Hayao Miyazaki
Exploring the early work of Japan's greatest animator
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Review

Hayao Miyazaki: Exploring the Early Work of Japan’s Greatest Animator
Raz Greenberg, 2018.
New York: Bloomsbury Academic
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S tudio Ghibli, led by Hayao Miyazaki and the late Isao Takahata, is one of the most celebrated Japanese animation studios and has attracted a global audience for over 30 years. Many books and articles have been written in English about Studio Ghibli’s works, including Susan Napier’s Anime From Akira to Princess Mononoke (Palgrave, 2001), Helen McCarthy’s Miyazaki: Master of Japanese Animation (Palgrave, 2001), Thomas Lamarre’s Miyazaki: Master of Japanese Animation (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), Nadja-Christina Schneider’s Studio Ghibli, including strong female characters, and Anne Nakamura’s “Porco Rosso” (2004), which are based on the popular action manga by Monkey Punch. The fourth chapter offers a close study of Miyazaki’s earliest work – his childhood dream of becoming a manga artist, his encounter with Tōei Animation’s first featured animated film Panda and the Magic Serpent (1958) – and his early years as an animator at Tōei, the first large-scale animation studio in Japan, between 1963 and 1971. The first chapter examines many works that Miyazaki was involved in and the studio veterans he collaborated with, including Takahata, director of narratives, styles, and themes in Miyazaki’s works.

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In his work, the author draws on a wide range of cultural, sociological and media theory and thus offers new perspectives on the foundations of the country. By means of “guerilla filmmaking on a borrowed Super 8 camera, improvisated editing and underground exhibition” (p.2), Patwardhan demonstrates the potential of political filmmaking. His 1975 film Kraanti (War of revolt) is paradigmatic for the unconscious positionings of filmmaking practices outside the Films Division of India, i.e., the “nationally dominant state-run documentary production and distribution agency” (p.2).

Studying the term ‘independent’ was for a long time primarily associated with politically conscious (if not activist, see Anirudh Rajappan and Paramita Vohra) and underground cultural practices such as political filmmaking. His 1975 film Kraanti (War of revolt) is paradigmatic for the unconscious positionings of filmmaking practices outside the Films Division of India, i.e., the “nationally dominant state-run documentary production and distribution agency” (p.2). Subsequently, the term ‘independent’ was for a long time primarily associated with politically conscious (if not activist, see Anirudh Rajappan and Paramita Vohra) and underground cultural practices such as political filmmaking. His 1975 film Kraanti (War of revolt) is paradigmatic for the unconscious positionings of filmmaking practices outside the Films Division of India, i.e., the “nationally dominant state-run documentary production and distribution agency” (p.2). Subsequently, the term ‘independent’ was for a long time primarily associated with politically conscious (if not activist, see Anirudh Rajappan and Paramita Vohra) and underground cultural practices such as political filmmaking. His 1975 film Kraanti (War of revolt) is paradigmatic for the unconscious positionings of filmmaking practices outside the Films Division of India, i.e., the “nationally dominant state-run documentary production and distribution agency” (p.2).

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Greenberg emphasizes Miyazaki’s role in the animated adaptations of classic children’s literature in the 1970s and 1980s, including Madame Bovary (1979), 3,000 Leagues in Search of Mother (1976), and Anne of Green Gables (1979) as well as the original short films Porco Rosso and Ponyo (1972, 2004). Miyazaki’s first trip abroad was an important source of inspiration, and his great love for the European landscapes were integrated into these shows. Linking these early television series and short films to Miyazaki’s later films with Studio Ghibli, Greenberg argues that Miyazaki started practicing new forms of narratives, styles, and themes through these projects. The third chapter focuses on Miyazaki’s directorial debut feature film The Castle of Cagliostro (1979) as well as the preceding animated television series Lupin the Third (1971, 1972), which are based on the popular action manga by Monkey Punch. The fourth chapter offers a close study of Miyazaki’s early work – his childhood dream of becoming a manga artist, his encounter with Tōei Animation’s first featured animated film and how his creativity has evolved over the 50 years of his career. It starts by tracing Miyazaki’s early life – his childhood dream of becoming a manga artist, his encounter with Tōei Animation’s first featured animated film and how his creativity has evolved over the 50 years of his career. It starts by tracing Miyazaki’s early life – his childhood dream of becoming a manga artist, his encounter with Tōei Animation’s first featured animated film

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