thesis, it also exposes them to critique at a popular level impossible in the pre-globalized era.

The internet has also allowed for an increased availability of academic content, which people are more likely to engage with if it concerns their favourite cultural texts and franchises. Journalism, blogging, and criticism have all been brought into greater connectivity as a result of the internet, and the overlap between these categories has also become greater. As a result, audiences can be engaged with assemblages in a more active way than was possible in the past, and have better opportunities to not only consume, but also produce high-level critical content. These societal changes can therefore be said to have had a democratizing effect on the academic treatment of texts such as those of J-horror and Ghibli.

On the other hand, a consequence of this widening of the participants of debate has naturally led to a lack of critical rigor in most cases. In addition, due to the popular appeal of J-horror and Ghibli, much of the literature around them is designed to appeal to both fans and academics. In other words, unlike works on cultural texts that are not deemed “popular”, much of the published literature has aimed to target both the popular and academic demographics in order to reach a wider audience. Therefore, at the same time as internet blogs have become more critically informed and astute, published academic literature on these topics has become more prone to sloppy or simplistic analyses. While this leveling-out of quality across different media could be framed as a danger to academic integrity, the positives of wider engagement and a more democratic

distribution of knowledge surely outweighs the negatives of an increase in simplistic criticism. Nonetheless, this new state of affairs impacts all academic work on popular cinema and culture, and is something researchers must take into account when carrying out their own inquiries.

Indeed, the greater exposure to and engagement with Japanese popular culture for international audiences in the era of globalization has become established to the extent that it has become its own image within popular culture. A striking example of this new image is to be found in the Disney film *Big Hero 6* (2014), set in the fictional city of “San Fransokyo”, a hybrid of American and Japanese cultural signifiers, cheeseburgers alongside cherry blossoms. This expression of hybridity is bound to resonate with international audiences who consume large amounts of both Western and Japanese popular culture, and whose very identities have been shaped by cultural texts from both milieus. A Japanese audience, on the other hand, may also relate to the co-existence of both cultural signifiers in their lives, or they may even take national pride in seeing “their” signifiers existing as equals to the more traditionally global/universal American signifiers. However, a closer look at the film reveals its hybridity to be of a hierarchical nature: Japanese names and images decorate a world which reflect a stereotypical image of American values and societal norms. “Japaneseness” does not challenge but decorates the Disney aesthetic, and is therefore displayed as part of Hollywood’s extensive multiplicity – in this sense, *Big Hero 6* can be said to not only reflect, but to prescribe a new subject position for its young audiences (both international and Japanese) who find themselves immersed in both Japanese and American popular culture images. Unlike previous films, which did not take this hybridity as content, *Big Hero 6* is prescriptive of how we can live with our hybridity: to enjoy Japanese popular culture as part of a global/Western imaginary.

The content of this thesis is therefore poised to counter this formulation not only in the cases of the two assemblages of J-horror and Ghibli, but in every one of its manifestations in cultural texts. The case of *Big Hero 6* suggests the need to further interrogate the role of Hollywood in generating images that reinforce the ideology of transpacific complicity. In addition, there are doubtless other mechanisms through which the dispersal of Japanese popular culture has

been accommodated by the hegemonic ideology of the postwar period. It lies with future projects to investigate and record these historical continuities, so that we might better understand the limits and the possibilities of what our cultural assemblages have to offer us.

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