

# Stylistic Comparison: Western and Japanese Animation

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**Bota, Ante**

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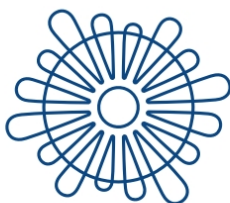
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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Diplomski sveučilišni studij Engleskog jezika i književnosti; smjer: nastavnički  
(dvopredmetni)

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Zadar, 2020.



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Zadar, 17. srpnja 2020.

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## 1. Introduction

Winsor McCay, the creator of *Gertie the Dinosaur* cartoon and one of the most important animators in history, was quoted as saying the following:

Animation should be an art, that is how I conceived it. But... what you fellows have done with it is [make] it into a trade... not an art, but a trade... bad luck. (Maltin 1)

McCay was correct to a degree. Modern animation is a very profitable source of entertainment, with animated movies, in particular, being a regular presence on lists of highest-grossing movies of the year. However, this does not mean that animation as a medium has lost value as an art form neither that it cannot surprise the audience. Animation in the West first started as a series of different experiments that were all aiming for the same thing; to produce the illusion of movement. As time progressed, cartoons became increasingly more elaborate, both in animation techniques and the storylines they wanted to portray. Innovative animation studios such as Disney and Pixar have been creating some of the most groundbreaking and enduring works in the history of cinema. It should be noted, however, that in the West, the animation is still generally perceived as entertainment for children despite the popularity of adult-oriented animated shows like *The Simpsons*, *South Park* and *Family Guy*.

While Western animators were preoccupied with making the movements of their cartoons as fluid and realistic as possible, a different kind of animation started to gain traction in Japan. Anime, which is often hailed as one of Japan's most popular exports, has gained recognition for its fresh approach to the medium of animation. Tracing its origins back to manga (which remains its visual blueprint to this day), anime has quickly cultivated a strong following all around the world. Susan J. Napier writes about the following anecdote that illustrates just how far anime's influence can reach:

In 1993 the Japanese critic Ueno Toshiya made a visit to the city of Sarajevo in war-torn Serbia. Wandering through the bombed-out city, he encountered an unexpected sight. In the middle of the old city was a crumbling wall with three panels. On the first was drawn a picture of Mao Zedong with Mickey Mouse ears; the second had a slogan for the Chiappas liberation group, the Zapatistas, emblazoned on it. But when he came to the third he was 'at loss for words. Incredibly, it was a large panel of a scene from Otomo Katsuhiro's *Akira*. (*Akira* 4)

One of the reasons why anime might resonate with the non-Japanese audience in this way is because anime tends to explore different subjects in unconventional ways that most of the Western animation wouldn't dare to. This provides the foundation of this thesis, which explores the key differences between these two mediums. The thesis will cover the history of animation in the West starting from the silent period while also taking a look at some of the most notable animation studios. After covering anime and observing its connection to manga, the focus will shift to the key stylistic differences between it and its Western counterpart. This will mainly consist of observing different approaches to how animation is done, what are the most common themes in each of them, how are characters portrayed and many more.

Finally, four movies will be analyzed that can serve as good representations of the two mediums. Disney's landmark *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and Andrew Stanton's *WALL-E* will serve as examples of the Western animation while the already-mentioned *Akira* and Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* will represent Japanese animation.

## 2. The Origins of Animation

Animation, as well as the art of filmmaking in general, emerged from a human fascination with light and motion which ultimately led to the first breakthrough in the seventeenth century (Solomon 3). It should be pointed out that animation does not have any movements, but instead has a rapid sequence of images that when put together create the illusion of motion<sup>1</sup> (Olsen & Johnsen 5). In 1645, Athanasius Kircher published *Ars Magna Lucis Et Umbrae* (*The Great Art of Light and Shadow*) where he described an object he referred to as „the magic lantern” (Solomon 3). It was a relatively simple device which consisted of a box containing the light source (either a candle or a lamp) and a curved mirror. Magic lanterns quickly gained traction among the general public and they were included in many travelling shows with the most famous one being *Fantasmagorie* by Etienne Gaspard Robert of Liège.

Another important precursor to animation was the introduction of so-called shadow puppets in the West (Solomon 5). The puppets, which originated from China, were the key components of the shadow theatre that quickly became a popular source of entertainment in the eighteenth century. These puppets, as well as the scenery, were all made in Western styles while dealing with different subjects. One especially popular type of shadow theatre was the one which was integrated into cabaret shows. The first shadow play of this kind was shown in Le Chat Noir cabaret in 1887, and it featured satirical puppet plays which were staged by writers and artists that frequented it. These shadow plays would often include caricatures of people of different professions (such as policemen) and they would also feature puppets „singing” the popular songs of that time.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a phenomenon known as *persistence of vision*.



The nineteenth-century also saw the rise of „philosophical” or animation toys, beginning with the invention of the *thaumatrope* in 1826 by John Ayrton Paris (Solomon 7). This was a device that featured a disc with an image painted on each side that was connected with a single string. This disc would merge the images by spinning, giving the illusion of movement (bird in a cage, the jockey riding a horse etc.). Another important invention was the *zoetrope* or Wheel of the Devil. Originally devised in 1834 by William Horner of Bristol, it consisted of an open drum that had slits in its sides where a strip of different drawings would be placed (Maltin 3). By spinning this drum, the images which appeared through the slits would give the illusion of movement, acting as a shutter on a projector. The most advanced animation device, however, was invented by Emile Reynaud in 1877 and was called the *praxinoscope* (Solomon 8). Just like *zoetrope*, it created the illusion of movement by rotating a drum and a strip of paper that contained drawings. However, instead of being able to see images through slits in the drum, the viewer was able to see motions which were reflected in a series of mirrors. Reynaud would go on to combine *praxinoscope* with a projector and open his theatre in 1892 where he would present his short films (*Pantomimes Lumineuses*). These short films were in colour, had actual storylines, and contained synchronised soundtracks.

### **3. A Brief History of Western Animation**

The earliest examples of modern animated filmmaking can be traced back to works of James Stuart Blackton which include *The Battle of Santiago Bay*, *The Humpty Dumpty Circus*, *The Haunted Hotel*, *The Enchanted Drawing*, and *The Humorous Phases of Funny*

*Faces*.<sup>2</sup> *The Enchanted Drawing*, a short film based on „chalk-talk” vaudeville act, included scenes of Blackton drawing a man’s face together with a bottle and glass above his head (Maltin 1). He would then „take” the bottle and the glass<sup>3</sup> which would promptly anger the man whose face would display a sour expression. While this was not technically an animated movie, it did demonstrate an interesting use of the motion-picture medium that would reappear in some future cartoons of the silent era. *The Battle of Santiago Bay* is often considered one of the earliest examples of creating special effects with animated miniatures and it involved Blackton and Robert A. Smith using cutouts of the American and Spanish ships that were hooked on black threads and were incorporated in a painted miniature set that contained an inch of water (Solomon 12). They also utilised cigarette smoke and pinches of gunpowder to create an illusion of the real battle. *The Humpty Dumpty Circus*, which was also made in collaboration with Smith, was touted as the first purely stop-motion film, although the patent on the process was never obtained. *The Humorous Phases of Funny Faces*, which was released in 1906 and is widely regarded as the first animated cartoon (Maltin 2), consisted of several unrelated vignettes which included a hand drawing the faces of a man and a woman only for them to change expression when the hand gets withdrawn, the same man tipping a hat and the same woman blowing smoke, a clown doing a comic balancing with a poodle, and caricatures of black and Jewish people (Solomon 13).

While Blackton did have a profound influence on the medium of animated filmmaking, it was Winsor McCay who demonstrated its artistic potential (Solomon 14). McCay, who was also an expert creator of newspaper comic strips and a famous editorial cartoonist, first rose to prominence with his strip cartoons *Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend*

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2 A large bulk of this chapter is based on Charles Solomon’s *Enchanted Drawings* and Leonard Maltin’s *Of Mice and Magic* due to their detailed portraits of American animation’s history.

3 Bottle and glass were now real objects, allowing Blackton to pour himself a drink.

(published in *Telegraph* in 1905) and *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (first published in *Herald* in 1905). *Little Nemo*, in particular, enjoyed such massive popularity that it appeared in newspapers around the country and even got adapted into a vaudeville act, operetta, and perhaps most importantly, a short animated movie. Completed in 1911, *Little Nemo* mainly consisted of plotless episodes which served as a vehicle to showcase the movements, metamorphosis, and exaggeration of the characters (Maltin 3). One of the cartoon's main draws was McCay's persistence in ensuring that drawings remained true-to-character regardless of the motions they performed. The movement of characters was so smooth and realistic that some audience members were convinced that McCay used live actors and trick photography (Solomon 16).

*Little Nemo* was followed up by *How a Mosquito Operates* in 1912 and *Gertie the Dinosaur* in 1914, the latter being considered his masterpiece and one of the most important animated movies ever created. Originally shown as part of McCay's vaudeville act, *Gertie the Dinosaur* laid the groundwork for what is commonly referred to as *character animation*. Gertie, a large female dinosaur, constantly displays behaviour similar to a small child such as reluctantly listening to what McCay orders it to do, crying after being scolded, and showing a large amount of interest towards other prehistoric animals. She is playful but at the same time mischievous, she chews and swallows her food, and she even performs elaborate movements such as lifting her foot on McCay's command (Maltin 5). Following another masterfully crafted animated movie *The Sinking of the Lusitania* (1918) and short films based on *Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend* (all released in 1921), McCay permanently retired from animation.

The silent era of animation saw the rise of animated movies as a profitable source of entertainment. This occurred in part due to an increasing number of professional animation studios, the first of which was Raoul Barré studio in New York, founded in 1913 (Solomon

21). Other notable animation studios of that time include *Barré-Bowers* studio (founded by Raoul Barré and Charles Bowers) which would later become Bud Fisher studio, Charles Bowers studio (founded by Charles Bowers after leaving Barré-Bowers studio), John Randolph Bray studio (responsible for *Colonel Heeza Liar* cartoons), and International Film Service (established by William Randolph Hearst). The latter two, together with Raoul Barré studio, dominated the production of American animated movies between 1913 and 1919.

The demand for faster production of animation these studios faced due to deadlines and budgets lead to the creation of *slash system*. The system, which was created by Barré<sup>4</sup> consisted of animation being drawn on one sheet while the background was drawn on the other page that was then promptly placed either over or under the first page (Solomon 22). While its popularity did start to wane with the introduction of cel animation by John Randolph Bray and Earl Hurd, it still found some use in short movies from the 1920s. Perhaps the most important innovation of this era in the field of animation was made by Bill Nolan, who discovered that passing a background drawn on a long piece of paper under a drawing of a character created the illusion of movement.

Coincidentally, Nolan was also responsible for the creation of the *rubber hose* animation (first utilised in the cartoon short *The Spider and the Fly*). The hallmark feature of this animation style were characters that looked like their limbs and the trunk were made out of rubber tubes while their heads, palms, belly, and ears were drawn like circles (Raffaelli 114). Due to this particular style, the characters could bounce around, roll up, and flatten themselves only to return to their original forms without issue. Rubber hose remained the dominant type of animation until it was overshadowed by Disney's more realistic style of animation.

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4 Barré also created the peg system of registration, where identical pegs were placed on the animators drawing table to hold the paper together (Solomon 22).

Possibly the most memorable cartoons of the silent era were created by Max and Dave Fleischer. Their approach was to combine live-action settings and animated figures while utilising a very loose and free animation. One example of this would be the footage where KoKo the Clown (a character that originated from their successful *Out of the Inkwell* series) is seen walking among real-world skyscrapers<sup>5</sup> (Solomon 31). The most popular character of the silent era animation, however, was Felix the Cat, which originated in Pat Sullivan's *Felline Follies*. Created by Otto Messmer, it made multiple appearances in cartoons created by Pat Sullivan studio (Solomon 33). Taking inspiration in movements from Charlie Chaplin, Felix quickly became the most adored cartoon character of its time due to his highly stylized movement and fourth-wall-breaking humour (Cresswell 7).

While animated movies of the silent era might appear underwhelming in comparison to the creative output of the most dominant studios such as Disney and Pixar, they still had the profound impact on the evolution of animation as an art form, both in America and in the rest of the world. As Charles Solomon wrote:

The silent cartoons were more than a training ground for animators and directors; they created the audience that could appreciate and accept the movements and expressions of characters composed of ink lines. Without Dinky Doodle, Colonel Heeza Liar, Bobby Bumps, Oswald Rabbit, Felix the Cat and Ko-Ko the Clown, there could never have been Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny, Donald Duck, Tom and Jerry, Betty Boop or Wile E. Coyote. (Solomon 22)

While Disney was constantly pushing boundaries by perfecting the craft of animating movements and incorporating sound into his movies, other studios were preoccupied with transforming their most popular silent shorts into Hollywood cartoons (Solomon 73). This paved the way for the studio cartoon era of non-Disney animation which lasted from 1929 to 1941. The leading studio, and also Disney's main competitor during this period was

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<sup>5</sup> Koko is also sometimes seen emerging from an ink bottle and just generally interacting with the live surroundings.

Fleischer Studios helmed by Max Fleischer. Fleischer, who was also an inventor credited for devising *rotoscope*,<sup>6</sup> rejected the realistic animation and embraced the rubber hose style. According to Maltin, Fleischer „was more interested in mechanical innovations than artistic ones” (Maltin 83). During this period, the studio produced cartoons which featured some of their most famous characters such as Betty Boop and Popeye, while also producing popular animated tv series and a movie adaptation of Superman comics. These characters were notably more human and adult than those created by Disney (Cresswell 7). Betty Boop, in particular, was notable for how common double-entendre jokes and other forms of adult humour were in her cartoons.

Other major studios that competed with Disney through the following years include Terrytoons, Warner Brothers, MGM, and UPA. According to Raffaelli, these studios were decidedly „anti-Disneyan” because they were more concerned with production costs than by a concrete philosophy (Raffaelli 122). Terrytoons, which was founded by Paul Terry in 1929, was perhaps the greatest example of this particular approach to animation. Despite being one of the first animators around, even creating a notable character in Farmer Al Falfa, Paul Terry had a rather cold stance towards animation and viewed it exclusively as a product to be manufactured on schedule (Maltin 125). He was also very conservative with the budget, trying to minimize the expenses as much as he could, resulting in a portfolio of competent but ultimately uninspiring animations. The most memorable cartoons from the studio include *Mighty Mouse*, *Heckle and Jeckle* and *Gandy Goose*.

Other studios, while also financially motivated to a degree, were more ambitious when it came to the quality of their animation. The Warner Brothers studio originally started as a Disney imitation, but it later reinvented itself by creating a distinct visual style and

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6 A device used to produce realistic animation by tracing over the movie footage.

format that bore zero resemblance to anything Disney was doing (Maltin 223). Just as Disney was establishing itself as a dominant studio in the field of feature-length animated movies, Warner Brothers became a key player in the production of innovative and humorous short subjects. Their principal work was essentially a direct reaction to language and themes of Disney movies (Raffaelli 122). There were no rules in Warner Brothers cartoons and there were also no expectations that can be imposed by any authority figure. Some of the most recognisable animated characters in the American pop culture such as Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Tweety, Sylvester and Elmer Fudd, were introduced in these cartoons. Furthermore, many of the most significant cartoon creators such as Chuck Jones, Tex Avery, Friz Freleng, and Bob Clampett had their big breaks while working at Warner Brothers.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, also known simply as MGM, was one of the leading studios in the production of live-action movies. After the incredible success of Disney's feature-length animations, they decided to expand so they could include cartoons. This eventually led to the creation of *Happy Harmonies*, a blatant rip-off of Disney's *Silly Symphonies* (Maltin 281). The two lead producers, Harman and Ising, focused on the production of animated cartoons that featured small animals and stylized characters, resulting in cartoon shorts such as *Poor Little Me*,<sup>7</sup> which were huge hits with the audiences. Their greatest success, however, came with *Tom and Jerry* cartoons, which were created by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera. These cartoons relied almost exclusively on mime and the plot revolving around cat chasing the mouse regardless of the setting of the story (Solomon 170). The duo would go on to produce multiple successful cartoon tv shows such as *The Huckleberry Hound Show*, *The Jogi Bear Show*, *The Flintstones*, *The Jetsons*, *Scooby-Doo*, *Where Are You!*, and *The Smurfs*.

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7 This cartoon focuses on a baby skunk who is rejected by other forest animals.

The United Productions of America (UPA for short) profoundly altered the course of animation with their innovative cartoon shorts. The studio started in the 1940s, benefiting immensely from the Disney strike of 1941. Many young artists who worked for Disney at that time felt they were not given enough room to experiment with the classic formula and were keen to explore animation's potential (Solomon 207). They also had very strong political views that they wanted to incorporate into their cartoons. They consistently worked throughout the decade, creating some memorable characters such as Mister Magoo. However, it wasn't until the release of *Gerald McBoing Boing* in 1951 that they enjoyed their first major success. The short feature was challenging to make because the animators were aiming for simplicity that is apparent in the designs of both the characters and backgrounds. Despite this simplicity, their movies were incredibly engaging, utilising many new animation tricks. The most notable one was the psychological use of colour that was supposed to convey certain emotion or mood the character was going through (Maltin 332).

### **3.1. Walt Disney and the Disney Studio**

To claim that Walt Disney and his movies defined the medium of animation would be an understatement. Very few animators have demonstrated the determination, creativity and enthusiasm for perfecting their craft as he has. His career started in 1919 when he was employed as a commercial artist in Kansas City Film (Maltin 30). He then proceeded to get a job as an advertiser and comic vignettes for the Newman's Theater in a series called Newman's LAUGH-O-GRAMS series which focused on spoofing famous fairytales. He partnered with Ub Iwerks (who also started as a commercial artist at the same time and in the same company as Disney) and assembled a small staff. Disney and Iwerks allegedly taught themselves animation by studying Carl Lutz's book on basic techniques and Muybridge's photographs of humans and animals in motion (Solomon 37). In 1923, Disney officially



founded the Walt Disney Studios together with his brother Roy (Olsen & Johnsen 12). Shortly after he went out of business due to large spending on films, he managed to get financiers for the „pilot” film to his series *Alice in Wonderland* (Maltin 30). It was an attempt to reverse the idea of Max Fleischer’s *Out of the Inkwell* by having the main character (a real little girl by the name of Alice) interact with animated characters in a cartoon world. The show was well-received and Disney started working on the *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit* series. The character was immensely popular and it was praised for its „rubbery” movements and other technical marvels it could perform. However, the character did not remain under Disney’s ownership due to Charles Mintz’s refusal to give him a raise. This ultimately resulted in Mintz taking both his team and the character of Oswald. Solomon writes that this underhanded deal with Mintz „changed the course of animation and American popular culture” (Solomon 39).

Following this fallout, Disney returned to California where he would eventually create the character of Mickey Mouse together with Ub Iwerks.<sup>8</sup> The success of *The Jazz Singer* (1928) inspired Disney to create a synchronised sound cartoon (Maltin 34), resulting in the third Mickey Mouse film, *Steamboat Willie* (1928). The audience reaction to the movie was exceptionally enthusiastic, mostly because the idea of a cartoon character that could sing, talk, play an instrument and move to the musical beat was considered a huge innovation at the time. Raffaelli describes the character of Mickey in the following way:

A child who, through his game, controls the entire Universe, changing its views, widening its vocabulary, turning logic upside down. A cow’s teeth are not musical instruments yet they become so, thanks to him. Mickey is creator of his world. (Raffaelli 114)

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<sup>8</sup> Iwerks was the one who sketched Mickey Mouse. Disney approved the design and provided the character’s personality.

This was followed by *The Skeleton Dance*, the first short in Disney's *Silly Symphonies* series. The short wasn't a typical cartoon that served as nothing more than a vehicle for gags. It was a moody piece that had no plot or familiar characters (Maltin 35). Despite this, it proved to be popular with the audience. *Silly Symphonies* would include more cartoon shorts that evoked certain settings, seasons, and events.

After this, Disney focused on colour production. Technicolor company tried to persuade Disney to test its new three-colour process that incorporated all the colours of the rainbow (Maltin 39). He was convinced that Technicolor would be an asset to his film and proceeded to utilise it in *Flowers and Trees* (1932), a pastoral fantasy about a tree defeating an old evil stump to win the heart of a willow (Solomon 49). The movie was a huge success both critically and financially, eventually becoming the first animated movie to win the Academy Award. *Flowers and Trees* was followed up with *The Three Little Pigs* (1933), which included the most impressive character animation since *Gertie the Dinosaur*. All of the characters in the movie showed distinct and well-defined personalities, especially the titular protagonists. For the first time in the history of animation, characters that had almost identical appearances showed different personalities through their movements (Solomon 52). The movie also gave Disney the first hit single in *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?* (Maltin 40).

1937's *The Old Mill*, which utilised a multiplane camera, marked yet another milestone for Disney (Maltin 51). The Multiplane camera was fourteen feet high which enabled it to look through a series of animation „planes” instead of just one, creating the feeling of depth and dimension. Disney was now officially the first one to build and utilise the multiplane camera, the first one to create a colour cartoon, and the first one to perfect the technique of lip synchronisation (Raffaelli 115). With all of these successfully tested technical marvels at his disposal, Disney finally decided to produce his first feature-length

movie, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Being without the doubt Disney's most ambitious project at that time, *Snow White* demanded an unprecedented amount of work both on the story and in animating the characters. Disney was so meticulous in selecting which scenes should be included in the final film that he even scrapped two completely animated sequences (Solomon 61). The hard work ultimately paid off, as the movie broke numerous box office records while receiving glowing reviews. It also had toys and memorabilia based on the characters stocked in many stores right around its release, a marketing strategy that would become one of Disney's trademarks (Alcacer et al 1). *Snow White* was followed up by *Pinnocchio* in 1940 which proved to be even more of a challenge for animators. The movie did not perform well at the box office but was yet another critical triumph, winning two Academy Awards. Disney's follow-up project to *Pinnocchio* was perhaps his most adventurous one. Released the very same year, *Fantasia* was essentially a feature-length musical with a similar premise to *Silly Symphonies*. Each sequence in the movie was accompanied by a classical composition that matched its theme. However, the movie was a commercial failure (Maltin 63). *Fantasia's* poor box office performance forced Disney artists to focus on retelling familiar stories (Solomon 70).

*Dumbo* and *Bambi* were the last two Disney movies produced before America officially joined World War II and the impending Disney strike of 1941 (Maltin 65). *Dumbo* was one of the least complex and also one of the shortest feature-length animated movies Disney has produced. Because of this, it displayed what Solomon called „an exuberance and spontaneity matched only by the early *Silly Symphonies*” (Solomon 127). *Bambi*, on the other hand, heavily relied on realism in the portrayal of forest animals (Maltin 66). Disney artists carefully studied nature and the movements of animals to fully capture the essence of the movie. Exaggeration and stylization were allowed to some degree, but only as an

embellishment of reality. While *Dumbo* was a surprise box office success, *Bambi* was Disney's third feature-length movie to not turn a large profit. After the end of World War II, Disney returned to feature-length animation with *Cinderella* in 1950, the first animated feature that was shot entirely in live action before the animation began (Solomon 188). It was a commercial success and was well-received critically despite some notable similarities with *Snow White. Alice in Wonderland*, which had a rather bizarre tone and humour, was not as enthusiastically received. Other Disney movies from this period include *Peter Pan*, *The Lady and the Tramp*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *101 Dalmatians*. The latter marked the first major use of the xerox process<sup>9</sup> (Maltin 75). *The Jungle Book*, which was released in 1967, was the final movie Walt Disney worked on before he passed away in 1966. While visually impressive, it relied too much on the cast of huge stars that voiced the characters. However, it was very successful at the box office. The Disney company suffered a prolonged period of a creative and commercial slump throughout the 70s and the 80s. This changed with the release of *The Little Mermaid* in 1989, which marked the beginning of the Disney Renaissance. This would lead to a string of blockbuster movies in the following years such as *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992) and *The Lion King* (1994). While *The Lion King* alone generated over one billion dollars in net income, subsequent Disney-produced movies fell below expectations at the box office (Alcacer et al 2).

### 3.2. Pixar- A Leading Technological Pioneer in Computer Animation

For the majority of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, hand-drawn animation was the most dominant, with cel animation being especially common. However, by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, animators started experimenting with then-newly developing computer technology (Au 12). Following, 1977's *Westworld*, the first feature film to incorporate computer graphics, movies started to

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9 Xerox process removed the necessity of hand-inking and pencil drawing onto cells, while also making duplication easier.

utilize the aforementioned graphics with increased frequency. *The Adventures of Andre and Wally B.*, which was released in 1984, marked another milestone for computer graphics. Directed by Alvy Ray Smith and produced by The Graphics Group, it was the first fully computer-generated animated short that demonstrated squash and stretch technique. Then in 1986 came *Luxo Jr.*, the first animated short from then-independent animation studio Pixar. Directed by John Lasseter (who coincidentally was the animator responsible for *The Adventures of Andre and Wally B.*) it focused on a small lamp with human qualities while also demonstrating the ability of 3D software RenderMan in surface shading.<sup>10</sup> Pixar followed that up with *Toy Story*, the first-ever computer-animated feature-length film. It was the first movie in the three-picture deal between Pixar and Disney and it proved to be a huge success, ultimately becoming the highest-grossing movie of the year in the United States (Alcacer et al 6). Produced by John Lasseter and released in 1995, it marked an effective utilisation of both RenderMan software and Modeling Environment program (Au 13). According to Au, the latter program allowed „the creation of three-dimensional computer character models with built-in controls, mimicking the function of muscles and joints” (Au 13). This allowed animators to specify at what frames and in what position a model should be, also known as keyframing. The computer would then interpolate the intermediate movement and create a smooth, fluid motion.

Today, Pixar is a leading company in the production of computer-animated movies. Originally part of Lucasfilm computer division, it was officially founded by Edwin Catmull and Alvy Ray Smith in 1986 after Steve Jobs bought off the company for 5 million dollars, while also investing additional 5 million in its founding (Catmull & Wallace *Creativity* 36). Catmull himself was the head of major initiative at Lucasfilm to bring computer graphics and

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<sup>10</sup> Also known as self-shadowing, surface shading refers to characters and objects in environment casting shadows on each other.

other digital technology into films and games (Catmull *Pixar* 4). During their first few years, they scored some notable hits such as the already mentioned *Luxo Jr* (which became Pixar's mascot), and the *Tin Toy*, which won Pixar its first Academy Award (Catmull & Wallace *Creativity* 41). After an extended period of struggling, they were approached by Jeffrey Katzenberg, who wanted Pixar to make a feature film that would be owned and distributed by Disney. After the successful negotiations, they struck a three-picture deal that allowed Disney to finance Pixar, while also distributing movies and having full ownership of them. Following the release of *Toy Story*, Pixar formed two defining creative principles: „story is king” and „trust the process”. The first principle refers to the importance of story and how nothing should compromise it. The second one refers to the fact that staff should remain faithful to the entire process of animation and production. It also denotes that the staff is trusted with solving any type of problem that might potentially appear. Catmull also claims that Pixar never buys scripts or movie ideas from the outside, meaning that all of the stories and characters are created internally by its community of artists (*Pixar* 2). He's also critical of executives that try to imitate the success of others instead of opting to create something truly brand new. Coincidentally, Pixar is notable for the string of original movies that they released during the 2000s, such as *Monster Inc.*, *Finding Nemo*, *The Incredibles*, *WALL-E*, and *Up*. All of these movies were commercially successful and critically praised.

#### **4. The Origin of Japanese Animation and its Relation to Manga**

Japanese animation, also known as *anime*, appeared considerably later than its Western counterpart. While its origins can be traced back to Japanese arts such as Kabuki and woodblock print known as ukiyo-e (Napier *Akira* 5), the medium itself didn't start to become popular until the post-war period with the rise of production companies such as Toei. The reason for this was the thriving industry of Japanese live-action movies during the period

when the movie attendance was at its peak. However, the subsequent drop of interest in the live-action movies coupled with the competition from Western imports allowed anime to form its niche among the consumers. It is important to note that Japanese animators have been creating cartoons since 1915 due to their exposure to American animation since 1909. Finally, in 1958, Japanese animation enjoyed its first major success with the release of *The White Snake* (Cresswell 7). Directed by Taiji Yabushita and produced by the already mentioned studio Toei, the story centred around a young boy who is in love with a reptile that got reincarnated as a girl. East Asian lore, fairytales, legends and science fiction were the most common focus of the early Japanese animation. In this regard, those movies are similar to many of the most acclaimed Disney movies (*Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast* etc.) that were based on European fairy tales and legends. However, unlike the American movies, the Japanese ones were less preoccupied with musical timing and detailed art, putting the emphasis instead on dream-like backdrops and violent actions, allowing them to be produced at a much faster pace. *Alakazam the Great*, which was directed by Taiji Yabushita and released in 1960, represented yet another important milestone in Japanese animation. *Alakazam* was a movie adaptation of the manga of the same name by Osamu Tezuka which heavily borrowed from Chinese legend *Monkey King* (Cavallaro Miyazaki 18). It was the first in the line of many manga adaptations that proved to be ubiquitous in the history of anime (Cavallaro *Adaptation* 5).

Arguably the most important date in the history of Japanese animation is January 1963, when *Astro Boy* premiered (Napier *Akira* 16). Produced by studio Mushi, it was an adaptation of the manga of the same name from the 1950s by Osamu Tezuka (Raffaelli 126) which focused on a small boy-like robot who developed a thinking mind (Cresswell 8). The origin of *Astro Boy* as manga is extremely important here, not only because many of the most

famous anime are adapted from mangas, but also because some key stylistic traits such as colourful hair, lipless mouth, very large eyes, heart-shaped faces, and the emphasis on „line over form” have become staples in the anime itself (Cavallaro *Miyazaki* 16). Cavallaro further confirms this, writing that the „shooting techniques used in the anime world are overtly inspired by the pictorial style typical of manga”. On the surface level, manga might appear to be a Japanese equivalent to Western comics and graphic novels. However, there is a notable stylistic and thematic difference between the two. Cavallaro argues that manga constitutes a „much more influential cultural force in Japan than any comic does in Western society” (*Miyazaki* 15). Norris further confirms this, writing that manga has found a place in nearly every facet of Japanese life and culture (Norris 257). The reason for this can be credited to the sheer diversity of topics and themes that can be found in mangas, allowing them to cater to the wide demographic of audiences. Some of the examples of this include *gekiga* style, a type of manga with more serious and mature drama depicted in a realistic and graphic style, „cute” manga that was pioneered by Osamu Tezuka (*Astro Boy*) and was influenced by Disney animation and US comics, and *shojo* manga which was created by female manga artist and catered primarily to girls below the age of 18. Another aspect of manga that differentiates it from Western cartoons is that one single character can have two completely different story arcs, which means that certain characters can have a profound relationship in one arc but then have another arc where they do not know each other (Cavallaro *Miyazaki* 15).

Because of the influence of the manga, anime itself is incredibly difficult to properly define. Napier writes that anime has a variety of forms, and that includes „everything from adaptations of foreign children’s classics such as *Heidi* to romantic comedies such as *No Need for Tenchi*” (*Akira* 6). Anime industry is often liberal when it comes to accepting the



stories from a different variety of sources (Naskar & Maiti 478). Napier further elaborates on this by stating that anime „does not only deal with what American viewers would regard as cartoon situations” (*Akira* 6). Cavallaro, however, argues that anime can be classified into three major categories; *catastrophic* anime, *carnavalesque* anime, and *nostalgic* anime (Miyazaki 18). The first one generally reflects on the legacy of atomic bombings and the subsequent aftermath of the event, urban alienation, economic problems triggered by the collapse of the stock market in 1989, and Japan’s record-breaking suicide rates. The second one embodies the spirit of *matsuri*, a Japanese equivalent of the Western carnival that represents an important moment of what Cavallaro refers to as „the ritualized transgression of conventional boundaries and distinctions” (Miyazaki 18). The last one conveys a deep sense of melancholy inspired by an awareness of the temporariness of life and pleasure. This disposition is further stressed by the notion of *mono no aware*,<sup>11</sup> a concept that is usually depicted in the anime by cherry blossoms.

#### 4.1. Studio Ghibli

Arguably the most influential animation studio in Japan, Studio Ghibli was founded in 1985 to produce *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (Cavallaro Miyazaki 40). Its inception, however, can be traced back to 1983 when the publishing company by the name Tokuma Shoten decided to produce a feature-length movie *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*. The studio’s primary principle was rather unique for an animation studio in that it only chose to produce original movies instead of direct adaptations of existing work. This presented a huge financial risk at the box office since the general consuming audience preferred to spend money on the work that they were familiar with. To minimize potential losses, Ghibli opted to not hire full-time employees but instead relied on temporary staff to complete their films. While *Nausicaa*

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11 Translates to „the sadness of things”.

and *Laputa* were box office successes, the follow-up movies *My Neighbor Totoro* (directed by Hayao Miyazaki) and *Grave of the Fireflies* (directed by Isao Takahata) did not perform very well at the box office. *Grave of the Fireflies*, which was an adaptation of the semi-autobiographical wartime novel by Nosaka Ayuki, was especially difficult to market due to its portrayal of the World War II events as told from „the perspective of previously neglected voices” (Cavallaro *Adaptation* 27). Despite the poor box office performance, both movies were critically acclaimed. Furthermore, the titular character from *My Neighbor Totoro* achieved huge popularity due to the line of plush toys that were modelled after it (Cavallaro *Miyazaki* 41). The sales of Totoro plush toys allowed Ghibli to have enough funds for new movies. It didn't pass long before the studio had its first two blockbusters with *Kiki's Delivery Service* in 1989 and *Porco Rosso* in 1992. Ghibli started experimenting with CGI in 1993 and promptly utilised it in the 1994 movie *Pom Poko*. In 1996, Ghibli made a deal with Walt Disney Enterprise to distribute its products in America and Canada (Napier *Akira* 8). *Princess Mononoke* was released shortly after. The movie is generally credited for introducing both Hayao Miyazaki and Ghibli to the American audience, while simultaneously breaking box office records in Japan. *Spirited Away*, Ghibli's most successful movie and a recipient of the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature, was the first fully digital animated movie directed by Miyazaki (Cavallaro *Miyazaki* 42). Miyazaki followed it up with *Howl's Moving Castle* in 2005, *Ponyo* in 2008, and *The Wind Rises* in 2013.

## **5. Stylistic Comparison Between Western and Japanese Animation**

Given the vast difference between Western comics and manga, both in the style and general influence on their respective native cultures, it should come as no surprise that there is a significant difference between Western animation and anime. The first and perhaps the most important difference is the type of movement that is the most common in each medium.

Thomas Lamarre makes a distinction between two types of movements; *drawing movements* and *moving drawings* (Lamarre 330). The former is generally common in the Western animation, especially in Disney movies, while the latter is almost synonymous with Japanese animation. Drawing movements consists of photographing series of painted or sketched figures, then projecting that series to create an illusion of movement. Moving drawings, on the other hand, involves the cel either being moved across the background in multiple directions or the background being moved under the cel itself, resulting in the „induced” movement (Solomon 330). This type of animation contradicts Norman McLaren’s philosophy that animation should focus on drawing movements instead of moving the drawings, and also neglects the most important aspect of American animation (Raffaelli 127). Western animators have been attempting to create movements of their characters as fluent as possible. These attempts resulted in many already-mentioned styles of animation such as *rubber hose* animation and Disney’s signature fluid animation. Japanese animation, however, is not concerned with making their characters and movements look realistic.

Raffaelli describes the main features of Japanese animation, mentioning that instead of two or three frames, there are five or six, causing the movements to become a „series of perceivable jerks, abandoning the fundamental element of American animation, which is fluidity” (Raffaelli 127). In Japanese animation, animators generally tend to suppress intermediate movements, which in turn make the movements look jerky and awkward (Lamarre 335). Each emotion exists in time and it is commonly slowed down to enhance the emotional moment (Raffaelli 129). Arguably one of anime’s most recognisable features is the expressive face of a character that is in close-up but shows very little or no movement. Just as any other movement, expressions in the anime can sometimes seem exaggerated due to the lack of the before mentioned intermediate drawings (Raffaelli 131). Because of this, the

characters might sometimes appear „petrified” in the emotion they are experiencing. The emphasis is on the most visually and emotionally important poses that last through many frames (Lamarre 335). In Disney movies, on the other hand, a character can display multiple emotions in a short time. Animation of walking is also another notable example of how different Japanese animation is. In Western animation, characters often stop being flat against the background if they are running, such as the case with Tom & Jerry cartoons (Raffaelli 127). On the other hand, characters in the anime will walk like they are in the centre of the universe due to walking along the line leading in and out of the horizon. There are multiple theories as to why anime looks the way it does. One plausible explanation was proposed by Lamarre who claims that anime aesthetics can be traced back to production during the global economic crisis of animation in the 1960s (Lamarre 335). Because of this, a more limited animation, such as the one in the anime, was perceived as generally less costly (Raffaelli 127). Another example of the less costly approach in Japanese animation is how the camera operates. According to Raffaelli, „the angles of the shots are chosen in a functional manner within the limits of the animation and are constantly changing” (Raffaelli 129). Camera movements are completely optional, but they can be drawn in with zoom lens and made more interesting by rotating the camera or changing the intensity of the light. Such camera movements proved to be way less costly for the animators.

Another key difference between Western and Japanese cartoons is the distinction between good and evil together with the general question of morality. Disney films, for example, always point out the difference between the good and evil (Olsen & Johnsen 14). The good side represents the main character, the bad side represents the obstacle. According to Raffaelli, one common trope in Disney movies is that there are no positive authority figures (Raffaelli 117). Only evil characters have any desire to control the world. Everything

also must be directly expressed and there must never be any ambiguity in the character's motivations. Anime, on the other hand, thrives off the diversity of stories that find their basis in the Japanese religion of Shinto, which heavily affects how the story is told (Olsen & Johnsen 21). This religion does not have a single God, but several deities that are worshipped at different shrines. It has no sets of theological beliefs or a code of morality, and the focus is instead on cleanliness and communal guilt. For example, death is often shown in the anime without causing controversy among the Japanese. The reason for this is that death is honourable in Shinto, especially if the character dies for the honourable cause. On the other hand, death is considered a taboo in American animation and only the villain of the story is „allowed” to die. Japanese animation also blurs the line between the good and evil, allowing its characters to be morally ambiguous. It is not uncommon to see the protagonist resort to unethical methods to achieve his goal just like a villain can sometimes to a good deed.

Anime generally has complex storylines that can appear refreshing in comparison to Disney's predictable storyline (Napier *Akira* 9). Napier points out that it often „defies expectations of Western audiences while simultaneously being approachable in its universal themes and images” (*Akira* 10). Naskar and Maiti further elaborate on this by claiming that anime separates itself from the dullness and provides the audience with a vibrant world filled with enigmatic fantasies and romanticism (Naskar & Maiti 476). One of the most surprising aspects of Japanese animation is how often it tends to include violence, action, gore, and sex in its storyline. According to Raffaelli, violence is prevalent in the anime „because characters use violent methods in response to the world they live which forces them to essentially communicate with the language of violence” (Raffaelli 131). This offers a stark contrast to the violence that can be seen in, for example, Warner Brothers cartoons where it is used only

as a gag. Furthermore, blatant displays of violence are almost non-existent in Disney animation unless they are perpetrated against the main villain.

## 6. Film Analysis

### 6.1. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*- Disney's Seminal Masterpiece

Few animated movies are comparable to Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in terms of influence on the history of animation. Directed by David Hand, William Cottrell, Wilfred Jackson, Larry Morey, Perce Pearce and Ben Sharpsteen and produced by Walt Disney himself, the movie was released in 1937 to both critical acclaim and commercial success. Distributed by RKO Radio Pictures, the fantasy film borrows the plot of the German fairy tale of the same name written by Brothers Grimm. It is the first American feature-length animated movie, although not the first one in cinema history.<sup>12</sup>

The plot of the movie centres around Snow White, a beautiful princess who lives with her stepmother, the Evil Queen. She works as a maid in the castle until one day she meets a prince whom she instantly falls in love with. At the same time, the Queen finds out from her Magic Mirror that she's no longer the „fairest of them all", losing the title to none other than Snow White herself. Enraged by this discovery, she orders a Huntsman to take Snow White to the forest and murder her. He does indeed take her to the forest, but he cannot bring himself to harm her. Instead, he first pleads for forgiveness and then promptly tells her to run away if she values her own life. After getting lost in the forest only to be rescued and guided by forest animals, she comes across a small cottage. Unknown to her, this is the home of the seven dwarfs that work at mine; Doc, Grumpy, Happy, Sleepy, Bashful, Sneezy and Dopey. Despite being terrified upon finding their house clean and Snow White sleeping on their beds, they allow her to stay with them. Meanwhile, the Queen finds out that Snow White is very

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12 According to Solomon, that honour belongs to Quirino Cristiani's *The Apostle*, released in 1917.

much alive so she decides to find her. She also transforms into an old hag so that no one can recognise her. She subsequently comes across the cottage and, after getting attacked by forest animals, gets taken in by Snow White. While there, she offers her the poison apple which she eats, causing her to fall under the spell and fall unconscious. Upon realising that Snow White is in danger, the dwarfs chase the Queen down, but before they can get to her, she gets struck down by thunder and falls down the cliff. Later, the dwarfs are seen mourning Snow White who is placed in the glass coffin until the prince shows up and kisses her. This breaks the spell and revives her and she comes along with him to live in his castle.

The animation in *Snow White* is one of the greatest testaments to the talent of Walt Disney and his team. The movements of the characters provide an excellent example of the fluid animation that is generally valued in Western cartoons. These movements were incredibly demanding to animate, especially those of Snow White herself. Grim Natwick, the chief animator of Snow White, said that they went beyond just rotoscoping<sup>13</sup> the character since the results were still not satisfying due to the fact Snow White had smaller body proportions than the actress that served as a model (Matin 56). All the hard work, however, paid off. Snow White gets many opportunities to be expressive and to perform certain actions such as dancing or doing chores and her movements are fluid without any jerks that would make her look unnatural. The seven dwarfs needed separate animations that matched their personalities. For example, Sleepy needed a type of animation that would show how he's constantly drowsy, Dopey needed a type of animation that would show his clumsiness and so on. Disney already produced a movie starring similar-looking characters that demanded different animations (*The Three Little Pigs*), but dwarfs proved to be a far greater challenge. Shamus Culhane complained that the march scene during which they sing *Heigh Ho* needed 6

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<sup>13</sup> Marge Champion, a professional dancer, served as a model for Snow White's movements, most notably her dancing (Solomon 59).

months to get properly animated, despite being only a minute long. Another detail that shows the quality of the animation in *Snow White* is how easily and quickly the characters change their expressions. This is evident throughout the entire movie. An example of this would be when the Huntsman is approaching Snow White and she turns around just as he's about to strike her with a knife. Her expression quickly shifts from denoting carelessness and confusion only to transform into the expression of pure terror. The dwarfs also tend to display an array of emotions, especially Dopey. Since he's mute, he often has to communicate using his body language and facial expressions. There is a scene in the movie where he catches a glimpse of two large diamonds on the table that Doc is working. At that moment his face lights up instantly, clearly showing that he's planning to prank Doc by placing those two diamonds over his eyes. The background in the film was done by Albert Hurter and Gustave Tenggren. Disney wanted it to mirror the style of the old European storybook and he thought that Hurter and Tenggren could create just what he wanted (Solomon 59). The result was a mix of multiple scenarios that perfectly captured the atmosphere of the fairy tale, such as the dark forest, Queen's castle, and the cottage where the dwarfs live, especially with the help of multiplane camera.

*Snow White's* story is a familiar one of the battle between good and evil that ends with everyone living happily ever after, except for the villain. Snow White herself embodies the archetype of both the typical protagonist in American animation and a prototypical Disney Princess. Appearance-wise, she manages to be what Solomon describes as „appealing, beautiful and feminine without being overly stiff, cute or cartoony” (Solomon 59). As a protagonist of the story and a positive character, she has no noticeable flaws. She's hardworking, kind, selfless and sweet, and all the other characters are captivated by her except the Queen. She notably never questions her behaviour, which is a common trope



among Disney protagonists (Raffaelli 117). An example of this is when she finds the cottage where dwarfs live and proceeds to clean it up and then promptly fall asleep on the bed. She shows no concern about who might be the owner of the cottage or what their reaction would be upon finding her in their house. She's also very hopeful about the future despite the fact she's in a very underprivileged position of a maid, yet another common characteristic of Disney protagonists. This is perfectly illustrated in the sequence where she sings *Someday My Prince Will Come*. The opposite of Snow White is the Evil Queen. She is the first major villain in the history of Disney animation and remains among the most memorable ones to this day. Just as Snow White serves as a model for prototypical Disney heroine, the Queen serves as a perfect model for a prototypical Disney antagonist. Her wicked personality can be sensed in her physical appearance, which Solomon describes as „icy” and „regal” (Solomon 59). She is incredibly vain and the only thing she is concerned with is preserving her status as the most beautiful woman in the kingdom. The dynamic between her and Snow White represents the most common story trope in Western animation; the conflict between good and evil. The Queen's main role in the movie is to serve as an obstacle that Snow White has to overcome to achieve happiness. She meets her end by falling off the cliff because, as Raffaelli writes, „life needs to go on” (Raffaelli 117).

## **6.2. WALL-E- Pixar's Post-apocalyptic Movie**

WALL-E is one of the greatest examples of Pixar's willingness to tackle original ideas and take risks with their stories. Directed by Andrew Stanton and released in 2008, it was praised by critics for the animation, story, voice acting, and how it tackled topics such as consumerism, waste management and human impact on the environment.

Set 700 years into the future, the movie opens with a shot of Earth which is now completely covered in garbage. All of the humanity has been evacuated by the

megacorporation Buy-N-Large on a massive spaceship called the Axiom. The only remaining thing inhabiting Earth is one small robot called WALL-E (Earth Allocator Load Lifter). He works diligently through the day by collecting garbage while also saving some memorabilia and watching *Hello Dolly!*, showing clear fascination with dance numbers and romantic scenes. One day, a robot called EVE (Extraterrestrial Vegetation Evaluator) visits the Earth. WALL-E is captivated by EVE and he quickly befriends her. After she stumbles upon the plant that he found and promptly shuts down after absorbing it, she gets taken back by the spaceship for Axiom causing WALL-E to attach himself to it. Axiom is filled with morbidly obese people who rely on technology to live their everyday life. The ship is operated by the robotic lieutenant called Auto, while the supposed human captain McCrea merely gives it orders.

When EVE is brought in to place the supposed plant life she obtained in the Holon-Detector (that would cause hyperjump to Earth) she doesn't appear to have it in her possession so she's sent to Diagnostics. WALL-E frees her together with some faulty robots, causing a commotion on the ship. When EVE attempts to return him to Earth via pod, GO-4, Auto's first mate, arrives to place the plant in the pod. After successfully saving the plant, both WALL-E and EVE return to McCrea to hand him the plant. Auto, however, initiates a mutiny, revealing that he has „no return directives” by Buy-N-Large due to them incorrectly concluding that the Earth was uninhabitable. He proceeds to electrocute WALL-E and shut down EVE, sending them to the garbage chute. After successfully escaping, they manage to insert the plant into Holon-Detector with the help of humans and other robots, but not before Auto crushes WALL-E. Now back on Earth, EVE attempts to fix WALL-E but he does not appear to have any memory of her. She gives him one last „kiss” in the form of a small

electric shock which causes him to revert to his old self. The movie ends with both human and robots doing farming, fishing and building while nature slowly reverts to normal.

As a Pixar movie, *WALL-E* can be seen as a perfect example of how Pixar creators implement some of their rules,<sup>14</sup> with three rules, in particular, standing out; those being rules 4, 13, and 16. Rule 4 refers to the following “story spine” template: „*Once upon a time there was \_\_\_\_\_. Every day, \_\_\_\_\_. One day \_\_\_\_\_. Because of that, \_\_\_\_\_. Because of that, \_\_\_\_\_. Until finally \_\_\_\_\_.*” According to Bugay, this story template was the creation of Kenn Adams and was common in the world of improvisation theatre (Bugay 11). Regardless, it is still very applicable both to *WALL-E*’s story and the story of the majority of the Western animated movies. *WALL-E*, in fact, follows the template perfectly. The story takes place 700 years into the future where we see the main character WALL-E do his everyday chores. This changes when he meets EVE. Because he is infatuated with her, he follows her to ship that takes him to Axiom. Because of the importance of the plant to EVE, he helps her retrieve it until she finally places it in Holon-Detector and everyone can return to Earth.

The next rule that can be observed in *WALL-E* is rule 13 which is: „*Give your characters opinions. Passive/malleable might seem likeable to you as you write, but it’s poison to the audience.*” Bugay once again elaborates on this by writing that it’s not enough to just give characters opinions, but that their drives, desires, and goals need to be the main cause why they take action (Bugay 37). One of the most interesting aspects of *WALL-E* is that the two main characters are robots, yet they both convey emotions without issues and also actively work to achieve their goals. For WALL-E, that’s getting EVE to fall in love with him while for her, the main goal is protecting the plant she acquired.

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14 In 2011, Emma Coats tweeted 22 principles of storytelling that were interpreted as being specific to Pixar studio.

The final rule is number 16 which says: „*What are the stakes? Give us the reason to root for the character. What happens if they don't succeed? Stack the odds against.*” The future of the entire human race and planet Earth is at stake in *WALL-E*, which puts immense pressure on the main characters. If the plant does not get inserted in the Holon-Detector, all humans on board of Axiom will get even more overweight and become even more reliant on the automated technology. Earth will also remain polluted without any chance of rehabilitation. Auto represents a major hurdle since he was programmed to keep Axiom on autopilot regardless of the situation at hand. The conflict between the robot that is representing Buy-N-Large corporation interests, and two outlaws that want to save humanity is what Bugay refers to as the „main tension line of the entire story” (Bugay 46).

*WALL-E* is generally considered as a great example of Western animation that doesn't rely on romance or fantasy to make itself appealing to the audience. As Madureira notes, the setting does have romantic elements, but they are secondary in the story (Madureira 73). It is also important to note that the storytelling in *WALL-E* leaves room for continuity, unlike Disney movies where everything needs to be resolved and nothing is allowed to be ambiguous. However, it should be noted that the romantic subplot of the movie plays into conventional template set by Disney movies. *WALL-E*'s story arc shares many parallels with *Snow White*. Both of them are shown at the start of the movie doing their everyday job until one day they come in contact with their love interests, EVE and the prince respectively. Finally, both of them end up in a precarious position from which they can only be saved with a kiss. It is interesting to note the role reversal that occurs in *WALL-E*. The main protagonists might be robots but they can still be perceived as male (*WALL-E*) and female (EVE). EVE is the one that does majority of the heroic deeds and she essentially fulfils the role that would, in a Disney movie, for example, belong to a prince or any other „dashing handsome”

character. In the original draft of the script, WALL-E was supposed to save EVE. However, after the intervention by Brad Bird, Andrew Stanton decided to change it so that EVE saves WALL-E instead (Catmull & Wallace *Creativity* 69).

The themes that *WALL-E* tackles represent the departure from what is commonly seen in the majority of the Western animation. The most notable one is the problem of pollution, which is evident by the terrible state Earth's shown to be in at the beginning of the movie. A singular plant that WALL-E finds represents Earth's last chance at recovery. Besides the transparent ecological message, *WALL-E* also examines modernization (Herhuth 54). All of the humans on board of Axiom rely on automated machines created by the very same corporation that turned Earth into a pile of garbage waste. As Herhuth writes, the habits and social conditioning of humans in the movie is a „great example of the feedback loops and dynamics that shape human-machine relations” (Herhuth 66). What this means is that humans on board of Axiom have decided that their comfort was the main priority, causing them to ruin their home planet. This is even more evident by the fact all of the humans in the movie are morbidly obese to the point they cannot even move properly without the assistance of machines. They are also constantly staring at hologram telecommunications they possess, making them completely unaware of their surroundings and suspected to brainwashing from Buy-N-Large corporation. One scene in the movie that perfectly illustrates this is when WALL-E comes across the passenger by the name of Mary. She first bumps into him without noticing it, and then ignores him when he tries to ask her if she has seen EVE. WALL-E then proceeds to shut down her telecommunicator, causing her to notice both him and her surroundings. As it turns out, she wasn't even aware that she was on a spaceship and she is completely entranced by space and stars she can see outside.

### 6.3. *Akira*- The Embodiment of Catastrophic Anime

Adapted from the early part of the long-running manga by director Katsuhiro Otomo and released in 1988, *Akira* is almost singlehandedly responsible for introducing anime to the Western audience (Clements & McCarthy 13). In fact, *Akira* enjoyed much greater success overseas than in its native country. Borrowing elements from both the cyberpunk of *Blade Runner* and the military conspiracy from 1963 live-action film *Japan's Longest Day*, it is a shining example of digital and analog animation. *Akira* originated as a manga in 1982, but it did not get the proper ending until 1990, two years after the release of the movie (Kovljanić 53).

The plot of *Akira* is set in 2019 Neo-Tokyo and it begins with an ending (Napier *Godzilla* 336). It is explained that the Old Tokyo was destroyed in 1988 by a singular force. Neo-Tokyo is a very hostile environment, filled with different forms of corruption, terrorism, protests, and gang violence. During one of the anti-government protests, a motorcycle gang lead by Shotaro Kaneda is fighting with the rival gang called The Clowns. Tetsuo Shima, Kaneda's friend and a member of the gang, crashes into an unknown creature. That creature turns out to be a psychic by the name of Takashi who has the body of a child but the face of an old man. Following this event, Tetsuo starts to develop psychic powers of his own, attracting the attention of a secret government project run by Colonel Shikishima. Both Tetsuo and Takashi are captured while Kaneda's gang is arrested and subjected to interrogation. While there, Kaneda meets Kei, one of the activists of the resistance movement who helps him and his gang escape military custody. Meanwhile, Shikishima and Doctor Onishi discover that Tetsuo possesses psychic powers that are very similar to those of Akira, one of the psychics that destroyed Old Tokyo. Tetsuo eventually escapes, but not before wreaking havoc on the city. Shikishima overthrows the government and assumes control over

military forces, ordering them to kill Tetsuo. After Tetsuo murders Yamagata, one of Kaneda's friends, Kaneda vows to avenge him. Tetsuo continues to rampage through Neo-Tokyo until he reaches the stadium where the Olympics are supposed to be held. Beneath the stadium is Akira, who is in cryogenic storage. While there, both Shikishima and Kaneda attempt to kill him but fail. He promptly mutates into a grotesque mass of tissue that starts to absorb everything in its proximity, including Kaneda. However, the psychics successfully awaken Akira who creates another singularity. This singularity then proceeds to draw in both Tetsuo and Kaneda, transporting them into another dimension and simultaneously destroying Neo-Tokyo. The psychics successfully retrieve Kaneda from the singularity, while Tetsuo transforms into what appears to be a form of a „higher” being.

*Akira* serves as a perfect example of catastrophic anime because the plot heavily alludes to nuclear bombings Japan suffered during World War II. Images of destruction are common throughout the movie with the most striking ones being the „explosions” produced by the singularity. The fact that the final showdown between Tetsuo and Kaneda takes place in the Olympic stadium further cements this connection since Japan was supposed to host Olympic games in 1940 but was unable to due to bombings (Clements & McCarthy 13).

To a degree, *Akira* shares some elements with *WALL-E*. Both are science fiction movies that take place in the future after a certain catastrophic event. For the former, that is the destruction of the Old Tokyo, while for the latter that is the pollution of Earth which rendered it uninhabitable. The main protagonists are outlaws,<sup>15</sup> though WALL-E and EVE are incorrectly perceived as such for a brief period. Finally, their worlds are controlled by powerful organisations that are to some degree responsible for the destruction of their previous home. In the case of the biker gang in *Akira*, it is the corrupt government and

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15 WALL-E and EVE become outlaws after they release malfunctioning machines, even though neither of them had any intention of doing that.

military force. In the case of *WALL-E*, it is the megacorporation Buy-N-Large. However, there are also some notable differences between the two. The most obvious one is the tone of each movie and how it portrays the post-apocalyptic world. *Akira* offers a brutal and violent vision of the future, which can be attributed to anime's willingness to show graphic content and tackle complex themes more maturely. *WALL-E*, while still transparent with the message it wants to convey, still chooses to offer a more cartoonish portrayal of the world that is palatable to children.

Another noticeable difference is how the characters are portrayed in the movie. As Napier argues, *Akira* does not have a single truly sympathetic character (*Godzilla* 339). Every single person or a group in the movie is deeply flawed. For example, the supposed anti-government resistance group never explains what it wants to accomplish with psychic mutants (or espers) after they liberate them. The main character Tetsuo is at first portrayed as weak and overly reliant on his friend Kaneda. As the story progresses and his psychic powers become more destructive, he becomes more unhinged and vengeful, showing no hesitation when it comes to murdering other people. He also consistently avoids capture and successfully overpowers both the military and other psychics. Napier describes his antiheroism as a representation of an „all-out adolescent resistance to an increasingly meaningless world in which oppressive authority figures administer the rules simply to continue power” (*Akira* 42).

Kaneda, who is arguably the closest character in the movie to a traditional positive protagonist (Napier *Godzilla* 339), also exhibits some negative characteristics such as being egotistical and extremely violent. Akira, the titular character that curiously appears only for a brief time in the movie (Kovljanić 53), serves merely as the tool to stop Tetsuo in his rampage while still triggering the destruction of Neo-Tokyo. Napier concludes that Akira has



no „moral centre or positive alternative”, while it also resists proper closure by having Tetsuo become a deity-like being without showing how he intends to use his new powers (*Akira* 42). This becomes especially apparent when compared to *WALL-E* that also does not have a proper closure but has plethora of positive characters such as the titular protagonist that indicate there’s a bright future ahead. Most importantly, *WALL-E* ends on a positive note, offering an optimistic view of the future where robots and humans can work together to rehabilitate Earth.

#### **6.4. *Spirited Away*- Miyazaki’s Fairy Tale Masterpiece**

Excelling in both visual presentation and complex storyline, *Spirited Away* is arguably Hayao Miyazaki’s masterpiece. Clements & McCarthy described it as a „surreal mixture of the childhood adventure of *My Neighbor Totoro* with the threatening other-world of *Princess Mononoke* and the transformations of *Porco Rosso*” (Clements & McCarthy 606).

The story centres around 10-year-old Chihiro who is moving into a new home together with her parents. Her father decides to take a shortcut which brings them to what appears to be an abandoned amusement park. During their exploration of the place, Chihiro’s parents come across an abandoned restaurant that has a large assortment of food. Despite Chihiro’s warning, her parents proceed to eat the food causing them to transform into pigs. A boy by the name Haku then instructs her to get a job at the large bathhouse. Chihiro first attempts to get hired by Kamaji, a demon with multiple limbs, but he refuses and tells her to talk to the owner of the bathhouse, a powerful witch called Yubaba. She agrees to give her a job after Chihiro wakes up her son Boh, but takes her name as a part of the contract. Chihiro, who is now referred to as Sen,<sup>16</sup> is treated poorly by all of the employees of the bathhouse

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<sup>16</sup> Sen translates to one thousand.

except Haku and Lin.<sup>17</sup> During her tenure as a worker, she invites a mysterious creature called No Face thinking that he's a customer. She also successfully purifies a „stink spirit” that turns out to be a river god. He rewards her with a magic dumpling. Meanwhile, No Face starts to consume employees of the bathhouse while also giving large tips.

One day, Sen sees a large dragon being chased by paper shikigami and recognises him as Haku. One of the shikigamis transforms into Zeniba, Yubaba's twin sister, who then turns Boh into a mouse. It turns out that Haku stole her magic seal which was protected by a deadly spell. Sen feeds him half of the dumpling that river god gave her, causing him to vomit out both the seal and dark slug-like creature that Yubaba used to control him. Sen decides to return the seal to Zeniba as an apology. She comes across now-massive No Face who tries to tempt her with gold. She, however, feeds him the other half of the dumpling causing him to chase her down while regurgitating all of the employees of the bathhouse he ate. They all take a train that leads them to Zeniba's house where she reveals that Sen's love for Haku broke the spell that Yubaba placed over him. No Face decides to stay with Zeniba while everyone else returns to the bathhouse where Yubaba prepares one final test for Sen. She is tasked with identifying her parents among the group of pigs, to which she responds that none of the pigs is her parents. Since this is a correct answer, the contract between her and Yubaba is destroyed and she obtains her name back. Haku, who also turns out to be a spirit of Kohaku river, takes her back to the riverbed. She finally reunites with her parents who have no memories of turning into pigs.

The most notable feature of *Spirited Away* is arguably the palette of complex characters that inhabit its world. The main heroine of the story, Chihiro, is probably the greatest example of this because she embodies the shojo archetype that is unique to Miyazaki's

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17 Lin is one of the female workers at the bathhouse who took Chihiro to Yubaba.

animated movies. As Napier writes, this particular type of shojo that can be found in Miyazaki's movies is „often quite assertive and independent” (*Akira* 152). At the beginning of the movie, she's shown to be whiny and self-obsessed, constantly complaining about the fact she's moving to a new city and how her father bought her only a single rose for the birthday. However, as she's forced to rescue her parents and learn to navigate the fantastical ghost world she learns to be selfless and to care about the well-being of others. Chihiro presents a good contrast with Snow White in regards to their character arcs. Snow White also ventures into unknown (the forest and eventually the cottage where dwarfs live). She spends her time cooking and cleaning for the dwarfs just like Chihiro has to work at Yubaba's bathhouse. However, their development is completely different. Snow White embodies all of the positive traits from the beginning such as being kind, caring, and virtuous, which means that she does not need to have a character development since she already represents the ideal heroine. Chihiro starts as spoiled so she needs to build up her character through experience, which in turn makes her more complex and much more interesting. It is important to note that Chihiro's parents are also portrayed in a rather negative light, displaying arrogance and carelessness that eventually turns them into pigs.

Yubaba is yet another interesting character due to her status as the main villain of the story. She exhibits many of the negative traits that can be found in villains of Western cartoons such as greed, short temper, and tendency to manipulate others into doing her bidding (like she did with Haku). She also has an antagonistic relationship with her twin sister Zeniba, who fulfils the role of the „good” sister even though she is also capable of being vengeful (as seen when she transforms Boh into a mouse). However, she can occasionally show a more sympathetic side too. This is evident in how much she cares for her son Boh whom she spoils and constantly showers with affection. She's also willing to help

which is demonstrated when she directs everyone to help Chihiro remove the trash from stink god's body. The complexity of her character shows anime's tendency to deviate from the „good and evil” dichotomy of Western animated movies, such as works from Disney. The Evil Queen, the main villain of *Snow White* and also a character who is most comparable to Yubaba, never once shows anything that could be described as a positive trait. She only cares about herself and she shows no mercy or empathy towards anyone else.

The recurrent theme in *Spirited Away* is the question of identity and the power of names and words. This can be seen when Yubaba takes Chihiro's name away after hiring her, making her susceptible to losing her true sense of self if she manages to forget it. Cavallaro supports this by writing that this reflects the notion that „all of the creatures are defined by their names and that by knowing those names one might gain power over them” (*Miyazaki* 136). One character that embodies this loss of identity is No Face. He first appears as a mysterious figure lurking outside the bathhouse, until Chihiro lets him in. He then proceeds to eat everything in sight including other creatures, causing him to grow enormous. Cavallaro writes how No Face's display of appetite and desperation coupled with the desire to establish a connection with Chihiro/Sen is his „last hope of transcending his crippling solitude” (*Miyazaki* 139). Indeed, No Face turned out to be a sympathetic character who just wanted to form a friendship with another individual which caused him to wreak havoc in the bathhouse.

Another theme that can be observed is the „obligatory environmental moment” that can be seen in the majority of Miyazaki's movies (Clements & McCarthy 606). This is especially evident in the scene where stink god gets a bath, reverting him to the river god. He first appears to be a large mass of sludge but after the removal of all the garbage from his body he finally shows his true form, rewarding Chihiro with a magic dumpling while exclaiming „well done”. Napier writes how river god's condition symbolises „consumer

capitalism, and environment sullied by toxic effusions of modern life” (*Akira* 184). This singular character is used to convey a message in a subtle but effective way, as opposed to *WALL-E* which uses the entire story to send the very same message.

## 7. Conclusion

The focus of this thesis was to observe the stylistic differences between Western and Japanese animation. The first two chapters focused on the general history of animation and the history of Western animation in particular. Some notable animation styles were tackled such as the influential rubber hose style. We observed how animation evolved from the silent period up to the dominance of studios such as Warner Brothers, MGM, and UPA. Then the focus shifted to Walt Disney as possibly the most influential figure in the history of animation. We observed how his studio kept pushing boundaries with animated shorts such as *Steamboat Willie*, *Flowers and Trees*, *The Three Little Pigs* and *The Old Mill*. He then proceeded to create some of the most famous feature-length animated movies such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Pinocchio*, *Fantasia*, and *Bambi*. All of these movies were aiming for a certain level of realism with the portrayal of movements by making them as fluid as possible. After this, we briefly examine the history of Pixar, a leading studio when it comes to the production of computer-animated movies. Pixar’s approach to animation involves them taking risks with new ideas and making their stories as engaging as possible.

We then briefly mention the history of Japanese animation (or anime) and its relation with manga, another popular form of entertainment in Japan. Manga has had a profound influence on anime, being the most common source when it comes to adaptations. However, anime also takes inspiration from different mythologies and foreign literary works, such as

European fairy tales. As a form of popular entertainment, anime is much more significant to Japanese culture than animation is in the West. The main reason for this is the wide range of topics that anime covers which allows it to cater to many different demographics. Anime rose to prominence with the release of *Astro Boy* in 1963, a television adaptation of the manga of the same name from 1952. Anime did branch out to include feature-length movies. The lead studio in the production of anime movies is studio Ghibli, which produced some of the most recognisable anime classics such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke*, and *Spirited Away*.

There are many differences between Western animation and anime. The most prominent one is the portrayal of movements. Western cartoons tend to display more fluid movements and generally prefer to avoid unnatural „jerks“. Anime, on the other hand, is heavily influenced by the pictorial style of manga, which causes the movements to appear „stiffer“ in comparison to its Western counterparts. Furthermore, Western cartoons tend to make a clear distinction between good and evil, while anime prefers to include morally ambiguous characters. Anime is also a lot more liberal with its portrayal of violence and sex in comparison to Western cartoons which can be attributed to anime's far-reaching audience which includes many adult demographics.

Two great examples of Western animation are Disney's landmark *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and Pixar's *WALL-E*. *Snow White* displays many of the fundamental elements of Western animation and storytelling. Snow White, who serves as the main protagonist, is the perfect representation of Western cartoon heroine due to her sweet and virtuous nature. The Evil Queen, which acts as an antagonist, is the great example of a hurdle that the main character has to overcome to achieve happiness. The animation in *Snow White* remains to date one of the greatest examples of fluid animation while giving its characters many

opportunities to demonstrate it. *WALL-E* preserves some of the features seen in *Snow White*, such as the battle between good and evil, characters and entities that have well-defined roles in terms of morality (WALL-E is good, Buy-N-Large corporation is evil), and romantic subplot. However, *WALL-E* tackles some complex themes that most Western cartoons would not, such as criticism of consumerism, technology, and the problem of pollution.

On the opposite side are *Akira* and *Spirited Away*, two movies that were chosen to represent Japanese animation. *Akira* is the perfect example of an animated movie that keeps surprising the audience with its complex story, fleshed-out characters and animation. It subverts the formula of Western cartoons by blurring the distinction between good and evil while also showing some genuinely disturbing and violent sequences. *Spirited Away* brings a new twist to the classic fairy tale story by creating a truly unique fantasy world. Just like in *Akira*, the characters are not as clear cut in terms of morality as the ones in Western cartoons, adding to their complexity. The main protagonist (Chihiro) has a proper character development due to her experience at the bathhouse. There are of course other engaging characters that range from terrifying demons and witches to small animal spirits. The movie deals with heavily loaded topics such as the issue of identity and pollution.

With all of this in mind, it is clear that Western and Japanese animation is inherently different, starting from their methods of animation to their approaches to characters and storyline. Each one offers a different perspective that is heavily influenced by their native cultures which in turn makes them engaging in their distinct ways.

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### c) Movies

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*WALL-E* **Dir:** Andrew Stanton **Prod:** Jim Morris **Distr:** Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2008, Film

*Akira* **Dir:** Katsuhiro Otomo **Prod:** Ryohei Suzuki, Shunzo Kato **Distr:** Toho, 1988, Film

*Spirited Away* **Dir:** Hayao Miyazaki **Prod:** Toshio Suzuki **Distr:** Toho, 2001, Film

## 9. STYLISTIC COMPARISON: WESTERN AND JAPANESE ANIMATION- Summary and Key Words

### Summary

Western animation has a rich history that has been in development since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Influential animators like Winsor McCay laid the groundwork that studios like Disney and Pixar continued to build upon. The main concern regarding animation in the West was how to make movements of characters as convincing as possible. Many animation styles such as rubber hose came close to it, with Disney finally succeeding with its fluid animation. Japanese animation, on the other hand, was not concerned with the fluidity of movements. It instead chose to be visually similar to manga while tackling a wide variety of genres in a very unique way, allowing it to carve its niche in the animation market. Two movies that are chosen to represent Western animation are *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *WALL-E*, while *Akira* and *Spirited Away* serve as a representation of Japanese animation.

**Key Words:** animation, anime, manga, Disney, Pixar, Ghibli

## 10. STILISTIČKA USPOREDBA: ZAPADNJAČKA I JAPANSKA ANIMACIJA- Sažetak i ključne riječi

### Sažetak

Zapadnjačka animacija ima bogatu povijest koja se razvijala od početka dvadesetog stoljeća. Utjecajni animatori poput Winsora McCaya su postavili temelje na kojima su studiji poput Disneya i Pixara nastavili nadograđivati. Glavni problem po pitanju animacije na Zapadu je bio kako prikazati pokrete likova na realističan način. Mnogi stilovi animacije poput gumenog crijeva su došli blizu tom cilju, dok je Disney uspio s fluidnom animacijom. S druge strane, japanska animacija se ne brine o tečnosti pokreta. Umjesto toga je vizualno slična s mangom te obuhvaća mnogobrojne žanrove na jedinstven način, što joj je omogućilo da stvori vlastitu nišu na tržištu animacije. Dva filma koja su odabrana da predstavljaju zapadnjačku animaciju su *Snjeguljica i sedam patuljaka* i *WALL-E*, dok *Akira* i *Pustolovine male Chihiro* služe kao reprezentacija japanske animacije.

**Ključne riječi:** animacija, anime, manga, Disney, Pixar, Ghibli