

# Art and Narrative: Critically Acclaimed Animated Film

Lecturer: Dr. Eric Weichel

## Schedule of Topics:

### **Week 1: *Snow White* (1937) & Early Disney**

Participants explore and contrast the gendered nature of labour in *Snow White* with the actual circumstances of its production. We also look at art historical precedents for the film itself, and interrogate something of Disney's early successes, concluding with the wonderfully meditative early Media Studies criticism of the poet Walter Benjamin.

## Sources:

M. Thomas Inge (2004) *Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 32:3, pp. 132-142

Patricia Zohn. "Colouring the Kingdom," *Vanity Fair* (5 February 2010),  
<http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2010/03/disney-animation-girls-201003>

Goldstein, W. S. (2006). Dreaming of the Collective Awakening: Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch's Theories of Dreams. *Humanity Humanity & Society*, 30(1), 50–66.

### **Week 2: Wonderlands: *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) and *Nausicaa and the Valley of the Wind* (1984)**

Participants interrogate the art historical and literary precedents of the Disney film, noting Walt Disney's early engagement with Carroll's rich legacy, accounts of film criticism from the 1950s, the work's slow elevation to cult status in the wake of student popularity, and the colonialist, gendered and discursive impulses of both film and novel. By way of contrast, Hayao Miyazaki's germinal eco-feminist film, drawn from the manga of the same name, is compared to 'Alice in Wonderland', highlighting how originality and innovation heralded a new era of animation in Japan – and, eventually, in the West.

## Sources:

Daniel Bivona, 'Alice the Child-Imperialist and the Games of Wonderland', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Sep., 1986), pp. 143-171

Morgan, Gwendolyn. "Creatures in Crisis: Apocalyptic Environmental Visions in Miyazaki's Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke." *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 2, no. 3 (2015): 172-183.

### **Week 3: *The Triplets of Belleville* (2003)**

In week 3, participants explore notions of aging and personal agency in a startlingly original film: Sylvain Chomet's *Les Triplettes de Belleville*, a film Roger Ebert described as "creepy, eccentric, eerie, flaky, freaky, funky, grotesque, inscrutable, kinky, kooky, magical, oddball, spooky, uncanny, uncouth and unearthly. Especially uncouth." Chomet is also celebrated for the 2010 *The Illusionist*, which poignantly comments on the autobiographical work of Jacques Tati, a famous mime, director and magician, and is set to direct 2024's *The Magnificent Life of Marcel Pagnol*, a self-professed love-letter to the south of France and to the Marseille-born author and filmmaker who permanently stamped Francophone cinema with his popular legacy.

#### Sources:

Parsons, Elizabeth. "Animating Grandma: The Indices of Age and Agency in Contemporary Children's Films." *Journal of Aging, Humanities, and the Arts* 1, no. 3-4 (2007): 221-229.

Li-Vollmer, Meredith, and Mark E. LaPointe, "Gender transgression and villainy in animated film." *Popular Communication* 1, no. 2 (2003): 89-109.

Short Video, Week 8: Simpson's Couch Gag: Sylvain Chomet (1 minute)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5Tfq\\_bwYs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5Tfq_bwYs)

### **Week 4: *Persepolis* (2007)**

*Persepolis*, with its feminist re-telling of the Iranian Revolution through the coming-of-age eyes of a young exile, is at once funny and serious, provocative and flippant, heart-wrenchingly sincere and decidedly tongue-in-cheek. Marjane Satrapi, the author of the award-winning graphic novel, has collaborated with director Vincent Paronnaud to create a film that is widely recognized as a major work of art; for example, *Persepolis* claimed the Jury Prize at Cannes, was nominated for an Academy Award, and received the Cesar Award for Best First Feature Film. In this unit, we examine some of the historical and cultural background for *Persepolis*, and note its ongoing triumph over puritanical critics, both in America and in the Islamic World, who deplore its frank discussion of sexuality and refusal to depoliticize adolescence.

#### Sources:

Golnar Nabizadeh, Vision and Precarity in Marjane Satrapi's "Persepolis", *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Spring/Summer 2016, Vol. 44, No. 1/2, pp. 152- 167.

Barker, Jennifer Lynde. "Cosmopolitanism and Animated Kinography in Persepolis and Sita Sings the Blues."

**Week 5: *Moana* (2016) and *The Mountain of Sgaana* (2017)**

In this unit, participants compare and contrast depictions of indigeneity: Haida animator Christopher Auchter's lovely little film is juxtaposed with Disney's commercially successful, and yet ethically questionable, *Moana*.

Source:

Yoshinaga, Ida. "Disney's *Moana*, the Colonial Screenplay, and Indigenous Labor Extraction in Hollywood Fantasy Films." *Narrative Culture* 6, no. 2 (2019): 188–215.

**Week 6: Ancient and Classical Japan: *Princess Mononoke* (1997)**

To conclude this series, a wide range of artistic, literary and mythological sources from ancient and classical Japan are used to illustrate Miyazaki's famously complex source material. *Mononoke*, itself a meditation on indigeneity, time, technological progress, and eco-spirituality, has proven to have a surprising staying power, remaining relevant and inspiring to successive generations who see it as a unique work of High Art. Indeed, *Mononoke* reaches a level that Miyazaki himself has found it challenging to emulate. We cannot alter our Fate: however, can we rise to meet it, if we choose?

Sources:

Abbey, Kristen L. "'See with Eyes Unclouded': *Mononoke-hime* as the Tragedy of Modernity." *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 2, no. 3 (2015): 113-119.

Jolyon Baraka Thomas, 'Confronting Master Narratives: History As Vision in Miyazaki Hayao's Cinema of De-assurance, in Susan Jolliffe Napier, *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, Duke University Press, Volume 9, Number 2, Fall 2001, pp. 467-493.