

“Lost Inside Empire”: Self-Orientalization in the Animation and Sounds of Hayao Miyazaki’s *The Wind Rises*

Travis R. Merchant-Knudsen

North Carolina State University, North Carolina, USA

Abstract

Japan as a colonial power at the beginning of the twentieth century fell outside of the Eurocentric empires of the West. However, the country found itself preoccupied with ways of elevating its status in the hope of being equal to and, eventually, surpassing the West. *The Wind Rises* (2013), an anime film written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki, tells the story of Jiro Horikoshi, an aeronautical engineer who created the Mitsubishi A6M Zero used by the Japanese Empire during World War II. The animation and the sound design of the film are two formal elements that paint Jiro as a pacifist with a desire to create airplanes. It is a portrayal of an individual aspiring to be disparate from a colonial power, but the narrative suggests that it is, perhaps, impossible to completely align oneself outside of the imperial force of the Japanese Empire. The article explores how *The Wind Rises*, through the formal elements of anime and its sound design, carefully navigates Japan’s historical and colonial tensions.

Key Words: Miyazaki, self-Orientalization, Japanese, anime, sound, narrative

Introduction

As Jiro Horikoshi (Hideaki Anno) dreams upon a patch of grass in Japan, he visualizes Italian planes and the man who made them, Giovanni Battista Caproni (Nomura Mansai). The boundary of space disappears, and Jiro recognizes his dream to make planes at the level of Caproni — not for war but the beauty of aeronautics. The planes in the dream, emboldened with the Italian colors upon their wings, fly by without formation and the sounds resemble a human displacing the vibrations of the propellers; there is the clear evocation of human connection between Jiro’s aspirations and the planes, and the dream sounds reflect the goal he has of creating planes of such beauty later in his own life. However, the film sequence abruptly cuts to a disparate scene, and Jiro’s dream changes; flames and warfare blare in the distance as these planes made by Caproni

crash to the earth in balls of illuminating flames. The bright colors of the dream disappear, and the darkness reminds Jiro of the depressing inevitability of war. *The Wind Rises* (2013), an anime film written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki, depicts Jiro as an aeronautical engineer who creates the Mitsubishi A6M Zero used by the Japanese Empire during World War II. The film presents a heightened, fictionalized version of the real aeronautical engineer and follows Jiro as he attempts to supplant the aggressive desires of his country with his dreams of creating technology that would elevate the status of Japan. Miyazaki's film posits a colonial power that obsesses over its comparisons with the West and its protagonist Jiro as a participant within the Japanese empire who embodies the active rejection of colonial power.

The animation style and the sound design of the film are two formal elements that paint Jiro as a pacifist with the desire to create airplanes that can connect people across the globe. It is a clear attempt to differentiate the protagonist from a colonial power, but the film suggests that it is, perhaps, impossible to completely separate oneself from the imperial system within which one functions. As Japan does not fall within the Western-dominated model of typical post-colonial studies, how does *The Wind Rises* engage with the imperial power of Japan within modernism? By looking at the anime style and the sound design of *The Wind Rises*, Japan's replication of imperialist power displays moments of Orientalizing itself by becoming reliant on inspirations from, and connections to, historically imperialist Western powers. Historian Stefan Tanaka states, "Japan, having defined itself in terms of the object, soon became captive to its own discourse. Its understanding of itself was fixed in the past, as oriental; *toyo* was the source of Japan's orientalism as well as of the narrative of Japan's progressive development" (22). Tanaka establishes *toyo* as a term that signifies how Japan and its historians Orientalize Japan by seeking to unify versions of Japan into a collective singularity (11). In this article, *The Wind Rises* considers this stance by investigating the history of imperial Japan through the eyes of a citizen and inventor. Miyazaki's filmography deals with the violence of people towards others and nature through technological progress, as evidenced in works such as *Porco Rosso* (1992), *Princess Mononoke* (1997), and *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004). *The Wind Rises*, by engaging with recorded Japanese history, highlights individual defiance while operating within a state apparatus.

In *The Wind Rises*, the reliance on Japanese history and the tensions present within the depiction of that history problematize the focus on violence and technology present in Miyazaki's earlier films. The film's animation becomes a site to highlight a specific tension of technological progress between self-Orientalization. Jiro's perceptions and creations are initially depicted in the film as existing outside Japan's colonial ambitions, but such a separation becomes increasingly problematic as the narrative of *The Wind Rises* progresses, and such differentiation ultimately falters in the light of war. Horikoshi's¹ and Miyazaki's tensions in relation to imperial power articulate an opposition to militaristic force, and the expansion of modernist studies allows the film to be studied as a post-colonial text exhibiting a preoccupation with the rejection of imperial power. *The Wind Rises*, through the formal elements of anime and its sound design, carefully navigates the colonial tensions inherent in this period of Japan's past. By focusing on the fictionalized Jiro's love for engineering, the formal elements within Miyazaki's film depict an unwilling participant, torn between investing additional power in Japan's collective efforts to surpass the West and fulfilling the dreams of the individual.

Orientalization in Anime and Miyazaki

Modernist and post-colonial studies are often most preoccupied with European empires; this provides a gap to examine the empires that do not quite fit that model. Japan, as one such non-Occidental example, and due to its conquest of islands in the Pacific, and of Korea and China, exists as a historical colonial power during the beginning of the twentieth century that falls outside of the Eurocentric powers. Concurrent to this period of expansionism, the country found itself preoccupied with ways of elevating its world position to be equal to and, eventually, surpass the West. Takashi Fujitani, a scholar of Asia-Pacific Studies, positions Japan "as a part of the West in the latter's relations with the colonized and semi-colonized world" in his essay, "Post-Imperial Japan in Transnational Perspective" (161), and argues that Japan, during its imperial days in the early twentieth century, struggled to match the military and economic power of the West. Fujitani relates Japan's empire to a discussion of expanding modernist colonialism past Western geographical borders, a consideration which positions Japan as a site of colonialist studies, as it relates to the aggressive expansionism and atrocities the country committed as an Axis power

before and during World War II. Such actions support Fujitani's assertion that "all modern national borders have been constituted ultimately by some form of force and violence" (152). It is through such a forceful act that a colonialist power becomes established, and Japan's fascination with the colonizing of the Eastern hemisphere during the beginning of the twentieth century provides that act. However, if this is the case, how then does Japan fit within modernist studies? Japan, as an Eastern power, opposes the colonized hemisphere in conjunction with the West, so the boundaries have to be expanded to consider how it both is discussed and how it talks about itself.

Orientalist studies provide a basis for a discussion of how Japan's colonial history is viewed in the world. Edward Said states, "Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles" (2). This conflict usually emerges from European powers looking toward the East, or what Said terms "the Orient". From this approach, consideration of Japan's role becomes complex in its assignation as a part of the Orient, as Japan willingly dominates, restructures, and reorients itself within the Orient itself (Said 3). Expanding the boundaries of Said's studies, Walter Mignolo, a scholar of post-coloniality in Latin America, discusses how Japan began fulfilling what Mignolo calls a "standard of civilization" which placed it alongside other powerful countries at the turn of the twentieth century (286). This conflict creates tension with modernist studies because Said's focus, originally, positions the West as the authoritative power yet, in this case, what happens to Japan? Mignolo finds the Meiji Restoration, beginning in 1868 and leading into the official establishment of the Empire of Japan in 1890, as the moment "which dismantled an old political order and prepared Japan for its request to be accepted into the family of nations ruled by the standard of civilization, at the end of the nineteenth century" (132). As Japan reorganized its government and established an imperial power that would later annex much of the Pacific, these considerations of Orientalism begin to highlight how Japan exists within the framework of Orientalist studies.

The complication inherent in the narrative of *The Wind Rises* and its connection to Orientalist studies is its focus on the motivations of the individual within the larger empire. In Said's *Orientalism*, the consideration of culture invariably comes from the outside looking in; and yet Japan finds itself positioned and represented as both the Japanese Empire of 1868-1947 and as

a part of the Orient as defined by Said. Gayatri Spivak, however, begins to fill this theoretical gap by considering how “[t]he colonial subject is seen as emerging from those parts of the indigenous elite that have come to be loosely described as ‘bourgeois nationalist’” (206). The subject of Japan as a colonial power constructs its own history through the eyes of the government which creates the blinding of the individual subject within the system. In this way, Japan reorients itself outside of the defined Orient and into a position of power similar to those of the West that often clouds and hides individuals opposed to the colonial power. Spivak argues, “[That] which seems to operate as a subject may be part of an immense discontinuous network (‘text’ in the general sense) of strands that may be termed politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language, and so on” (213). This points to the way in which Japan borrows and appropriates inventions, power, and the ideology of the West. By obscuring the individual within the imperial model, Japan’s history becomes moulded by the empire, and through the empire of Japan.

In this “shadowing of the individual”, Amy Shirong Lu’s discussion of Japan as a participant of self-Orientalization becomes key to examining *The Wind Rises*. This term, coined by Lu, creates an extension of Said’s position by broadening the boundaries to include an empire within the Orient. She states, “[self-Orientalization] provides a stage on which Japan can stand out from the Oriental side of other Asian countries and act as both a stranger and a leader in Asia” (179). Lu establishes a connection between anime, such as Miyazaki’s work, and Edward Said’s Orientalization, which stresses Japan becoming Westernized by expanding its international definitions of power in the East (Lu 172). This distinction considers the reflection between empires inherent in Said’s claim that, “It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries” (57). However, as established through Lu’s exploration, the West does not establish itself as the sole articulator of Orientalization. Rather, Japan’s participation within the imperial model during the height of the Japanese Empire is what creates self-Orientalization as it relates to the hidden individual within Japan.

Miyazaki’s filmography touches upon these ideas of Orientalization in the representation of technology and violence; two such examples, *Princess Mononoke* and *Howl’s Moving Castle*,

previously examined this struggle between the internal and the external. In these two films, the exploration of cultures and ideas is concerned with issues outside of Japan (*Howl's Moving Castle*) and within Japan (*Princess Mononoke*). Cult film scholars Ernest Mathijs and Jamie Sexton discuss the relation of anime to Orientalism, observing, "The fetishism of the Orient is often visualized through a series of traits associated with both femininity and uncivilized, unindustrialized wildness" (121). This position can point to each film, but *Princess Mononoke* exemplifies this point through San, the woman raised by wolves in the film. Though she has the appearance of femininity, her brashness and embodiment as a protector of nature extend beyond the metaphor of peaceful confrontation and the sentimental attitudes of the nature in which she resides. This is also replicated in the main character, Ashitaka, who acts as an outsider and a wanderer, an external perspective noted by Chris Wood. Wood observes that, "*Princess Mononoke* features a non-Yamato protagonist and, it can be argued, is engaged in a wider project of representing those historically excluded from a narrative of [Japanese identity]" (113). The outsiders, in this case, are still within the empire and subject to the forces of violence in the film. However, the struggle between the two characters and their external antagonists subsumes them into the violence they attempt to escape. The violence of the film and the Orientalization within it ultimately shift the narrative toward an attempt for peace and turns the film into a self-Orientalized meditation on nature.

Within *Howl's Moving Castle*, the depiction of technology and war creates a struggle of understanding within the participation in violence. In his early writings, Miyazaki states, "It is hard to strip the past of whatever sentimentalism and glamorization we have added to it" (157), an observation which indicates that Miyazaki himself is aware of the troubles and problems of depicting the Japanese empire. If anime provides a form through which artists can contemplate historical imperial atrocities of Japan, it follows that Miyazaki, a known pacifist, would be unable to ignore their influence on Japanese history and culture. Appropriately, his films become meditations on the placement of violence and war within colonial systems. *Howl's Moving Castle* depicts two neighboring kingdoms nearing war, but the film focuses on the relationships outside of the strict violence, instead being "inscribed with a strong sense of karmic, environmental, and ecological awareness" (Mathijs and Sexton 127). It is this theme that remains the most powerful

in Miyazaki's films. The conclusion of the film depicts bombers flying away, but the cost of arriving at that point shows the inevitability of violence within this system.

In its depiction of historical events, *The Wind Rises* portrays a culmination of these tensions through actual human experience rather than fantasy. Japan's participation within self-Orientalization in this exploration of Jiro Horikoshi relates to the study of Miyazaki's images by asking how anime as an art form informs a colonialist study. Amy Shirong Lu notes that, "anime's internationalization illustrates that Japan not only 'imitates' and 'adopts' but also promotes Orientalist discourse" (179). Anime and its formal qualities of animation relate to these themes through a lens which problematizes Japanese history. The utilization of animated images in Miyazaki's *The Wind Rises* conveys a hierarchal relationship between Japan's imperial power and its people, and in the abstraction from history in the animated image, the film confronts what Stefan Tanaka argues are problems with constructing historical narratives in post-colonial stances: "Even as non-Western countries must deal with their own past—their 'parent'—they must also grapple with the West, another 'parent'" (266). In self-Orientalized abstraction from the historical recounting of Horikoshi's life, the limited scope of the animated image orients Japan as a colonial power at the turn of the nineteenth century not just in expansionist actions toward other nations but in its elevation of technology and power in line with other Western global powers such as Italy and Germany.

***The Wind Rises* and Japan's Technological Aspirations**

The Wind Rises displays the tensions of the people and the country alongside its struggles with imperialism. Alistair Swale discusses how Miyazaki, in *The Wind Rises*, "skirts around directly depicting or addressing in any detail the horrors of war" (519). This, perhaps, becomes a clear moment of how the film participates within the system as a commentary towards the inevitability of atrocities. Within the film, the technology Jiro dreams of and interacts with throughout his life showcases a tension between atonement and imperial power, a tension evident in Hayao Miyazaki's comments on how Japan deals with its past: "[The] country has not yet made a full accounting for the Second World War" (147). The film displays this clearly throughout and, most notably, in the final scene of the film in which a dreaming Jiro meets Caproni for the last time. In

the first panning shot of the dream, the image displays a graveyard of downed planes and the aftermath of the impending war. As Jiro finds Caproni, both of their animations are constantly moving in the blowing wind, and he references the first dream where the two met near the beginning of the film: “This is where we first met. Now it’s the land of the dead” (02:00:24-31). The open field of blowing grass has changed for Jiro as the nation of Japan goes to war. Jiro’s dreams with Caproni and the technology he builds throughout the film highlight how he sits outside of Japan’s imperial desires and time. His dream at the end of the film demonstrates the impending war and what is to come, but the film refuses to showcase the actual war itself. As Jiro becomes lost inside the machine of the Japanese empire, his dreams reflect the beauty of what he wants and the horrors of war waiting at the end.

As explored through the lens of Lu’s self-Orientalization of Japan’s surroundings, it becomes clear that *The Wind Rises* is not a statement of atonement for the atrocities of Japan’s empire but rather an exploration of the internal tensions of Japan as represented through citizens like Jiro. Extending this concept further, Aijaz Ahmad, a Marxist literary theorist, critiques Said’s ideas of Orientalism in this relation to atrocities; Ahmad’s discussion of the colonial subject positions the problem of self-representation — one that Jiro finds himself in within the confines of Japan’s colonial power (PE101). As Jiro begins to create airplanes for his dreams, he inadvertently begins to fall within the agenda of the Japanese Empire. As Japan entered the twentieth century, it attempted to become a “modern” country itself by mirroring the West. *The Wind Rises* projects this idea when Jiro and another engineer, Kiro Honjo (Hidetoshi Nishijima), visit Germany to learn ways to construct a stronger plane. In this scene, Jiro finds a small aircraft in the German hangar they are visiting and admires its beauty. A German soldier chastizes him by saying, “You Japanese copy everything,” to which Honjo exclaims “You’re afraid we’ll just improve it” (00:47:22-32). This scene exemplifies Tanaka’s claims of Japan embracing Western ideas in an attempt to become and surpass the West: “Japanese claims to uniqueness thus incorporated many elements used by Westerners to explain Oriental inferiority but turned them into positive characteristics that accounted for Japan’s development” (274). The German plane gives Jiro inspiration similar to the inspiration he receives from Caproni, yet he attempts to recognize the problems of an evolving Japan and push against it by designing the planes for his

dreams. However, as his dreams become the dreams of the empire, Jiro's identity becomes lost within the system of Japan's empire.

Through struggles of self-recognition, Japan becomes a site of colonial power, similar to Western powers, through a focus on technology within *The Wind Rises*. Though Japan's focus is on Westernizing itself, the consideration of its military power and technologies becomes the focus of the state apparatus. Jiro's perception and dreams are centered entirely on the fascination with modern technological advances both from within Japan and within Western colonial power bases, but Jiro's desires cannot be separated from the looming war that he opposes. This is evident when Jiro discusses the weight of his plane as being too heavy. He suggests, "One solution could be we leave out the guns" (01:37:16). The other engineers at Mitsubishi laugh at the suggestion. Instead of embracing the militaristic need for violence within his plane, Jiro's goal in *The Wind Rises* is to create technology that would make Japan worthy of the global stage. One can see this from Horikoshi's preface to a book about creating the Zero fighter: "We were trying to surpass the rest of the world's technology, not just catch up to it. That was the goal of the Zero I designed" (x). The film focuses on the function of Jiro's dreams and aspirations as they relate to the Japanese empire. Though he wants to make the planes to fulfill his personal desires, the weight of Japan's need for new technology forces him to acquiesce to governmental directives. In this way, Japanese culture becomes an amalgamation of influences and desires that extend through Orientalization and, in line with Lu's positioning of Japan as self-Orientalizing, it may be seen that Japan's technology becomes the focus of its efforts to elevate itself in its pursuit of perceived Western technological and imperialist supremacy.

Since self-Orientalization becomes inevitable for Japan as a whole, how does the individual fit within the system if they are pushing against it? This question becomes the heart of *The Wind Rises* as it considers the role of the Zero fighter and its creator, Jiro Horikoshi, and Hayao Miyazaki as the director of the film. In a scholarly review of the film, Deborah Breen asks, "Is technology neutral, or are designers complicit in the uses of their inventions?" (458). This relates to the question of the Japanese desire to elevate the nation above the West because the pursuit of technology emerges as an increasing source of tension within the country and among its participants. Additionally, Miyazaki's narrative is further complicated by the possibility of a

rejection of violence and war in reality; this is where the two figures meet and the film's themes of struggling with memory and the past is born. Miyazaki's film begins with a dream sequence that displays Jiro flying a plane that behaves and flies like a bird, providing an immediate indication that the construction of the narrative hinges on the interiority of the characters on screen. As Tanaka has noted: "By demonstrating a connection to the original nature of man, the possessor of that beginning can create both a narrative that ties the origin to the present and a narrative that distinguishes past from present" (Tanaka 270). Jiro's dreams are a space in which Miyazaki explores the origins of Jiro's aspirations to build the Zero fighter, and these dreams often create a blurred line between the past, present, and future. The final sequence flashes forward to World War II as Jiro laments for the land of the dead, and the memory of Japan becomes coded through these blurred distinctions.

The film's second dream sequence shows Jiro and Caproni's first rendezvous, a scene which highlights the trapped individual for both Jiro and Caproni. The dream opens with a shot of a young Jiro's face with superimposed Italian planes flying through the air (Figure 1).



(Figure 1)

Jiro transitions from this moment fluidly into the dream world of a wide-open field with jittering grass blowing in the wind. The animation in the dreams is constantly moving across the film's 24 frames per second, reinforcing the tension within the individual as Jiro escapes into this world.

Suddenly, he witnesses an Italian plane flying closer to the ground to reveal Caproni, who jumps out of the plane to meet Jiro. As the two face each other, Jiro states, “I’ve been reading all about you” (09:00). This telegraphs a moment which conflates both Japan’s and Jiro’s search for validation through Western guidance. At this moment, the field appears peaceful, and the outside world does not directly affect the two engineers. However, Caproni then gestures towards the planes that Jiro admires, and mutters, “They will bomb an enemy city. Most of them will never return.” The image suddenly displays the atrocities of World War I with a burning landscape and falling planes (00:09:32-44). As Jiro watches the flames burn, Caproni then waves his hand to bring a passenger plane closer that he claims is his actual dream once the war ends. The large passenger plane glides through the air and gives a preview of a lofty dream separated from the violence of the small planes in the burning sight moments earlier. After showing him the plane, Jiro questions if he can design airplanes without perfect sight, and Caproni invigorates Jiro to chase his dream of becoming an engineer by saying that planes are not for war: “Planes are beautiful dreams, and engineers turn dreams into reality” (00:12:16-20). This dream sequence explores how Caproni, also an engineer who made planes for the Italian government during World War I, is a trapped individual within the power of the Italian empire. As Jiro grows up, he falls into this same trap by embracing Western influence and mirroring the desires of the Japanese empire.

Positioned as the individual subsumed within the system, Jiro becomes a motif of Japan’s influence over its people. In the animation of this sequence and the reliance on dreams to bring these two similar figures together, Miyazaki’s film and his authorship mirror the design philosophy of Jiro, who states, “I came up with a pessimistic forecast: the longer the war lasted, the less favorable were our chances to win” (Horikoshi 123). This pessimism occurs within the concluding stages of making the Zero and upon realizing that his plane was destined for the war and violence which appear in the final scene of the film. In the case of *The Wind Rises*, the narrative device of these dreams complicates the questions of war and violence and its association with technology within imperial Japan. In this sense, Miyazaki explores an aspect of Homi Bhabha’s discussion of the image of the nation: “What I want to emphasize in that large and liminal image of the nation [...] is a particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it” (1) As Jiro acts on his dreams to create a plane, his clear

refusal to associate with the imperial power accentuates the importance of the dream spaces, yet this continuing belief in the autonomy of the actions of the individual insinuates that he still falls into the category of self-Orientalization because of his continued actions outside of the dreams to create the plane within the system of the Japanese empire.

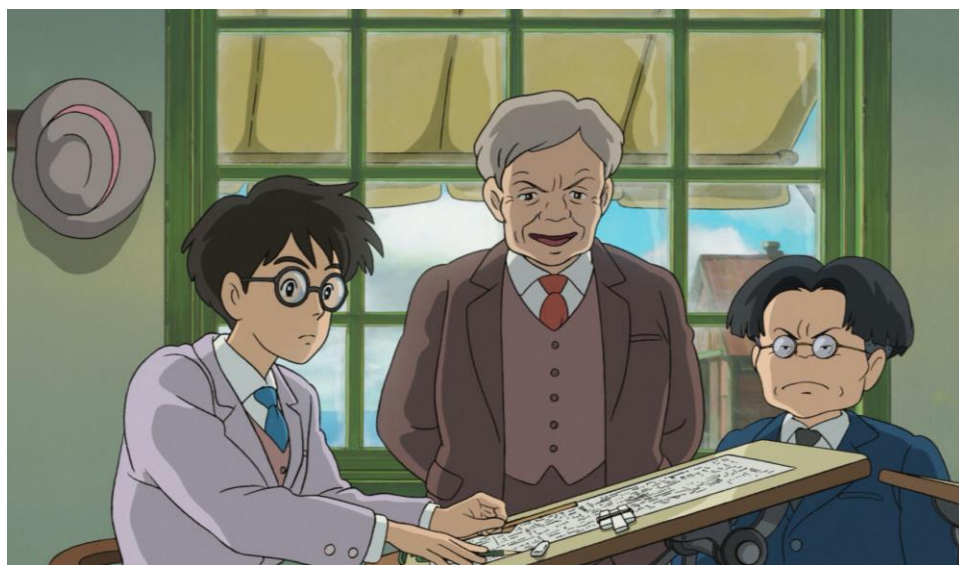
The final dream sequence solidifies this defiance and conflict through a display of Caproni's own acceptance of the use of technology. The sequence mirrors the first time Jiro and Caproni witness the flashing images of flames and war from Italy's involvement in World War I. Through the final dream focuses on the technology forged by Jiro, the looming war ensures that the planes will not return, in response to which Caproni utters, "There was nothing to return to. Airplanes are beautiful cursed dreams waiting for the sky to swallow them up" (02:02:32-39). This change from his earlier invigoration of Jiro highlights the inevitability of war for these engineers and the inevitability of the designer's imagination being tainted by militaristic pursuit. Caproni's admission of the cursed dream of planes embraces the idea that technology can aid exemplary growth for a nation primarily because of the use of that technology for violence and war. Although scholarship on Miyazaki and *The Wind Rises* considers the placement of the narrative and themes through the lens of self-Orientalization, what is missing is a clear connection to the form that Miyazaki utilizes: anime. In these dreams, Jiro and Caproni seem to be constantly moving without a moment of static imagery, and their surroundings imitate this to create an overwhelming sense of unease. The formal elements of the film become the concretization of the post-colonial themes of the film, especially because "animation itself tends to conceptualize and even to cultivate a specific set of relations vis-à-vis technology" (Lamarre 10). Through the consideration of the image itself, Miyazaki's film becomes one filled with tensions between designs, conflicting animations, and powerful dreams. Thus the creative expression of anime, for Miyazaki, provides a glimpse into the role of technology as the source of tension between Jiro and the Japanese government. As imperial Japan vies for more power and land before World War II, Jiro's style and animation provide a clear opposition to the forces at play within the film.

Anime Movement as Conflict

The film's form as anime foregrounds Jiro's aversion to imperialist Japan because the imperialist power threatens Jiro's fantasies and pacifism. Throughout *The Wind Rises*, Jiro's style opposes those around him who are concerned with the nation becoming a colonial force as it prepares to enter World War II. Lu states, "Anime has undergone a unique developmental trajectory that allows creative borrowing of various cultural and political elements to build up its stylistic properties and narrative framework along the way" (183). This *borrowing* works similarly to Mitsubishi's borrowing of ideas from imperial powers during World War II—the company Jiro works for in the film. There is a separation, though, between the borrowing forces that are present within the film's diegesis: Jiro's design and animation style conflicts with those in the higher rankings of Mitsubishi and the government, and his plane designs even move differently from others at Mitsubishi. By considering the tensions of animations and character designs, the differences highlight the conflict of dealing with Japan's colonial power. There is a recognition of the atrocities to come, yet the film contains an awareness that problematizes the protagonist's attempts to retain a creative and ethical autonomy amidst the coercive forces of the nation's political machinations and military aggression.

First, Jiro's character design and his animation differ greatly from the surrounding characters within the film. His character design comprises round edges in comparison to the square faces of imperialist characters, and his animation appears to be in constant motion—even in moments of apparent stasis—such movement echoing Miyazaki's view of Japan: "Our flightly country sways to and fro, caught in each gust of wind" (147). Miyazaki's comments reference the struggle with identity that the Japanese collective psyche must confront in relation to the nation's position as an Axis power during World War II. Jiro's constant movement additionally follows the element of full animation as defined by Thomas Lamarre who hypothesizes the bustling, real-life energy of these kinds of images (64). Jiro's anxieties and uneasiness regarding war and his plane being used for such violence manifests itself in his jittery movements, rendering the appearance that he is animated on "the ones and twos" — a new frame of movement being shown every frame or every other frame. Such animation serves to encapsulate Jiro's unease, and conveys to its audience a similar discomfort for, as Michal Daliot-Bul observes, "Viewers are indeed drawn to

the conclusion that what happens on the screen to Jiro could happen (probably on a more modest scale) to anyone; anyone could be entangled in a situation over which they have no control” (563). This universal call to viewers becomes cemented in the animation of Jiro and his planes. Jiro’s visible unease imprints a sense of discomfort to the viewer as the governmental forces of Japan press upon Jiro as a tool for elevating the imperial status of Japan. As he attempts to design his plane within the idealistic parameters of his own peaceful vision, his softness and fluidity contrast the callous pragmatism of the leaders at Mitsubishi and the Japanese government (Figure 2).



(Figure 2)

The other characters in *The Wind Rises* occupy a different design and animation aesthetic that visually represents their opposition in ideology to that possessed by Jiro. Not only are their faces squarer with harsh edges, but their animation also follows Lamarre’s limited animation which opposes full animation. Instead of constantly displaying movement, their animations follow the more traditional anime technique of movements of being animated every two or three frames. This creates more static images, and their animation shows a lower use of frames which problematizes the relationship between characters. In comparison to the full animation of Jiro, the authoritative characters occupy a position of *lower animation*. When viewers see Jiro’s more fluid movements and rounder appearance, his inviting nature feels more analogous to their own experience. The lower animation of the authorities provides a gateway for viewers to see them as

uninviting because of their stiff movements and harsher appearance. This opposition between harsh lines and the round face, along with the changes in animation frames, can be seen when Jiro begins working at Mitsubishi for Kurokawa (Masahiko Nishimura). As Kurokawa walks him through the halls of the manufacturing plant, his bouncing animation appears limited in comparison to the facial expressions of the more fluidly-animated Jiro. Jiro glances at the other engineers and workers at Mitsubishi, so his face and expression are constantly changing while Kurokawa remains looking forward. When Jiro enters the design room with the other engineers, his face shape and animation stand out in relief against the angled and square faces of the engineers in the foreground of the frame (Figure 3).

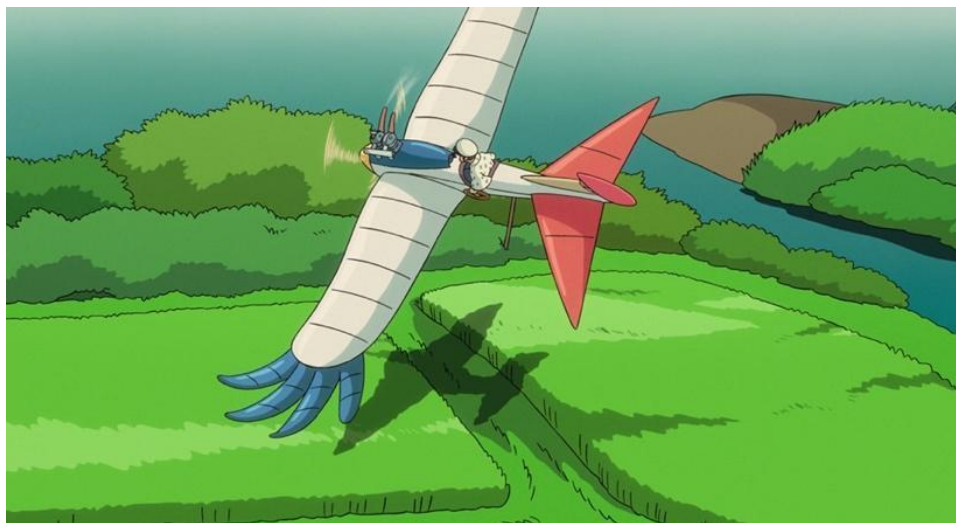


(Figure 3)

At this moment, the opposition of the frames becomes clear as Jiro moves into the foreground on the two-framed sequence while the others in the frame are moving on the threes. In this way, the filmmaking and narration give a clear indication of the tensions between those with plans to build jets for war and Jiro with his dreams of engineering. In this clouded image of the nation comprising different views under the Japanese leadership, “textual meaning is produced through the articulation of difference in language” (Bhabha 2). In Miyazaki’s narrative, the difference in language is a difference in animation language for the characters. Through the varied movements

and shapes of those around Jiro, their utterances and movements display competing ideas of how to define and create individual and collective Japanese identity under the empire.

Furthermore, these opposing animation techniques continue through the displays of technology and the planes of imperial forces. In discussing the depictions of the technology in *The Wind Rises*, Deborah Breen states, “The film thus serves as an elegiac reminder of the uses to which technology, however beautiful in design, may be put [...] The technology stands as both a metaphor for and an example of human creativity” (459). The planes that do not emerge from Jiro’s designs often elicit a mechanical functionality rather than an aesthetic sense drawn from the natural environment. For instance, Jiro’s designs are at one point inspired by a mackerel bone to make the wings bend to the will of the plane’s speed. This can also be seen in the opening dream sequence of the film, which displays the child Jiro dreaming of flying a plane that resembles a bird and moves with lifelike elegance (Figure 4).



(Figure 4)

Such sequences contrast the mechanical planes that are being used by Germans in the film and the stiff designs of other Japanese engineers around Jiro. In the scene in which Jiro and his companion visit the German hangar, the plane ride they take displays an asset that seems to only move as a single frame across the screen. The propellers of the German plane spin with slow precision, but the plane itself remains static and unflinching, presenting a marked contrast with not just Jiro’s

dream plane, but also his real planes which bend in the wind as they fly around the sky. As Lamarre notes:

The result is a sense of fully realistic and fully realized magic. The animetic interval is at once masked by and embodied in character movement. Full animation promises to fold the animetic interval back on itself, making for a substantial body with a substantial relation to the world. (Lamarre 73)

Lamarre defines the animetic interval as awareness and movement between planes of an animated image, but he also looks at the way it telegraphs depth and moves into cinematism—the opposite to animetism (7). The dynamic between cinematism and animetism shines in the tensions between the two competing movements of the planes. In continuance with the tensions between Jiro’s animation and the others around him, the technologies act as another layer of oppositional forces battling each other in the frame of the colonial powers.

The film’s animation creates a clear distinction between two modes of thinking: flowing and peaceful versus stiff and violent. The conflicting stylizations of characters and technologies force a push against the power of the empire yet also display a moment in which the stiff surroundings will eventually swallow Jiro. Because he remains alone in this stylization, the pressures of the outside imperial force inch their way over his own, and his planes later become stiff and mechanical as they fly to war at the end of the film with Caproni. In 1979, Miyazaki wrote, “In modern society, humans have become slaves to machines—so much so that machines hold the keys to our collective fate. But that is the real world; in the world of anime, by contrast, humans control and operate the machines” (20). This important distinction holds within *The Wind Rises*, yet it also displays the change in Miyazaki’s position over time. While the character of Jiro may be positioned within the second part of the quotation, the surrounding colonialism eventually provides the powerful impetus that machines carry into the violence of war. As Jiro’s Zero fighter succeeds, it becomes a component of the imperial mechanism through its violent use as the tool that Japan utilizes to create its superiority. The fighter stiffens, loses its lifelike animation, and flies into the distance as a tiny dot among thousands.

Jittering, Blubbering, and Blowing Sounds

In addition to the animated image as a site for the colonial tensions present between Japan and Jiro, the sound design telegraphs the conflicting ideologies through a similar binary between the humane and mechanical. When discussing the power of animation, Miyazaki has argued, “When watching animation, it’s not enough to fall in love with a particular explosion of combat scene; you also need to consider what the overall work is trying to express and whether what has been expressed succeeds” (125). The thematic drive of *The Wind Rises*, as argued throughout this essay, is to display the tensions within the Japanese individual identity and the collective atrocities of the government as a colonial power. While animation is one layer of articulation in which the film participates, sound becomes a source of auditory motifs that support the dichotomy. For Kathrin Fahlenbrach, sound motifs establish emotional motifs: “machines, animals, buildings, or natural forces are used metaphorically to concretize emotions that fictional characters have to deal with” (91). The sounds that dictate the machines within the diegesis of the film usually occupy two opposing forces: human sounds and mechanical sounds. Jiro’s machines typically utilize sounds made from the mouth of the sound engineer of the film, Koji Kasamatsu; oppositionally, the sounds of machines from Germany and Japanese imperial power sound mechanical.

Throughout the film, the sound design provides subtle indications of Jiro’s aversion to imperial power. For example, in a sequence during the Kanto Earthquake of 1923, the film institutes a motif of sound: the sounds of the earthquake and the train are created with human vocals. The earthquake begins with a loud sigh that reverberates and echoes across the land. The houses of Kanto vibrate from side to side as layers of the houses lift and dip to signify the changing elevations. Jiro, on a train going through Kanto, shakes alongside the blubbering train, the rattling ground, and then focuses on the rocks underneath the train that signify a minuscule detail in nature. The film then holds visual focus on the rocks as the earthquake ends (Figure 5).



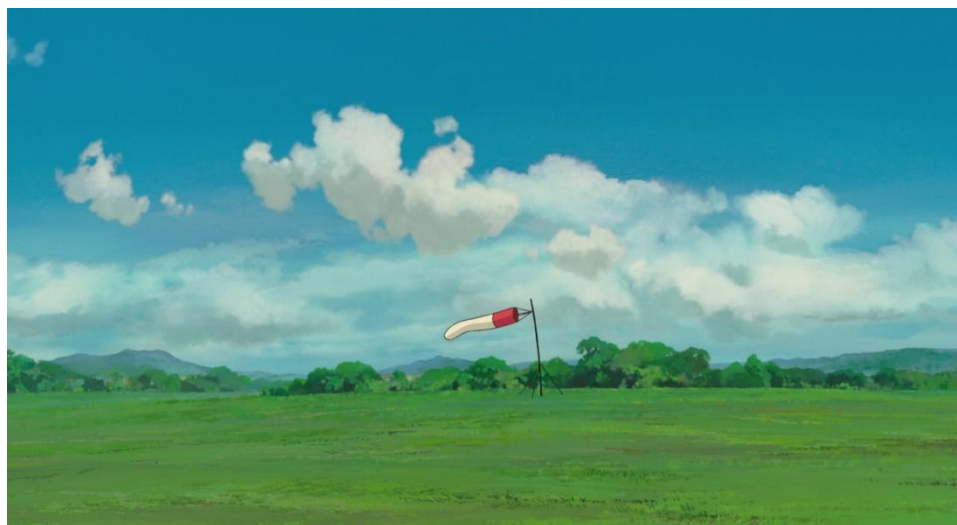
(Figure 5)

Jiro's attention on the rocks focuses on the sounds within nature, and that focus — translated through Kasamatsu's sound design — elicits a deep connection with the nature of Japan. This sequence follows the human sounds of the birdlike plane and Caproni's passenger plane in Jiro's dreams. The sounds of Kasamatsu's lips blubbering accompany the spinning propeller, and whispering voices coincide with the engine churning on screen. These humanistic sounds create a connection to nature that is coded in humanity and, from this point on, Jiro's emotions continue to be coded through human sounds. As Kathrin Fahlenbrach notes, "Sound design refers to deeply embodied gestalts that guide our perceptive, cognitive, and emotional experience" (86), and it is these gestalts which provide the audience with a sense of humanity speaking for itself through the technology which aligns with Jiro's aspirations of elevating Japan to the level of the rest of the world—though not through a militaristic position. Jiro's machines occupy this rejection of the higher powers, and the human sounds give these machines life within the nature around Jiro.

This directly contradicts the artificial sounds of specific war technology. In scenes of war, the fighter jets sound mechanical and cold, and planes from the other Axis powers, like Germany, sound like their real-life counterparts. As German planes scream in the sound design, they replicate the mechanical rumblings and twirling of propellers rather than the naturalistic sounds that resonate from Jiro's planes. Bhabha states, "What emerges as an effect of such 'incomplete

signification’ is a turning of boundaries and limits into the in-between spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated” (Bhabha 4). The mechanical sounds from planes outside of Jiro and Caproni’s designs indicate a moment of negotiation with their respective imperial systems. As they both work towards creating planes for their nations, the sounds become coldly mechanical, but designs stemming from their artistic imagination continue to exhibit sounds associated with humanity and nature. The comparisons of the sounds point to the relational history of the world’s colonial powers. It highlights the diverse forms, and spaces, that colonialism and Orientalization inhabit; Axis planes sound mechanical, and planes used by Japan that are not from Jiro’s earlier designs replicate those sounds. There is an inequality established here, and Japan’s imposing force represents a sinister technological advancement, emphasizing that, as Fahlenbrach notes, “Within such a relational arrangement [viewers] may realize hierarchies, polarities, contrasts and similarities among objects, figures, and spaces, which can be marked by specific acoustic qualities” (95). These contrasts create the line that separates the humane Jiro from colonial Japan — until his Zero fighter jet is complete at the end of the film.

When Jiro’s Zero fighter succeeds at tests near the end of the film, the sounds from the plane become mechanical. Jiro, paying close attention to the plane, notices it and looks away from his plane to the nature that surrounds him. In the sound mix, the plane sound disappears, and the wind whispers like a human into his ears as the frame pans over to the empty field to a sole flag in the distance (Figure 6).



(Figure 6)

Horikoshi discusses how “the name Zero was better known outside of Japan than it was at home” (133). The sounds and power of these jets can be heard worldwide, but for Jiro in *The Wind Rises*, it becomes something that he cannot bear to hear. Just as he did during the Kanto Earthquake, the sounds of nature made by the mouth of Kasamatsu signify freedom from the harsh, dark truth. Jiro knows the jet that will carry the country to war, so he searches for a sound that gives him life again. Instead, he finds an odd stillness residing over the field; the sound of the wind brushes his ears, but the film does not focus on the sound it is making against the softly swaying flag; instead, Jiro suddenly finds himself lost in the suffocating system of the Japanese empire. For him, the “stillness is a lack of perception rather than a lack of movement” (Gershon 258). As the world around him moves in celebration of the plane’s successful run, Jiro cannot help but recognize that his perception, his dreams, and his desires have been subsumed by the system that surrounds him.

Jiro’s suffering, but also his unwilling implication in the inevitable violence that must follow can be heard in the whispers of the wind, and his dreams of engineering must now be equated with the colonial disaster that Japan carries into World War II. In response Jiro, in the final scene, seeks a new location in which he does not feel guilty — at least by first-hand experience — and one in which he may attempt to rid himself of his colonial guilt by association. Susan Friedman’s observations are pointed in this regard: “[W]ith the dislocations of imperial or hegemonic dominance come *creative re-locations*. With suffering also come the *transformative agencies of the human imagination*” (482; emphasis added). While Jiro’s dreams represented an escape from the imperial power of Japan, the final dream’s relocation to a place of future destruction and grief provides no salvation for Jiro. His imagination becomes just as depressing as his reality, yet the conversation with Caproni does allow for a shared grief between the two engineers. Natural sounds provide a brief glimpse of escape, and his dreams utilize an open field to encode that idea with the sound, yet his suffering has displaced his desires. His dreams — those of himself and Caproni marveling at the planes that carried Italy into World War I — remain a distant unattainable memory. As the wind brushes through the silent flag, the hope for peace also disappears. Instead, Jiro’s machine becomes synonymous with the colonial machine of aggression and destruction.

Conclusion

The Wind Rises is an articulation of the suppression of individuality, but also perhaps the inevitability of the compliance of the individual, within the overpowering apparatus of imperialism. Through its animation and sound design, Miyazaki's film depicts the control the Japanese empire holds not only over its colonial subjects but also over its own Japanese citizens. Jiro, whose dreams of engineering never engaged with that colonial machine, nevertheless becomes part of the system itself, an eventuality which Homi Bhabha, in his musings on the connections between narrative and state, would term in the following way: "Quite simply, the difference of space returns as the Sameness of time, turning Territory into Tradition, turning the People into One" (300). The imperial machine swallowing Jiro creates the "One" that Bhabha gestures towards. As a result, Japan's empire becomes one that not only is in external confrontation with the West, but also in confrontation with any notion of individuality that may be perceived as against the "national interest" within its own borders.

Miyazaki's film creates a meditation on that inevitability by not silently acquiescing to the imperial winds of change but by recognizing the power of the human spirit to create and dream despite that colonial machine. Though Jiro and his design fall into the hands of the machine of war, the focus on his life and dreams as existing within, but also separate to, that system creates a dichotomy of understanding. He becomes the colonial subject within the Japanese empire, both shaped by but also rebelling against that mechanism. In doing so, Miyazaki asks similar questions to those posed by the theorist Aijaz Ahmad, who notes that the use of the term "colonial" itself constitutes a problematic entrapment:

Now, the notion of a 'colonial subject', or 'post-colonial subject' for that matter, of course, presumes that we are indeed constituted by colonialism, then in quick succession by post-coloniality; if we are not constituted by colonialism then the term 'colonial subject' is theoretically meaningless. (Ahmad PE101)

If Jiro must indeed succumb to the inevitability of being consumed by the imperial power, the film explores the idea that Japan Orientalizes itself by creating a singular story of Japanese history.

While Jiro's experience becomes narrated through *The Wind Rises*, the empire's own goals and aspirations are also narrated.

As Jiro and Caproni stare at the thousands of Japanese planes going to war in the final dream sequence, self-Orientalization accentuates the melancholy of being lost within the imperial system. The blowing wind obfuscates the mechanical sounds of the planes for Jiro in this moment, but the visual of the planes going to war creates a feeling of loss as he contemplates his future with Caproni at his side within his dreams. The Japanese empire shown in *The Wind Rises* displays how the Orient is not simply at the behest of the West, yet the empire's ambition to become an imperial power exhibits self-Orientalization by hiding populations of people trapped within the system like Jiro. It creates a tension of internal desires that questions the colonial subject as present within the borders of their own country. This tension continues throughout anime, especially within the films of Miyazaki. *The Wind Rises* considers the lack of power for the individual while also displaying the ultimate failure to completely disengage with the winds of imperial progress.

Notes

¹ Throughout the essay, I refer to the real-life Jiro Horikoshi as "Horikoshi." When discussing the character in the film, I will refer to him as "Jiro."

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