

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Despite the now common usage of the term “girl”, there has been little call for pause and deeper analysis into what we actually mean when we use this term. In particular, animated film provides a wide scope of media texts that claim to focus on girlhood; but how do we in fact *know* girlhood? How is girlhood constructed? With these questions in mind, I use feminist textual analysis to examine three films—*Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), *Kiki’s Delivery Service* (1989), and *Princess Mononoke* (1997)—by acclaimed Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki in which girl characters and girlhood play prominently into the film's construction as a whole. In particular, I examine how Miyazaki constructs girlhood through his storylines and characters and how these characters (i.e. girls) are then positioned in

relation to three specific aspects of their representation: their use of clothing, their relationships to other characters, and their freedom of movement relative to other characters. In doing so, I deconstruct more traditionally held notions of girlhood in which girls are seen as dependent and lacking autonomy. Through Miyazaki's work, I instead offer up a counternarrative of girlhood in which the very category of gender, and indeed "girls", are destabilized. In doing so, I hope to provide a wider breadth of individuals the chance to see themselves represented in animated film in both significant and meaningful ways.

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Girlhood Reimagined: Representations of Girlhood in the Films of Hayao Miyazaki

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Karissa Sabine, Author

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Chapter One: Introduction

The representation of girls in animated film often depicts a very particular view of what in fact constitutes “girlhood”. From films like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) to *The Swan Princess* (1994), these films frequently offer narrow depictions of girls that leave much to be desired when entering a larger conversation about the ways we have seen and continue to see girlhood represented on screen. The girl characters in these films are almost always portrayed as white, hyperfeminine princesses who ascribe to normative depictions of societal beauty standards. They are also frequently thrown into storylines that highlight love and romance, or in other words, heterosexuality. In the “happily ever after” ending in which the princess finds her prince, we are reminded that the roles of wife and mother seem to be the only paths allowed for her. Any facades of adventure or autonomy that might have been glimpsed are ultimately shaped back into a narrative in which domesticity wins out. Such depictions of girls often lead to very specific gendered representations of what one must be in order to fit the mold of girlhood.

Going against the grain, and in some ways directly challenging this normative depiction of girlhood, acclaimed Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki has stepped both outside of and beyond this narrow boxing in of what society allows for girls in terms of representation. Not only do his films frequently showcase young girls as protagonists, they also construct girl characters in such a way that they are presented as courageous, intelligent heroes in their own right, unconstrained by their gender. It is not uncommon to see girls in his films taking on the roles of warriors, adventurers, or mechanics, actively resisting preconceived notions of hyperfemininity and passivity that are so often attached to girls and women.

In the following study, I analyze *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), and *Princess Mononoke* (1997), three films by Hayao Miyazaki in

which girl characters and girlhood play prominently into the film's construction as a whole. I have chosen these three films specifically for their overall emphasis and dedication to girlhood; Nausicaä, Kiki, and San (*Princess Mononoke*) are all protagonists in their respective films and thus provide a wide breadth of material for analysis into the ways girls in Miyazaki's films break from more traditional notions of girlhood.

My analysis of these films is motivated by two central questions: how do these films by Hayao Miyazaki construct girlhood; and how do these depictions (of girls) within animated film work together to construct a counternarrative of girlhood? In order to answer these questions, I examine how Miyazaki constructs girlhood through his storylines and characters and how these characters (i.e. girls) are then positioned in relation to three specific aspects of their representation: their use of clothing, their relationships to other characters, and their freedom of movement relative to other characters. In doing so, I hope to show how Miyazaki constructs a depiction of girlhood in which not only the term "girl" itself is questioned, but also in ways that break down the binaries of girlhood more broadly. Rather than simply categorizing characters as either girls, or not, based on preconceived notions we may have about what it means to be of a certain age and gender (i.e. girls), instead I hope to deconstruct this perception in ways that allows a greater range of individuals to fit under the namesake of girls/girlhood. The scope of my thesis is thus not simply to offer up what does and does not constitute girls/girlhood, but rather to come to a more nuanced understanding of the ways we come to determine these terms in the first place.

Given the amount of media that not only girls but children more generally are exposed to, the question of representation is no small matter (Davis, 2006; Giroux & Pollock, 2010). Some sources cite that by the age of three, children are already learning to become active media users

(Kirkorian, Wartella, & Anderson, 2008). Popular movie streaming sites such as Netflix and Hulu have even jumped on this children's entertainment bandwagon, expanding to include sections designated solely for children's movies and TV shows. Once only accessible through home videos or movie theaters, popular children's movies such as Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), and *The Little Mermaid* (1989) are now all readily available to stream at any given time. Even films based outside the United States, such as the films by Hayao Miyazaki, are steadily making their way into the children's media market here in the U.S. so much so that anime (i.e. Japanese animation) often even has its very own section.

It is in these films and animated TV shows that children first begin to see themselves reflected (Hurley, 2005; Miles, 1995). While many children are given the opportunity to see themselves represented in film in this way, at the same time, many more are not. As previously mentioned, representations of girls are often quite limited in their depictions (i.e. white/whitewashed, able-bodied, heterosexual, hyperfeminine, princesses, etc.) and thus can easily lead to a variety of negative effects (e.g. poor self-image/self-esteem, body image, etc.) when it comes to how girls are receiving these images (Bispo & Schmid, 2014). As such, a great deal of film theory has been solely devoted to reception studies and the ways that individuals internalize such portrayals (Bispo & Schmid, 2014; Hurley 2005; Witt 2000). Additionally, given the prominence of representations of girls as delicate, hyperfeminine individuals who are most often concerned with looks, love, and romance, girls are often left to believe that self-worth, and indeed their very gender, is both constructed by and dependent on these limited ideas (Bispo & Schmid, 2014). This leaves little to no room for envisioning alternative possibilities for the girls who see themselves as not quite fitting such normative depictions of girlhood. This in itself is a powerful tool in that not only do girls feel the pressures of adolescence more broadly,

(e.g. making friends, love, success, etc.) but they are also often forced into conforming to these molds in ways that marginalize or “other” all those who do not conform (Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2009). Girls who occupy marginalized identities are even more so set up to fail in this regard in that they are, quite literally, unable to change themselves in such a way as to fit into normative ideas of girlhood (Harris, 2004). It is thus important, if not entirely essential, to explore *how* these girls, and girlhood more broadly, are being portrayed.

Fiona Handyside and Kate Taylor-Jones point out in *International Cinema and the Girl: Local Issues, Transnational Contexts* that some of the most popular films of the last few decades are indeed about girls. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *The Sound of Music* (1965), *Dr. Zhivago* (1965), and *Titanic* (1997) are all films that feature girls and young woman in lead or major supporting roles. In these films, we follow the narrative of young girls as they navigate the difficult and arduous tasks of girlhood, thus often making their roles central to the plot in some capacity. Yet even with the overwhelming success of films in which girls play key roles, there is very little discussion of the ways these various characters (i.e. girls) are actually represented. Despite the now common usage of the term “girl” itself, there has been little call for pause and deeper analysis into what we actually mean when we use the term “girl”. What aspects make up girlhood? How do we in fact *know* girlhood? It is precisely for this reason that I decided to take a deeper look into the various ways “the girl” is constructed in children’s animated films. It is my hope that my readings of these films by Hayao Miyazaki will uncover a type of counternarrative to some of these more mainstream depictions we often see of what it means to be a “girl”.

In order to examine the various ways Miyazaki constructs a counternarrative of girlhood through his films, in the following chapters I use feminist textual analysis to conduct close

readings of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), and *Princess Mononoke* (1997). Feminist textual analysis is particularly useful to me because it opens up new areas of scholarly enquiry (Davis, 2006) through close readings of individual films as situated within a larger genre. By exploring these films as texts, I highlight the ways in which texts, and animated film in particular, allows potential for notions of girlhood to come into existence through repeated (visual) representations. As feminist scholar Dawn Currie writes, "Treating texts as representation helps us see how gendered identities such as adolescent femininity are cultural constructions" (2015, p. 17), and indeed how these constructions of gender and girlhood are then upheld as normative due to their profusion. Feminist scholars have examined everything from flap books to magazines to video games, uncovering the ways in which gender is brought into being through the production of texts (Fisher, Jenson, & Castell, 2015; Pomerantz & Raby, 2015; Reid-Walsh, 2015) and ultimately, what affect this may have on girls and how they come to understand and position themselves within society. As these scholars' work shows, representation does very much matter.

Feminist textual analysis is additionally useful to me because of my focus on characters and character development, or in other words, the text itself, rather than the reception of said characters (Bainbridge, 2008), a distinction that is important to make due to the scope and limits of this particular thesis. Although reception is useful in interpreting the overall influence these characters may have on audiences, as I noted above, my interest here is in first making sense of the actual construction of the characters in question and the various ways they contribute to and challenge the social and cultural construction of girlhood. In this way, textual analysis stands in as a starting point "before moving on to investigate audience interpretations of the media product or the media's social impact" (Wisneski, 2007, p. 48). In conducting close readings of these

three films, I will be paying close attention to both the background of the producer (i.e. Hayao Miyazaki) and the location and social climate in which each of these films was produced in order to accurately analyze the way larger discourses play into the filmic construction of girlhood.

Constructing Girlhood

It is clear that girls play important roles in the field that is children's animated film. More broadly, the most common meaning of girlhood is often heavily reliant upon notions of domesticity and autonomy, or rather lack thereof, in specific regard to not only age and gender, but many other aspects as well. It is elements such as clothing, relationships, and freedom of movement – and the parameters put on each – that come to commonly stand for what we as a society have classified as what it means to be a “girl”.

According to gender studies scholars, one of the largest indicators of girlhood is the social and cultural construction of gender itself. Gender comes to stand in not as something that is inherent or given, but rather something that is created by larger societal discourses. In this way, “discourses have the constituting power to produce the very things they seek to describe” (Bradford & Reimer, 2015, p. 290); representation being a large part of this discourse. By inscribing so-called norms and perceptions not only of gender and age, but race, class, and a multitude of other identities onto animated films intended for children, they come to see these depictions as representative of not only themselves but those around them as well. Such “social statuses are carefully constructed through prescribed processes of teaching, learning, emulation, and enforcement” (Lorber, 1994, p. 17), of which children's animated films provide a rich example.

It is through the constant repetition of certain portrayals and acts that come to be defined as gendered that gender itself then arises as a category of classification and indeed a level of performativity. As feminist theorist Judith Butler goes on to describe in her discussion of gender as a social construct,

Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. This formulation moves the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial model of identity to one that requires a conception of gender as a constituted social temporality. (Butler, 1990, p. 179)

Additionally, by defining gender, or in this case, “girls,” we at the same time know what “girls” are *not*, the common antagonism being “boy.” In creating such a binary definition of gender, girls, and indeed boys as well, are funneled into very specific paths in which they are overwhelmingly defined by their gender. Film as a medium creates a perfect environment for this production to be carried out.

In addition to gender, many scholars have defined girlhood through specific phases of development or age as well. Depending on the background and field of the researcher, various age ranges have thus been assigned to “the girl.” “The age parameters of girlhood are ambiguous - girlhood ranges from age 0 to a flexible ceiling extending to age 20 - depending on various cultural, legal, political, civil, or religious dictates” (Sohoni, 1995, p. 1). Some sources even refer to girlhood simply as any female before the age of marriage, a classification that has important implications for the definition of girlhood in and of itself (Hinton, 2016; Sohoni, 1995). Other

scholars have pushed back against this categorization, and postfeminist scholars in particular have claimed that girlhood is not defined solely by a number but rather a state of mind or being (Currie et al., 2009; Harris, 2004; Jiwani, Steenbergen, & Mitchell, 2006), using women's reappropriation of hello kitty to recapture youth or baby boomers who shop at stores such as Gap or Old Navy as just a few examples (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2008). It is this latter definition that indeed seems to be more useful here as it allows for a greater range of both location and culture more broadly when talking about girlhood; in this way, girls are not boxed in by a certain age range or set of numbers. By thinking about girlhood more conceptually as a way of being rather than a number, more individuals are given the opportunity to see themselves through this specific lens (i.e. girlhood). It is because of this reframing of girlhood and age that we see such a wide variety of ages, and indeed girls, in Miyazaki's films.

My analysis of girlhood in Miyazaki's films is further informed by scholarship in feminist film theory and girlhood studies. Emerging in Europe and the United States in the 1970s, feminist film theory takes gender as a central category of analysis in interpreting films as texts, responding to a need for a critical level of analysis into the ways women have been portrayed on screen (Creed, 1987; Smelik, 2007). As Karen Hollinger, a well-known scholar in the field of feminist film studies, points out in her book *Feminist Film Theory*;

Providing the basis for feminist examinations of film were De Beauvoir's concept of women as 'other,' Friedan's discussion of the social mythology that works to bind women to a 'natural' female role of passivity and maternal nurturing under a dominant patriarch, and... Millett's examination of how the ideology of femininity is instilled in women through many forms of cultural texts... (2012, p. 7)

In fact, it was feminist film theorists who first criticized Hollywood and called attention to the danger of producing a sense of “false consciousness” through their depictions of so-called “real” women; depictions that as Anneke Smelik points out, were “only the stereotypical images of ideologically laden femininity” (1998, p. 8). Because of this, feminist film theory became entrenched in discussions of the male gaze, scopophilia, and objectification (Mulvey, 1999) and the negative impact on female spectators (Smelik, 1998).

Shifting slightly in the 1990s, feminist film theory additionally began to view “cinema as constructing a particular, ideological, view of reality” (Smelik, 2007, p. 491). As Anneke Smelik in her book *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory* puts it, “Cinema is a cultural practice where myths about women and femininity, and men and masculinity, in short, myths about sexual difference are produced, reproduced, and represented. The stakes of feminist film theory are therefore high” (1998, p. 7). Given its newfound focus on representation, many feminist film theorists often used textual analysis and close readings as a means to gain better understandings of the various ways women were portrayed in film (Mayne, 1985). Not only did feminist film scholars devote a larger effort to studies of representation, but they also began to question earlier theories of the gaze and scopophilia as mentioned above, Mulvey herself included, instead opting for more negotiated or oppositional readings of film in which spectators were seen as possessing a sense of agency to be able to actively question ideological assumptions within film (Benshoff & Griffin, 2011); a level of analysis I myself take up in my close reading of girlhood in Miyazaki’s films.

This rich tradition of feminist film scholarship provides an important foundation for my analysis of Miyazaki’s films, as I seek to expose the ways in which cultural texts such as films contribute to, reinforce, and/or challenge normative discursive constructions of girlhood. By

reading Miyazaki's work as a counternarrative, I hope to break down, or at least problematize, the ways we see girls as fitting into larger roles of "passivity and maternal nurturing" (Hollinger, 2012, p. 7) (i.e. domesticity) on their path to womanhood. Such a negotiated reading allows me to deconstruct the images and depictions we are presented with, sometimes actively resisting dominant readings in favor of more oppositionally held readings as well in which I believe the more nuanced understandings of girlhood in film and Miyazaki's portrayals truly shine through.

Despite its focus on women in film, feminist film theory is still lacking a specific focus on girls, a component that is of course vital to my work. "The girl" as a site of analysis and inquiry was formally taken up in the 1990s by scholars who later came to define their field as girlhood studies. Girlhood studies, although still fairly new in its implementation, thus represents a large proportion of critical studies that have contributed to the formulation of my analysis of girlhood in animated film.

The emergence of girlhood studies as a field came about at a very particular junction in the field of women's studies and popular culture. Gaining credence in the 1990s, the field of girlhood studies started to take shape alongside a burgeoning consumer market specifically targeted towards girls. This new market came in the form of girl's magazines, clothing brands, films, and pop-groups, to name a few (Mendes, 2009). Additionally, feminism more broadly was in its own transition of sorts as third-wave feminism and an overall anti-essentialism movement began to take form with a specific focus on inclusion and expanding what was deemed as feminism; girlhood additionally came to take center stage in this era of girl power and female empowerment (Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2009).

Asking many of the same questions I pose in this thesis, numerous scholars across various nations and disciplines produced what came to be considered groundbreaking studies on

aspects of girlhood (Campbell, 1981; Chesney-Lind, 1974; Fine, 1988; White, 1985), particularly in the 1970s and 80s (Kearney, 2009). Scholars began looking at girls' involvement in youth cultures such as punk bands and skateboarding, female delinquency and aggression, girls school and labor practices, as well as coming-of-age-rituals from cultures around the world as just a few of the many topics the field opted to take on (Kearney, 2009). Additionally, scholars of girlhood studies have also examined everything from flap books to magazines to video games, uncovering the ways in which gender, and ultimately, girlhood, is brought into being through the production of texts (Fisher, Jenson, & Castell, 2015; Pomerantz & Raby, 2015; Reid-Walsh, 2015). As briefly mentioned before, this last section of scholarly inquiry is particularly interesting, and indeed useful, to me in the various ways these studies highlight specific texts as sites of cultural production.

As girlhood studies as a field began to progress, studies of female delinquency such as Meda Chesney-Lind's "Juvenile Delinquency – The Sexualization of Female Crime" (1974), Anne Campbell's *Girl Delinquents* (1981), and Mary Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (1994) transitioned into less social science based studies and instead opted for more cultural and media based research in which girls were seen as active agents (Kearney, 2006; LeBlanc, 1999; Mazarella, 2005; Munk, 1997) rather than victims. It is through this transition that girlhood studies as a field truly began to become more intersectional and interdisciplinary in its work and research (Kearney, 2009).

Although, many of the earlier studies tend to get lost under the mantle of either women's studies or youth studies more broadly, and as such, were often not credited as being foundational to girlhood studies until the field was more fully realized in the 1990s as a distinct area of inquiry. Within youth studies, any mention of girls or girlhood was typically done solely on a

relational basis; if one were to discuss boys/boyhood, they would at least give mention to girls/girlhood, but rarely much more (Hentges, 2006; Mendes, 2009). Any in-depth analysis of what it meant to be a girl was sadly lacking. Scholars with an interest in gender as a category of analysis often stuck to discussions of women and womanhood more broadly, once again often relegating any reference to girls/girlhood as auxiliary. Simply put, there was no real field or discipline that focused on girls, specifically, *as* girls.

It is interesting to note that the barriers that girlhood studies scholars have faced in establishing their work as an overlapping yet distinct field of interdisciplinary inquiry seem to be rooted in the same normative constructions of girlhood that this thesis seeks to analyze. As Mary Celeste Kearney goes on to point out in *Coalescing: The Development of Girls' Studies*, the relegation to the home and the domestic sphere was one of the many factors that lead to the dismissal and lack in research pertaining to girlhood more generally, especially for male researchers, as this was seen as a barrier for access in studies in which girls' experiences were collected firsthand (2009).

While debatably dwindling in its hold on normative gender ideals in regard to girls today, domesticity has played a large role in the way we as a society have historically conceptualized girlhood. Both in the United States and Japan, girls were, and still are in many cases, thought of as essentially "young women" (Currie et al., 2009). In this depiction of girlhood, it is not so much the term "girl" that becomes important but rather the term "woman." Girls are framed as constantly *becoming* (women) rather than simply *being* (girls) (Harris, 2004). Unlike boys, who were generally given more freedom to play and explore outside their schooling, girls' primary role was to learn to become caretakers, or in other words, mothers and wives (Ivashkevich, 2011). The idea of "becoming women" is especially important in the ways that girlhood as a

whole is framed in that it is often thought of as something that is temporary or a stepping stone of sorts and not as a category that deserves recognition in and of itself (Harris, 2004; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2008).

In this regard, age as a central component of girlhood takes on a sort of double meaning. On one hand, age is essential in defining girlhood in that it often designates a specific age range to what we commonly classify as “girls.” On the other hand, exact age (i.e. a number/number range) is less important when one thinks about girls as occupying a transitory space in that they are always becoming women. By creating such a liminal stage, girls themselves are indeed very rarely given much free choice over the ways they exist in society. Girls (and youth more broadly) are seen as not having enough knowledge about the world because they are too young to have gained sufficient experience (Kearney, 2009), thus preventing any such choices.

This is where control, and specifically parental control, comes squarely into play. Although as I will argue, there are multiple ways we learn what exactly it means to be a “girl” or how to achieve proper girlhood, it is often parents who are the primary teachers of those ideas (i.e. gender roles), and ultimately, the ones who act as gatekeepers for young girls. Control is an essential aspect of what defines girlhood and childhood more generally in that it is the defining line between the realms of what it means to be an adult (versus a child). In the realm of feminism and youth studies, it is simply another way in which aspects of power and control play out between privileged and nonprivileged groups; the parents being the former and the children being the latter in this example. Having already gone through this transition into adulthood (i.e. womanhood) mothers play particularly significant roles in modeling proper gender roles for their daughters.

Girls today are still often left with very little choice in how they are presented. As film scholars Karen Nairn and Johanna Wyn note in their article “New Girlhood and Lost Boys: Analysing the Cultural Politics of Gender and Education Through Film”, “...new conditions did not open up opportunities for *all* young women, and the opportunities for ‘success’ can be rather limited. Two narratives for young women coexist: opportunity and choice, and crisis and risk” (2014, p. 825). While in some ways this can be seen as progress from more traditionally held views regarding the route to proper womanhood through a type of domestic education, especially with the rise of the girl power movement in the 1990s, the range of representations of girlhood is still limited. By simply categorizing girls into two categories, girls still fall victim to the pressures of achieving a good, or at the very least acceptable, form of girlhood.

Animating Girlhood in Disney and Miyazaki

As the scholars discussed above point to, girlhood is constructed through various means such as parental control, freedom of choice, relationships, etc. Animated film in particular has played a central role in defining the boundaries of what we consider appropriate and fitting in terms of the performance of girlhood. However, representations of girlhood diverge significantly across animated films. Miyazaki’s films represent a striking departure from other representations of girlhood as established by production companies such as Disney and other large animation studios (e.g. Pixar, DreamWorks, Warner Bros, etc.) in which these “normative” productions of girlhood are so often seen.

Of the 14 feature length films Miyazaki has made to date, 13 of them star female leads. Miyazaki’s films not only make female protagonists the norm rather than the exception, but also

often feature well-rounded characters that have come to be adored by fans all over the world. Such characters (i.e. girls) are often represented as fierce, strong, and independent in all that they do. It is common for them to fight battles such as in *Princess Mononoke* or go out exploring on their own as Mei and Satsuki do in *My Neighbor Totoro*. Miyazaki is often quite explicit and vocal in his process behind character creation, himself stating “many of my movies have strong female leads- brave, self-sufficient girls that don’t think twice about fighting for what they believe in with all their heart. They’ll need a friend, or a supporter, but never a savior” (“The Best Female Heroes”, 2015).

Although some scholars would classify Miyazaki’s work as being a part of anime’s shōjo genre (Freiberg, 2004; Napier, 2005), there has been much pushback to this argument as well because of this stronger independent side (Darling-Wolf, 2016; Hernandez-Perez, 2016). Shōjo, or “little women” is a term turned genre that became popular in Japanese anime in the 1990s as the industry started to develop a sector that could be more easily marketed towards young girls and women (Hinton, 2016). In these films and television shows, girls (i.e. shōjo) are often presented as hyperfeminine youth in which both their innocence and naivety are highlighted. Although in more recent depictions of shōjo some level of independence and strength is also personified (Napier, 2005), it is often done in a way in which we are ultimately reminded of the character’s gender, and thus her procreative (Hinton, 2016) and domestic potential. While in some ways the concept of shōjo as a genre is more fitting to Miyazaki’s heroines than simply the term “girl” by itself, characters such as Nausicaä, Kiki, or San seem to go above and beyond this label in their refusal to be classified in such a domestic, and indeed gendered, way. Miyazaki is also quite vocal himself in pushing back against labels he feels unbecoming of his films and characters. Although his work does technically fall under the category of anime more broadly,

Miyazaki has always been vehement in his refusal to be classified as such given the rise in popularity of a particular strain of anime in which women and girls are often highly sexualized and depicted in violent manners. For Miyazaki, such flawed representations of women and girls are an insult to the genre (Ebert, 1999).

As Japanese feminist Kumiko Saito goes on to explain, the larger genre of shōjo in which Miyazaki's work sometimes falls is also flawed as well. Despite attempts by Japan's anime industry at creating more independent, carefree representations of girlhood in which girls take on the role of action figures, warriors, and superheroes (i.e. shōjo), the end result is still the same:

...children's television programs reinforce fixed gender roles functioning in actual society, thereby teaching girls to become a good daughter at home and a good OL2 at work. She argues that the female protagonist[s]...reconfirms the values of femininity, which teaches girls to envision marriage and domestic life as a desirable goal once they have passed the adolescent stage. Compared to female heroes who are cute juvenile girls, Saito continues, women in the enemy force, whether in magical girl programs or the Power Rangers series, are adult women wearing heavy makeup and obsessed with careerism: they are, simply put, the women who failed to be a wife or a mother. According to these arguments, the seemingly empowered girl heroes in anime covertly teach girls to pursue fashion, romance, and consumption until marriage and, once married, to stay at home as a good wife and mother. (Saito, 2014, p. 145-146)

It is for these reasons I tend to align my analysis of Miyazaki's girl characters outside the more traditionally defined genre of shōjo as well. By positioning the girl character as having power only in a limited context, girls are once again placed back into a narrative in which traditional meanings of gender (i.e. mother and wife) for Japanese women and girls prevail (Saito, 2014) and this is indeed exactly what happens in the case of *Sailor Moon*, a popular anime series in which girlhood and girl power is often lauded by anime scholars and feminists alike.

Delving into slightly different depictions overall of girls in their animated films, the lead characters in Disney's films are often young girls and women who are almost always white, disproportionate (i.e. unrealistic body dimensions), able-bodied princesses offering little to no diversity in terms of character representation (Cheu, 2013; Giroux & Pollock, 2010). Although girl characters are often in fact leads or main protagonists in their stories, they are often presented in a way in which domesticity wins out in the end. What little time or freedom they had is subsequently squelched as they all, without fail, settle down in the end to live their "happily ever afters" with their princes. It is only recently in films such as *Brave* (2012) and *Moana* (2016) that we have seen Disney start to veer away from these narratives of love and romance as essential to their constructions of girlhood. It is therefore not surprising that young girls often have very narrow ideas of what girlhood means as mediated through a Disney lens.

Despite their differences in terms of representation (of girls), one thing Miyazaki and Disney do have in common is their profound level of global recognition and enormous global fan bases. Not only has Disney topped the market in the United States but it has also levied its influence all around the world. Disney was named the strongest (world) brand in 2016 and topped the charts in 2015 for licensed merchandise worldwide ("Statistics and Facts", 2016). By gaining global recognition, Disney, and the various narratives they convey in terms of gendered representations of girlhood are consumed on a global scale (Giroux & Pollock, 2010). Similarly, Studio Ghibli (Miyazaki's animation studio) in its 30 plus years of operation "is responsible for eight of the fifteen highest-grossing films to ever come out of Japan," *Spirited Away* being one of them (Hall, 2016, para. 1). *Spirited Away* went on to generate \$300 million worldwide and won an Academy Award for Best Animated Picture in 2003 (Hall, 2016), no small feat given the fact that *Spirited Away* is still "the only film made outside of the English-speaking world to have

done so” (John, 2011). Astonishingly, one statistic even goes as far to claim that 96 percent of Japan’s population have viewed at least one of his movies (Toscano, 2015), a statistic that even Disney may struggle to compete with.

The two companies also share a particular history of distribution rights and acquisition as well. The 1996 Disney-Tokuma Deal granted Disney worldwide rights to select home video releases (including Japan, but excluding the rest of Asia) of major films produced by Studio Ghibli (“The Disney-Tokuma Deal”, 2003). Granted, it was only under strict orders from Hayao Miyazaki that no cuts be made whatsoever to any of the releases that the deal was finally able to go through. This came after a botched release of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* was re-released under the title *Warriors of the Wind* by New World Pictures in 1985.

Chapter Overview

Animated film has indeed become popular on a global level. Whether it be through Disney’s princess films or the more carefree adventure films of Hayao Miyazaki, one thing is for sure; animated film, as a site of analysis, is essential in a globalized world that so heavily relies on and is influenced by representations in media. It becomes not only useful, but indeed crucial to highlight the ways films such as *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, *Princess Mononoke*, and *Kiki’s Delivery Service* have come to offer a particular vision of girls and girlhood.

Thus far, I have touched on and indeed built off of various scholars both within feminist film theory as well as girlhood studies as a way to situate my project within the larger scope of scholarship that has a focus on both film and girlhood as sites of analysis. I have also given a broad overview of some of the ways girlhood itself is commonly defined (e.g. controlled,

dependent, lacking knowledge, etc.) in order to set up the particular ways girls/girlhood are represented in animated film. In order to do so, I called into question the various ways popular animators such as Disney and Miyazaki commonly portray their girl characters. Although there are indeed many aspects to Miyazaki's films that one could pull out to further analyze, by focusing on three common aspects associated with girlhood – clothing (*Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*), relationships (*Princess Mononoke*), and freedom of movement (*Kiki's Delivery Service*) – we are able to envision a type of counternarrative of girlhood in which girls and girlhood are not seen as limiting distinctions.

In Chapter Two, I delve into Miyazaki's earliest major film, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, and examine the significant role that clothing plays as we follow the storyline of the main character, Nausicaä. Through her story, we see how clothing is used as a way to provide certain tools (e.g. pockets, ammo, weapons, etc.) to Nausicaä on her journey. By putting Nausicaä in more practical (i.e. useful) clothing, Miyazaki shifts the focus away from Nausicaä's gender (and even sex) and instead puts the focus on Nausicaä's character traits and positive attributes such as her courage, bravery, and adventurous side. In doing so, we come to envision a more fully-fledged depiction of Nausicaä, and indeed girlhood as a whole. Nausicaä is able to rise above and beyond her gender and shows time and time again how she is an expert in many things, none of which could be achieved without the presence of her specialized clothing.

In Chapter Three, I examine the ways relationships stand out as a significant way Miyazaki seems to play with larger narratives of girlhood in *Princess Mononoke*. In particular, I focus on how San's romantic relationship – or rather lack thereof – with Ashitaka, the leading male protagonist, does not follow a typical story arc of heterosexual love and desire often seen in other animated films in which boys and girls are featured. Not only does San's relationship with

Ashitaka resist patterns of heteronormativity more largely, but it also offers an avenue for freedom and independence in the ways that girls are not often able to achieve. For San, her present, and indeed her future, are focused on saving her forest home and family; there is no need for (heterosexual) love and marriage as a means to define either her, or her story.

In Chapter Four, the last of my chapters that focus on close readings of Miyazaki's films, I look into the ways freedom of movement comes into play in *Kiki's Delivery Service*. Given that *Kiki's Delivery Service* is a movie about a young witch who can indeed fly, movement and flight in particular are of course key elements in Kiki's story. By giving Kiki the ability to fly, Miyazaki does much more than simply allow her freedom of movement in the physical sense but rather opens up possibilities for larger conversations about autonomy and movement. This ability to move between different levels in society is something that is not available to many people, much less that of a young 13-year-old girl; it is in this way that Kiki indeed stands out in her refusal to align with traditionally held notions of control and constraint for young girls as she learns to thrive on her own.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I offer some concluding thoughts on the various ways Miyazaki's work speaks to the larger social construction of gender in an era in which animated film plays a large role in the production and endurance of representations of girlhood.

Positionality

I first came to this project, simply put, because of my love for Hayao Miyazaki's films. Growing up as a child of the 90s in the United States, I was of course privy to the totalizing

effects of everything Disney and in particular, the vast amount of films that came out during this time that are now known as products of the Disney Renaissance. In addition to these films, whether by pure chance or some intentional plan on the part of my parents, I was also exposed to many of Hayao Miyazaki's films as well. To this day, *My Neighbor Totoro* (1993) still easily tops the list of my all-time favorite movies, with many of Miyazaki's other works falling not far behind.

Despite coming from another country halfway across the world, a point that I'm sure was lost on me at such a young age, I found myself relating to the characters in Miyazaki's films in ways that I couldn't necessarily do with Disney films. Although I loved many of Disney's films (and still do), there was something in the way Miyazaki portrayed his girl characters that really struck me. These characters were fiercely independent, strong, inquisitive, and not afraid to be different. While some were of course taking on much larger tasks (e.g. San, Nausicaä) like fighting wars and saving their villages, others (e.g. Mei, Satsuki, Kiki) were simply out exploring their worlds and the nature around them, an activity that I very much allied to myself.

Nonetheless, the freedom Miyazaki gave his girl characters was significant in such a way that even in the films that I could not directly relate my experiences to (i.e. having to fight a war), I could see myself in Nausicaä's fierce love of insects and nature or San's outright refusal to be tied down by ideas of boys or romance, both depictions that would never make the cut in a traditional Disney princess film. It was clear that this idea of freedom and adventure, and ultimately, autonomy, was important to me in ways I only came to realize much later in my life as I started to become more consciously in tune with myself as an individual.

As I come to this project now, it is important for me to acknowledge the fact that I am indeed writing from the perspective of someone who was born and raised in the United States.

Naturally, my placement as a United States citizen rather than growing up watching these films in Japan has undoubtedly affected the ways I both see and analyze the characters in these films. The films I refer to are all American-released versions that have been dubbed (i.e. translated) for an English-speaking audience. Although Miyazaki has a strict no cuts policy as far as the content of his films is concerned, certain nuances of language are sure to be lost simply in the process of translating dialogue from one language to another. Because of this, I am conscious of the fact that some of my readings may additionally be skewed through viewing the films in question through this particular manner.

Even so, I specifically chose to look at anime as a medium, and Miyazaki's work in particular because of common threads of globalization/global effects between and throughout the two. Anime as a larger medium came about among a broader pattern of cultural exchange and an influx of western ideals and products into Japan between the 1970s and 1990s. Anime is thus often the product of multiple cultures, backgrounds, and discourses garnered from a global populous (Napier, 2001). Additionally, Miyazaki himself has come out to talk about the various ways he incorporates multiple aspects of other countries and cultures throughout his films, especially in regard to his characters. Similarly, many scholars have picked up on the fact that such characters often portray a more generalized or distinctly less Japanese look than may be expected and thus many "cartoons" abroad (i.e. outside of Japan) go uncredited as being Japanese (Freiberg, 2004; Napier, 2001).

Additionally, anime as an ever-increasing globalized market now generate more than \$4 billion annually on the U.S. alone, with some larger distribution companies such as Toei earning up to 35% of their annual revenue from foreign markets alone (Cooper-Chen, 2011). As such, it

is clear that the larger anime industry in Japan has at least some stakes in focusing their products on more global, and indeed western, audiences – Miyazaki not excluded within this framework.

It is through these particular avenues that I myself am placed as a scholar within the global field of animation studies and film studies more broadly. Nevertheless, my analysis is not meant to stand in as the “best” way to view Miyazaki’s characterization of girls, or even a “correct” one for that matter; it is simply one avenue through which to do so in which I hope to destabilize broader portrayals of girls and girlhood.

Chapter Two: Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind

One film in which representations of girlhood clearly come into play is in Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984). There are many ways in which Miyazaki creates and plays with concepts of girlhood in *Nausicaä*, but clothing in particular plays a significant role. As we follow the storyline of Nausicaä, princess to one of the last remaining villages left after a devastating nuclear war, we see how clothing is used as a way to provide certain tools to Nausicaä on her journey. Through its practicality (i.e. usefulness), we begin to develop a more nuanced sense of Miyazaki's portrayal of girlhood, and indeed gender, in this particular saga. Whether it be through the tools she carries, her transition between outfits, or simply the color schemas and adornments of the clothing she is shown in, our focus as viewers is drawn more to the role Nausicaä's attire plays in her overall quest rather than its appearance. As such, although Nausicaä's gender is still produced through the stylization of (her) body (i.e. clothing) (Butler, 1990), she is not gendered in such a way that we are reminded of her status as a princess – a position that is often designated by ornate gowns and dresses in other animated films that typically feature princesses (e.g. *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, etc.). In reality, she is actually much more than a princess. Pulling from various sources of inspiration such as Homer's *The Odyssey* and an ancient Japanese tale titled *The Lady Who Loved Insects* (Cavallaro, 2006), Miyazaki creates a strong girl protagonist who is adventurous, caring, and above all, autonomous. Shrugging off any impressions we may have surrounding preconceived notions of girlhood, Nausicaä becomes crucial in constructing a counternarrative in opposition to commonly held ideas about princesses/princess movies and girlhood more broadly.

Film Synopsis

Released in 1984, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* was the first major theatrical film that Miyazaki wrote and directed by himself. Given the fact that its production team also contained many of the production team who would go on to form Studio Ghibli, it is often also thought of as the film that gave rise to the studio itself (Cavallaro, 2006). *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, based on Miyazaki's 1982 manga of the same name, follows the path of Nausicaä, a princess of one of the last remaining human villages (i.e. The Valley of the Wind) that remains untouched by a toxic jungle. Taking place thousands of years in the future, we enter into a post-apocalyptic world that lies devastated and overrun by mutant plants and insects after a lethal human war.

Seeking a better understanding of the toxic jungle and the insects that lie within, Nausicaä finds herself in the middle of a war between two neighboring villages, Pejite and Tolmekia, who are fighting to regain control of both the human world and nature itself. After Pejite unearths one of the last Giant Warriors, the lethal bioweapons used in the ancient war that destroyed civilization, Tolmekia's Princess Kushana plans to steal and revive the Giant Warrior to scorch out the toxic jungle and stop its spread of toxins before they overtake the last remaining human strongholds.

Retaliating in a fit of rage and desperation, Pejite kidnaps a baby Ohm (the biggest species of mutant insects) to use as bait to lure the Ohm heard back to The Valley of the Wind, where the Giant Warrior is currently being held by the Tolmekian army. In order to save her village and the destruction that is sure to come from use of such a lethal weapon, Nausicaä puts her life on the line in a last-ditch effort to return the now injured baby Ohm back to its family and is trampled to death in the process.

However, with the help of the Ohm, Nausicaä is brought back to life after she makes the ultimate sacrifice to save not only her people, but the remnants of the human race and natural world. In the end, we are led to believe that there may yet be hope for peace and for a world in which both the humans and nature can thrive as one.

Gendered Clothing

There are many aspects of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* that could be analyzed through the lens of girlhood, given its primary function and role in defining the main character Nausicaä. Yet clothing stands out as one of the richer sites of analysis in breaking down how girlhood is constructed in the film. It is first important to gain a general understanding of the various ways clothing is used to construct girlhood more broadly in order to grasp how Nausicaä in particular is subverting these so-called norms in terms of gendered clothing tropes.

Perhaps no other articles of clothing signals femininity to modern movie audiences more so than skirts and dresses. Skirts and dresses have long been considered a staple of a woman's wardrobe, and popular media images continue to portray women in this more "traditional" wear (Sills, 2005). Given the fact that girls were often thought of simply as "little women", as I discussed in the introduction, it was of course also common for young girls to dress similarly to their mothers and other female figures in their lives.

Not only has this level of feminine dress been modeled from mothers to daughters; it has also been transmitted through media that children consume on a daily basis. Films such as Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* set the standard for representations of girlhood in animation by depicting the main characters in these films with

skirts and dresses as indicators of their social status as well as their gender. As Ashley Bispo and Letizia Schmid, a student and professor pairing at Rutgers University write, “[t]hese older films began the Disney princess franchise, grasping the attention of many young girls. They first emerged during a time where conventional or stereotypical gender roles prevailed in society and were reflected in the media” (2014, p. 2). What is more, the young female protagonists in these films were often depicted submissive, dependent on men, and above all, highly feminine.

Girl characters in animated films are often dressed in feminine or other heavily gendered clothing (e.g. dresses, skirts, aprons, etc.) that is directly representative of the characters’ gender. Such portrayals often aligned with more stereotypical gender roles in which women and girls were meant to be seen rather than active (Berger, 1972). Even when Cinderella acts as a maid and servant girl—a job that would presumably be more easily performed in something other than a dress—she is nonetheless still depicted in one. Additionally, such outfits, especially the more formal ones that come to be indicative of Disney princesses, are often in shades of pink, purple, and light blue, and decked in gems and sparkles, all aspects that are considered have come to be indistinguishable from the representation of these characters as highly feminized. This constant and repetitive depiction of girl characters in glimmering gowns and dresses simultaneously creates and reinforces gender norms.

Pilot, Princess, and Escape Artist

Nausicaä’s outfits are slightly different in this regard. In the very first scene, we see an adolescent girl, who we later know to be Nausicaä, flying across the sky on a glider. Taking on a military-esque attire, she is dressed in a blue-belted tunic with a sewn in ammunition sash, tan

pants, boots, gloves, and a full-face covering/mask tucked over orange hair. Attached to her belt, she appears to have both some sort of rifle and sword, as well as a satchel that contains various tools (e.g. insect charms, test tubes, flash grenades, etc.). This outfit, which serves as her flying gear, is the outfit we see Nausicaä in for the majority of the film.

Her other outfit is a more formal getup which she wears only once in the presence of her father. Donning a light blue dress with a dark blue-ribbon belt, matching blue jeweled hat, tan pants, and necklace, this is Nausicaä's more formal, royal wear. Compared to her initial outfit, it is significantly more feminine in both its colors and accessories.

Finally, we see Nausicaä in one last outfit towards the end of the film in which she is forced to switch outfits with another character to disguise herself while attempting to escape from those who are holding her prisoner. This outfit is similar in nature to Nausicaä's more formal attire and is comprised of a red and pink dress, tan headscarf, pants and boots. Other than color, the only other difference from Nausicaä's formal wear, is the symbol on the front, which stands for the village of Pejite.

Clothing Practicality

Because Nausicaä is depicted more often in her flying gear than any other outfit, we are presented with a much more practical choice and use of clothing. By practical here I mean something that is more focused on use and functionality rather than aesthetics. Her flying outfit certainly fits this bill given the multitude of pockets, tools, etc. built directly into the outfit itself. Not only is it practical in terms of actual function (i.e. tools) but also in the general style and color patterns it uses as well. Additionally, the way Nausicaä switches between this outfit and the

other two is done in a very precise and calculated manner, further solidifying a deeper sense of practicality in terms of clothing.

Miyazaki subverts gendered clothing norms by depicting Nausicaä in clothing (i.e. her flying gear) that has a direct correlation to the duties and activities she performs on a daily basis. The long sleeves, gloves, and leg guards on Nausicaä's main outfit all function to help protect her from the toxic environment while she is out flying and exploring the jungle. By having ammunition sewn into her tunic as well a sword and satchel containing various other tools (e.g. insect charms, test tubes, flash grenades, etc.) attached to her belt and easily accessible at all times, Nausicaä's outfit indeed becomes much more practical and useful for her needs. In the few instances that Nausicaä is not actually already dressed in her flying gear, we see her quickly change back into it in order to better be prepared for what is to come. This stylistic and purposeful choice in clothing is drastically different from many other female characters we commonly see in princess films (i.e., Disney films) whose attire is a primary indicator of their status as royalty and thus designed with little attention to practical function. Given the fact that Nausicaä is often seen roaming around the toxic jungle and out flying on her glider, it would not make sense for her to be clad in a dress or skirt or other typically 'feminine' attire.

Although seemingly minor, this distinction is quite important in terms of how Miyazaki represents girlhood. By putting Nausicaä in more practical clothing, Miyazaki shifts the focus away from Nausicaä's gender (and even sex) and instead puts the focus on Nausicaä's character traits and positive attributes such as her courage, bravery, and her adventurous side. Nausicaä is able to go above and beyond her gender and shows time and time again how she is an expert in many things, none of which could be achieved without the presence of her specialized clothing. In the remainder of this chapter, I examine the use of clothing in *Nausicaä of the Valley of the*

Wind in three respects: color, changing outfits, and weapons and tools. In doing so, I uncover the strategies that Miyazaki uses to challenge conventional notions of girlhood in animated film through the use of feminized clothing. Ultimately, I suggest that by constructing Nausicaä as a girl character who is not constrained by hyperfeminine clothing choices, he allows us to envision a more fully-fledged idea of girlhood as a whole.

Color and style. The first and most obvious aspect of Nausicaä's clothing that stands out is the actual color itself. Throughout *Nausicaä* we see a departure from the use of common notions of color and representations of gender in the clothing of Nausicaä as well as many of the other girl characters. Whether intentional or not, Miyazaki seems to pull from a wide array of color choices and focuses more on a diverse palette of colors rather than a conventional one (i.e. shades of pink, purple, etc.) in which the girl characters' genders are presented through such choices. While of course Nausicaä is the most obvious example of this rejection of gendered color choices, the same patterns are replicated in the younger girls in Nausicaä's villages as well. Similar to most of the other characters, the young girls in Nausicaä's village sport a wide variety of different colored dresses; ranging from hues of blue to green to red, all paired with hats, tan pants, and boots. They are also often duller shades and less vibrant than the colors we later see in Nausicaä's more formal attire.

There is no clear pattern that connects the girls gender to their clothing choices (e.g. all girls wear pink), which at first glance may seem insignificant, but is in fact quite telling in comparison to other animated films both in Japan and in the United States. Take for example the color patterns and other feminine adornments used in films such as *Sailor Moon* or *Sleeping Beauty*. In these films, viewers are often keyed into the (girl) characters' gender by frequent

appearances of shades of pink or purple or other vibrantly colored clothing; in other words, colors and styles that are commonly viewed as more feminine. By contrast in *Nausicaä*, by stepping out of this binary in the clothing choices made for girl characters, we start to see a variation of girlhood in which clothing is not defined as feminine through the use of color and style, and gender is not defined by feminine clothing. Additionally, by showing a more diverse array of toned-down colors, and indeed colors that are often thought of as being more masculine (e.g. browns, greens, and dark blues) in nature, our attention is not drawn to the vibrancy or flashiness of extravagant articles of clothing but instead redirected to other aspects of the characters and plot.

It is important to note in this respect that we do not actually know that Nausicaä is a princess until she dons her more “formal” dress in the scene in which she is in the presence of her father. Although Nausicaä’s flying gear makes her stand out in regard to the fact she is the only one seen carrying various tools as a part of her outfit, the general color and style of her flying gear is similar in nature to the clothing worn by the other village members. Because of this, she tends to blend more easily in with those around her making it difficult for viewers to read either gender or class through Nausicaä’s choice in clothing. In doing so, Miyazaki portrays a variation of girlhood that directly contradicts common perceptions of girls (and women) as objects meant to be seen (Berger, 1972).

In the one scene in which we do see Nausicaä’s outfit change to something slightly fancier, Nausicaä is seen lying on the floor of her father’s bedchamber in her more formal dress wear. Being that she is the princess of The Valley of the Wind, her jeweled necklace and hat are slightly fancier than what was seen worn by other village girls earlier on in the film, but still similar in style (i.e. hat straps under chin, long dress with pants, etc.). The overall formality as

well as the use of richer colors and jewels further clue us into Nausicaä's status as royalty in the town, a class distinction that was previously not apparent due to her choice in clothing. In this particular outfit (i.e. formal wear), she is no longer just Nausicaä of The Valley of the Wind but *Princess* Nausicaä. This is in fact the only time that we see Nausicaä in her more formal, and indeed, gendered attire. It is only in the presence of her father, the king, and what could be considered other members of the court that we see Nausicaä willingly change out of her flying gear.

Outfit switching. The only other time we see Nausicaä out of her flying gear is when she makes the decision to use clothing as a disguise and is ultimately forced to change into something else. As mentioned before, the particular scene in which this happens is when Nausicaä is being held captive aboard a plane and needs to find a way to sneak out. The particular outfit she decides to switch into seems to be Pejite's royal version of Nausicaä's earlier formal blue dress. In doing so, Nausicaä takes on the role of the Pejite girl whose clothes she is wearing and the Pejite girl in turn takes Nausicaä's place.

By switching clothes to disguise Nausicaä in her escape, the film makes an interesting point about clothing and girlhood. In this scene, gender, and the way it is read on the body through the intentional use of clothing, becomes more performance than performativity (Butler, 1988; 1990). In using the red and pink outfit as a means to disguise herself to escape, Nausicaä actively puts on a performance of gender in which she (and the Pejite girl) in this scene are reduced, quite literally, to their clothing. They cease to be members of differing classes or villages but become rather one in the same: a generic (depiction of) "girls". By simply switching clothing, they are able to fool the guards with barely a second glance. Instead of looking at the

actual person—a look that would have surely given Nausicaä away had the guard looked at her face—the guard merely glances at the clothing and nothing more. To him, gender, and indeed girlhood, is read in the same way: it is the clothing that marks the individual, rather than the individual themselves. By including such a scene, Miyazaki plays with the way girlhood is gendered through clothing. The viewers are set up to not only make distinctions between the different character's relationships to clothing but also the ways this particular scene calls out the difference between gender as performance and gender as performative.

Another way in which we begin to see how girlhood is portrayed in terms of clothing practicality, and the switching of outfits in particular, is through the larger messages associated with each outfit. As touched on above, compared to the tunic, pants, and boots (i.e. her flying gear) Nausicaä wears when out exploring on her glider, her formal outfit is significantly more feminine and ornate. Although this may seem like a minor detail within the scope of the storyline, such a switch actually has much larger implications in regard to the way Nausicaä is depicted in terms of girlhood.

As we have learned, Nausicaä is not only the protagonist, but is actually a princess as well. By establishing a connection between Nausicaä's more formal dress and her formal status as a princess, a direct correlation is made between the two in regard to both how Nausicaä is viewed by those around her, as well as herself. In other words, the term 'princess' comes to be personified by the (formal) dress itself. Despite this correlation, Nausicaä seems to feel uncomfortable in this more formal dress and quickly changes out of it once she is no longer in the presence of her father; she does not see herself as a princess and makes no mention of adhering to this title at any point. Nausicaä is often cast in such a way to make viewers see her as much more than "just a princess." She is involved and active in every facet imaginable when it

comes to *The Valley of the Wind*. Constructing herself in this way, Nausicaä removes herself from any previous ideas we as viewers may have had about ‘typical princess stories’ like those often portrayed in Disney in which the princesses more often fit the damsel in distress role or do not have direct roles in caring for or protecting their people. Nausicaä is indeed much more than that; she has proved time and time again that she is adventurous, courageous, and determined, all attributes that are less typical of princesses and indeed, more typical of princes instead (England, Descartes, & Collier-Meek, 2011). If Nausicaä’s primary outfit in the film had been this formal dress and hat opposed to her flying gear, the entire storyline would be drastically different. In fact, we may not have had a story at all.

Weapons and tools. A large component of this flying gear that makes it so practical is the actual pockets, sections, and tools built into the clothing itself. Nausicaä’s outfit even includes a sword, a rifle, and various kinds of ammunition, pointing again to the practicality of her clothing. Given Nausicaä’s role as protector of her village and her more explorative side, such tools are essential to her character.

Although these items that Nausicaä wears give the impression of a war-like persona, in truth she uses them more as tools than as weapons. Very few of the so-called “weapons” are actually designed to be as such. Take for example her rifle; much of the ammunition she uses are either blanks, flares, or stunners – none of them actually appear to be live ammo that could be used to inflict any serious damage. Time and time again we instead see Nausicaä make use of these tools in order to protect herself and those around her including the insects that threaten her village; rarely do we ever see them used in a lethal fashion. The only exception to this is when Nausicaä flies into a rage after she finds that the Tolmekian’s have killed her father. Lord Yupa

grabs her sword as she tries to make a jab at Kurotowa (i.e. the man who killed her father), causing a deep cut to his hand. We see blood begin to run down the sword and Nausicaä's face instantly turns to disgust and horror as she begins to come down from her rage and realizes what she has done. This fleeting moment of violence consumes Nausicaä, and Nausicaä's horror and disgust with herself continues into the next scene as Lord Yupa finds her in her secret garden beneath the castle. Nausicaä is still visibly distraught, her head on her arms, crying. She cries out to Lord Yupa and confesses that she is scared of herself and what she has done. She is appalled that she was responsible for the deaths of multiple people as this is far from characteristic of her more calm and pacifist nature.

This scene serves as a reminder to Nausicaä that violence is not the answer. Never again do we see Nausicaä lash out in such a way, even in extreme cases such as when Kushana points a gun at her in the toxic jungle after they crash, and her life is in jeopardy. Instead, Nausicaä opts to use the tools she has at her disposal in order to pacify those around her, insects included, without having to adopt traditionally more masculine-coded traits such as aggression and violence.

Similarly, this theme of non-violence is one that frequently appears in many of Miyazaki's work. In an interview, Miyazaki was questioned why he specifically chose to put a girl (i.e. Nausicaä) as the main character of a film that centers around action and impending war; Miyazaki responded by saying

Nausicaa is not a protagonist who defeats an opponent, but a protagonist who understands, or accepts. She doesn't think about avenging her parent's death. She is someone who lives in a different dimension. Such (character) is a woman rather than a man. If it's a man, that's too weird. I feel that men (depend) more on words. I felt that, for the issues concerning nature, women deal with them by feeling. (Henwood-Greer, n.d.)

Instead of actively trying to place a girl or woman into a “man’s role” or with what are typically designated as more masculine traits (e.g. aggression, revengeful, fortitude, etc.), Miyazaki instead highlights the traits that Nausicaä possesses (i.e. compassion, strength, courage, caring, etc.) and uses them as key components to defining Nausicaä in the role of a hero. It is also through characters such as Nausicaä that Miyazaki seeks to heal a “fragmentation of body, mind, spirit, and environment” that he says consume humankind (Morgan, 2015, p. 173). Likewise, many scholars have picked up on this theme as well, citing an environmental and ecofeminist perspective as enabling Nausicaä to take on the role of a hero in a way that does not harm others or the earth they live on. (McCarthy 1999; Napier, 2001). As Miyazaki himself quoted above, and as I myself argue, it is particularly important that this role indeed be taken up by a girl (or woman). By placing Nausicaä in such a role, she not only stands out in her broad relationship to and with nature, but is also through her active role as hero, adventurer, and protector; this ultimately allows us as viewers to begin to expand our views on girlhood and the possibilities of what they can achieve.

Along this same line, Nausicaä is in fact the only character who shows any outright compassion towards the mutant insects of the toxic jungle, who are typically seen as the enemy by other humans. As mentioned above, she never uses her tools to harm them but instead simply to pacify them and help redirect them. This is seen in the very first scene when she rescues Lord Yupa by firing a flash grenade and then using her insect whistle to calm the rage of the insects. While indeed practical in their use, such depictions do not fit typical portrayals of girlhood. Rarely do we see girls out on adventures like the one Nausicaä finds herself in and even more

rarely do we see them with any kinds of weapons or tools that enable them to do so (Emerson, 2009).

Here, it is important to recall some of the main characters from Disney's earliest films such as Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty. All three characters take on some variation of the 'damsel in distress' role and are in need of a prince to come and save them rather than save themselves, let alone others, as we see Nausicaä do. The mere presence of weapons and other tools as part of Nausicaä's outfit are something we would never see as crucial components of Disney's princess outfits. Imagine if Snow White had a machete to help slash through the brush when she is lost in the woods, or if Sleeping Beauty had a thimble to protect her from the the spinning wheel; they would indeed be very different stories altogether.

Mask. Finally, the mask Nausicaä is often seen wearing while in the toxic jungle is quite telling not only in the ways we come to view the various aspects of her attire as directly suited for a purpose, but also in how it relates back to Nausicaä's character (i.e. qualities distinctive to Nausicaä) more generally. First and foremost, the mask functions as an air purifier. Without it, the toxic spores spread by the plants of the jungle would quickly start to have lethal effects on Nausicaä, or anyone who is caught not wearing one; thus, making it a crucial component of Nausicaä's attire. After all, it is these toxic spores from the jungle that are the main threat to the remaining villages as they spread closer and closer. Nausicaä's father is a prime example of the effects of the toxic spores. If he had not first been killed by the invading Tolmekian army, we are led to believe that he would have died shortly due to an infection caused by the toxic spores. We begin to see the true significance behind this a few scenes later when Nausicaä removes her mask in the toxic jungle after the Tolmekian airship she is on is shot down.

In this scene, the Tolmekian warships carrying Nausicaä as a hostage, along with other individuals from The Valley of the Wind, have just been shot down by Pejite pilots. In order to shout instructions to the others, Nausicaä removes her mask, causing panic among those from The Valley of the Wind; they desperately beg their princess to put her mask back on. From such a simple act, it is clear that Nausicaä values the lives of her people far more than she does her own. She does not hesitate in pulling off her mask as she realizes they cannot hear the help she is trying to give them.

The removal of her mask in this scene clues us into the way Nausicaä's mask can be seen as a particular tool in her development as a character, and ultimately, as a girl who is out exploring the world. Although the other characters in the scene also have on masks, Nausicaä's removal (of her mask) symbolizes flexibility in the way she uses her mask in a way that is reminiscent of her changing clothes as a way of changing her role in the story. In this way, it is something that can be picked up and put down or taken off as she sees fit. Comparatively, the masks for the other characters have come to be part of their bodies; there is no indication that they would ever even think at the possibility of removing their masks.

The mask for Nausicaä therefore allows her to be away from home and embody the role of the adventurer and hero in ways that the other characters cannot. She is the only one who willingly dares to venture into the toxic jungle or even more tellingly, actually removes her mask in this setting as well. This characterization is particularly telling if we recall the ways that girls in particular are often relegated to the home and domestic sphere. For Nausicaä, there is much more for her out in the world beyond, a place that she would not have access to if it weren't for her mask and other tools.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Nausicaä takes on the role of a hero in her quest to save her town. In doing so, we not only see her go on a quest that she ultimately succeeds at, but we see her do so in a way that is drastically different from many of the typical princess narratives that girls so often see. Nausicaä's practical clothing, with built-in pockets, weapons, and tools abounding, allows Nausicaä the chance to be the hero in ways that other (animated) girl characters rarely achieve. Although one could argue that Disney princesses such as Mulan or Pocahontas do indeed go on adventures, the end is ultimately the same: they are channeled back into narratives in which love, marriage, and duty win out.

For Nausicaä, this is far from the case. In the end, we are presented with a counternarrative of what princesses—and girls—can actually *do*. More importantly, we learn that being a princess really isn't all about the dress or ball gown. If nothing else, Nausicaä shows that alternative girlhoods can exist and counternarratives in which girls can indeed go out on an adventure, save the day, and stay true to what is important to them.

Chapter Three: Princess Mononoke

Miyazaki's 1997 film *Princess Mononoke* offers similarly alternative depictions of girlhood. In *Princess Mononoke*, San, the leading female protagonist, takes on a very different role in terms of her relationships with others. While we follow San and Ashitaka, the two leading protagonists in *Princess Mononoke*, as they attempt to stop the humans from killing an ancient forest spirit, their relationship becomes of particular importance. San and Ashitaka's relationship does not follow the typical story arc of heterosexual love and desire. Instead, San puts home and family above all else while simultaneously proving that a girl doesn't have to play the role of the damsel in distress to gain people's attention. In doing so, not only does San's character demonstrate that girls and boys truly can be just friends, but also resists larger patterns of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 2001) and heteronormativity (Berlant & Warner, 1998) in the process. In a world, full of princesses waiting to be saved by their princes in order to live happily ever after, San offers alternatives for girls who simply want to protect those they love and have an adventure while doing it.

Film Synopsis

In *Princess Mononoke* we follow the story of Ashitaka, the last prince of the ancient and dying clan of Emishi people. While trying to save his village from an ancient boar god turned demon, Ashitaka's arm becomes cursed and he is forced to leave his home in search of a possible cure back in the west in the land of the animal gods.

With hopes of finding salvation, Ashitaka makes his way across a rural Japan set in the Muromachi period. Along the way, we get various glimpses into the ongoing turmoil that is caused by Samurai control and seizure of land. Ultimately ending up in Iron Town, Ashitaka

finds himself in the middle of a battle between humans and the animal gods of the forest as they fight over the land and its resources.

It is during this time that Ashitaka comes across San, a fierce and independent girl who now lives among and as one of the wolf gods after being abandoned by her parents. Due to her so-called animalistic nature, the people of Iron Town have given her the title “Princess Mononoke,” or in other words, the “princess of the spirits of ghouls, beasts and ancient gods.” Fighting alongside the ancient gods and animals of the forest, San is determined to see the people of Iron Town and the war and hatred they bring with them gone from her land.

San goes head to head with Lady Eboshi, the ruler of Iron Town, as she attempts to thwart her (i.e. Lady Eboshi’s) plot to kill the Forest Spirit, the ancient god of life and death and protector of the forest. After shooting off the head of the Forest Spirit, it is San and Ashitaka who must work together to return the disembodied head in an attempt to stop the deterioration of the land and forest that Lady Eboshi’s act of violence has caused.

Although San and Ashitaka are able to finally make the Forest Spirit whole again and end the spread of death and decay that was consuming the land, we are left questioning if the Forest Spirit was in fact saved or simply put to rest. Ashitaka favors the former while San seems to believe the Forest Spirit is no more. Ultimately, our two heroes part ways and go back to their respective homes, San to the forest, and Ashitaka to Iron Town.

First Comes Love, Then Comes Marriage

In many animated films that center young women and girls, a large portion of the storyline is based on the young girl or princess waiting for her prince to come and save her so they can live happily ever after (e.g. Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, etc.). Even in the

films in which girls are slightly more active and adventurous (e.g. *Mulan*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, etc.), love and marriage tends to win out and we are still reminded that this seems to be the ultimate goal.

Recalling Currie's discussion of girls as "young women" (2009), in order for girls to truly *become* women, they were often explicitly trained to do so. A large percentage of this centered around preening young girls in order to ensure they were ready to wed. It was common for girls to be taught how to cook, clean the home, and look after children, all while keeping up their feminine appearances (i.e. neat hair, dresses, makeup, etc.) (Ivashkevich, 2011). One only has to think of debutante or purity balls in which girls are debuted to the world in ways that signal that they have officially crossed the threshold into womanhood and are well on their way to becoming full-time wives and mothers.

Inherent in this presentation are strong ideas of heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality. Whether it comes from the relationships they are encouraged to have or simply through the ways we discuss girls in relation to boys more generally (e.g. "he's picking on her, he must have a crush"), there is a strong underlying emphasis on heterosexuality that pushes us to believe that girls and boys can only be seen as couples, or at the very least leading down that path (Berlant & Warner, 1998). In other words, we have this idea in our head that someday the little girl will ultimately marry that little boy, and this is indeed what media tells us. In almost every single Disney princess movie the girl and boy end up together. The concept of "happily ever after" has become so packaged and monopolized that there is little room for any diversion from this narrative. Characters who do indeed show some form of deviance in this realm are often punished. This is even true in many Disney films. Take for example the way *Mulan* (*Mulan*, 1998) is shamed for not wanting to get married and instead goes off to war or the way

Jasmine (*Aladdin*, 1992) is seen as not fulfilling duties to her family and country because of her refusal to wed someone she doesn't love; the only difference here being that the Disney princesses fall back in line and ultimately "live happily ever after".

Alternative Relationships

Contrarily, Miyazaki constructs San as an overall positive character and although she does receive some criticism from the humans because of her association with the animal gods, she is not punished for her romantic independence. Her role as a girl character who exists outside the home and the domestic sphere in the ways we commonly think about them opens up avenues that allow her to disrupt ideas around girls as being constrained to the domestic sphere in preparation for becoming a wife and mother. In ways that are similar to his work in *Nausicaä*, Miyazaki instead centers other narratives in *Princess Mononoke* such as the battle to preserve nature. By having both San and Ashitaka part ways (despite Ashitaka's persistent attempts) at the end of the film, Miyazaki dismisses any notion we may have about this being a love story. As Miyazaki has said himself,

I've become skeptical of the unwritten rule that just because a boy and girl appear in the same feature, a romance must ensue. Rather, I want to portray a slightly different relationship, one where the two mutually inspire each other to live - if I'm able to, then perhaps I'll be closer to portraying a true expression of love.
(Trendacosta, 2014, para. 12)

Aside from being a simple genre shift (i.e. from romance to action film), such a move has large implications for the ways girls are portrayed in animated film in its daring to break free of heteronormative storylines in which the girl marries, and quite often *submits to*, the male lead in the film. Contrarily, in *Princess Mononoke*, San stays true to herself and represents a fierce

example of independence and autonomy in her refusal to rely on others, especially on men (i.e. Ashitaka).

Nevertheless, it is this relationship between San and Ashitaka and in particular, how San holds herself in relation to Ashitaka, that I find offers the most useful critique in regard to how Miyazaki portrays girlhood more broadly. In *Princess Mononoke*, we are given much more than just a story about the battle between man and nature; we are also given a more nuanced understanding of relationships between girls and boys through Miyazaki's presentation of San and the way she disrupts any normative ideals or stereotypes that may be put upon her in terms of love and romances. Broadly put, there is nothing domestic about San.

Boys and girls can be friends too. Given that the main storyline actually follows Ashitaka, we are not introduced to San until a couple of scenes in. The first time we see her, San is tending to Moro's wounds after she (i.e. Moro) has been shot by Lady Eboshi. The camera angles to take on Ashitaka's point of view; as the line of vision closes in, we see San turn, blood running down her face as she spits out the blood she has been sucking from Moro's wound in her attempts to remove the bullet embedded in Moro's shoulder. This first shot we see up close of San through Ashitaka's eyes is quite telling. It is clear that she is unlike any girl you would find in the villages back west in Ashitaka's village. San briefly locks eyes with Ashitaka, glaring at him, until she finally tells him to "go away", jumps on the back of one of the smaller wolves and rides away.

This first depiction of San rings of an animalistic nature and ferocity that leaves Ashitaka in awe and is truly unlike many "first encounter" scenes that are often depicted between characters of the opposite gender in other animated films. Take for example the initial scenes in

which Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty first meet the princes of the story. In both films, time seems to stand still as the pairs exchange long glances at one other, that is, until the girls timidly look away or cast their eyes down in a submissive gesture of power. The characters quickly find themselves in each other's arms as if they have known each other their whole lives and a budding romance quickly ensues.

San on the other hand has no qualms about her looks or how she appears to Ashitaka, she is after all, covered in blood. She shows little to no interest in Ashitaka and if anything, is more annoyed by his presence than anything else. There are no longing glances or coy smiles to be found. This first encounter between the stories main two protagonists is far from love at first sight, especially for San.

As will become a common theme, her attention and indeed her loyalty remain tied first and foremost to her family. Albeit seemingly minor, such a portrayal stands in stark contrast to many "typical" animated children's films in which we see the girl fuss over her looks anytime a boy comes into the picture. Take for example the effort that goes into making Mulan a suitable bride or the first-time Cinderella meets her prince, a scene that is preceded by magic and a fairy godmother in order to make her presentable. In both these films, as well as many other popular animated films that feature girls, a significant amount of time and attention is devoted to making sure girls fit a standard feminine picture of what will ultimately be their futures; or in other words, the role of the pretty wife and mother. We get none of this in Miyazaki's portrayal of San.

Many of the scenes that follow this first encounter between San and Ashitaka are quite similar in nature in that San shows Ashitaka little to no attention. Any time Ashitaka attempts to communicate with or approach San, San either ignores him completely or outright tells him off. While it appears clear that Ashitaka has some sort of interest in at least getting to know San, if

not debatably more as we soon learn, the same cannot be said for San in regard to Ashitaka, or any other human for that matter. She clearly sees herself as separate from the human world and wants nothing to do with those she views as enemies to her and her family.

It is not until we see Ashitaka take San from Iron Town after attacking Lady Eboshi that any real shift starts to take place in their relationship. Badly hurt, Ashitaka falls off his elk Yakul and it is San who stops one of her wolf brothers from attacking and killing him. She appears to show some level of compassion towards Ashitaka by saving his life; a level of humanity at this point in the film we have yet to see from San in regard to a(nother) human. This is all quickly curbed as San becomes furious with Ashitaka as he gains consciousness and attempts to advise her on what should be done in regard to the impending war between animals and humans. San is so infuriated that she threatens to end Ashitaka's life and places her dagger to his throat. The only thing that seemingly stops her from killing him is her surprise and bewilderment after she jumps back upon hearing Ashitaka tell her she is beautiful. It is clear this is the first time that San has heard anything of this nature. We can assume that San has had little to no contact with other humans, aside from fighting, let alone a boy around her age, given the fact she was given up by her parents at such a young age.

Not all boys are heroes, not all girls are damsels in distress. One way to further break this scene down is to hold it in comparison to other scenes from films of a similar nature. The entire scene, as well as the preceding, in terms of plot is a sort of battle in itself between the two main characters for the role of hero. In many action movies, especially the likes of those produced by Disney, a typical story arc consists of the male hero rescuing the damsel in distress

and the two living happily ever after. This is not the case when it comes to San and Ashitaka; San refuses to fit into the mold of damsel in distress.

For example, it is San who first takes action and adeptly scales the walls and roofs of homes in Iron Town in her quest to kill Lady Eboshi. The momentum flips as Ashitaka steps in, quite literally, between San and Lady Eboshi to prevent them from killing one another. Despite being wounded, the strength given to him as a result of his cursed arm allows him to make his way out of Iron Town with an unconscious San across his shoulders who has been knocked out in the battle. Soon after they make it out, the momentum of the scene flips once again as Ashitaka is finally overcome by his wound and San wakes up. It is from this point that we witness the aforementioned exchange between them in which San threatens to end his life. The simple fact that Miyazaki makes it unclear who the actual “hero” or simply who is the more dominant character in these particular scenes is already disruptive of the view that men play the hero and women are those who need rescuing.

Aside from flipping the narrative more generally, this particular reversal of roles is important to point out because it is often this very scene, where the man swoops in and saves the woman, that leads to a budding romance (Whitley, 2013). Such narratives rely heavily on gendered stereotypes and it is thus not much of a stretch to fall into larger narratives that once again position men and women, or in this case boys and girls, as constantly in relation to one another romantically. Additionally, putting the girl (i.e. San) in a more active role and not as the damsel in distress, Miyazaki avoids positioning girls as simply objects for men (Lamarre, 2009), a detail we are once again clued into by San’s reaction (i.e. surprise, anger, disgust, etc.) to Ashitaka calling her beautiful.

Despite such an off-putting interaction (i.e. San threatens to kill him), Ashitaka's interest in San nonetheless continues throughout the film. At one point, he even admits to wanting to take San away from the forest to live the rest of their lives out together as "normal" humans. Moro, San's mother, quickly scoffs at this idea, insisting that San has no interest in him and for the most part, this appears to indeed be quite true. It is clear that for San, her family and the forest are the two most important things in her life. After all, Sans battle with the humans to protect them is in fact the only reason her and Ashitaka come into contact in the first place. At no point in the film do we see any inclination that San wants to start a life with Ashitaka. In truth, we see her do the exact opposite when Moro tells her that Ashitaka wants to spend his life with her. Moro says, "Do as you must. You know, that boy wanted to share his life with you", to which San replies, "I hate him! I hate all humans" (Miyazaki, 1997). As she says this, San cries out in frustration and buries her face in Moro's fur. It is clear that she is both frustrated and perplexed at the idea of Ashitaka having feelings for her, especially given her adverse relationships with humans thus far. For Ashitaka, it seems that wooing San and making her a part of his life has become just as much of a goal as saving himself from the curse.

San on the other hand, is still wholeheartedly invested in saving her home and family at all costs. At best, she is disinterested with Ashitaka's attempts to win her over. It is only because Ashitaka has shown her kindness that she seems to give him any kind of second thought. For San, the notion of romance plays no role in her interactions with Ashitaka. In her mind, it would seem there is little to no interest, let alone time, to think about such things as boys. In fact, her relationship with Ashitaka seems to stress her out more than anything else simply because it is so out of the ordinary and alien to her. In some ways, this narrative fits quite well with typical coming of age stories of boys and girls learning to find themselves and negotiating friendship,

love, and even hatred along the way. Indeed, San seems to be experiencing many of these same things, but not to the extent that Ashitaka seems to be. Although he is invested in saving the forest and animals as well, he is further removed from the problems because he does not consider himself part of nature and thus has more time to focus on other things, like his relationship with San, without showing a semblance of guilt or concern as far as his particular story arc goes. Although San and Ashitaka promise to stay in touch in the end, San still goes back to the forest and declines to join Ashitaka in the 'human world'.

Conclusion

By creating a character in San who is not only smart, agile, and compassionate, but fiercely independent as well, Miyazaki created a young girl who has no interest in a "happily ever after" and truly does not need anyone to save her. Staying true to herself and choosing family above all else, San does not give in to the narrative commonly seen in princess films in which the girl falls in love with the boy and they ride happily ever after off into the sunset. Instead, Miyazaki shows us that girls and boys can indeed just be friends. In doing so, he not only flips the trope of the hero and the damsel in distress, but also offers an alternative version, or counternarrative, to how girls can exist in this world, without the need of a boy or a man to complete them.

Chapter Four: Kiki's Delivery Service

In *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1984), Miyazaki again pushes back against common representations of girlhood in some very interesting ways. In particular, Kiki's ability to move freely both among society and from location to location puts her in a rare position in which girlhood and narratives of autonomy and independence are intertwined in such a way that poses them as positive attributes rather than constraints tied to her gender.

Unlike *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* and *Princess Mononoke*, both of which are films based off of Miyazaki's original work, *Kiki's Delivery Service* is based on a 1985 children's novel of the same name by Eiko Kadono (Camp & Davis, 2007). Nevertheless, Miyazaki didn't let this stop him from putting his own personal touch on it. As Miyazaki writes, "As movies always create a more realistic feeling, Kiki will suffer stronger setbacks and loneliness than in the original [book]" (2006, p. 6). Miyazaki goes on to say that he:

...was inspired by the struggle of young cartoonists to find work. It's not simply about making money and earning a living — everybody does that. It's about living your own life: how do you assert your individuality in this world? I think that's what everybody was concerned about when we made that film. (Jolin, 2011, para. 15)

This central theme of individuality and indeed, independence, remains central throughout *Kiki's Delivery Service*.

From the very beginning, Miyazaki was clear that *Kiki's Delivery Service* was specifically targeted towards young girls (2006). For Miyazaki, achieving independence wasn't merely about being able to support oneself; it was much more than that. It was the "self-realization" that comes after, when girls have to learn to truly become comfortable with themselves and the various ways they fit into the world, which is key in defining the line between dependence and independence (McCarthy, 2002). This narrative is one that is clearly

defined through Kiki's struggles in her new position. In order to show this, I pay particular attention not only to Kiki, but also the other girl characters portrayed in the film as well and how they are held in relation to freedom of movement; for Kiki, her broom becomes of particular importance in this regard as well.

Film Synopsis

In *Kiki's Delivery Service*, we follow the story of Kiki, a young 13-year-old who has just left her small country home in search of a city to call her own while she completes her final year of training in order to become a witch. In a typical coming of age narrative with a twist, we follow Kiki as she struggles making friends, finding a job, and simply fitting in, all while completing her final year of training.

The year out on her own is meant to symbolize not only her transition into becoming a witch but also a transition into adulthood; the ultimate goal is for Kiki to find a city she can move to and take on a more permanent role as a resident witch. In order to achieve this goal, she must overcome her apprehension and fear at being out on her own.

Kiki uses the only power she has, flying, to start her own delivery business in hopes of being able to fully support herself. As she progresses through this journey she has to overcome many obstacles; ranging from things as simple as a common cold to the loss of her magic and ability to fly. In the end, Kiki overcomes her fears and saves her friend Tombo. We are left with high hopes that she is finally on the right path to finding success and happiness as she finishes out her year of training.

Girlhood as Limiting

Although in the end Kiki does ultimately seem to successfully navigate her newfound independence, this freedom of movement, or at least in the particular path that Kiki takes, is not always so unconstrained when it comes to girls and girlhood. As I mentioned in earlier discussions of girlhood, in many cases girls are often set on and pressured into very specific paths that lead them into becoming wives and mothers. It is for this reason that girls are so often relegated to and associated with the domestic sphere (Ivashkevich, 2011).

Common household items such as the broom, mop, sponge, or apron come to be defined as domestic tools of labor in which girls and women have a direct correlation. Given this prevalence of women as stay at home moms and housewives, it is no wonder that the broom in particular has become femininely gendered in many ways. Furthermore, it is from this history that the jump was made to further associating women with brooms with witches as well. This symbolism of witchcraft's connection to domesticity is not lost on Miyazaki as is seen by the amount of focus put on Kiki's broom as a tool for independence.

Despite such seemingly positive connotations regarding Kiki (and her broom), this transition from girls to women (i.e. wife and mother) is not always so simple for other young girls. More often than not, such a deviation from what could be called the more traditional path to girlhood is often used as a way not only to ultimately define girlhood but also as a way to punish girls who do not conform to normative notions of "true" girlhood. It is in this way that Kiki indeed stands out in her refusal to align with traditionally held notions of control and constraint for young girls.

Freedom of Movement

Given that *Kiki's Delivery Service* is a movie about a young witch who can fly, movement and flight in particular are of course key elements in Kiki's story. By giving Kiki the ability to fly, Miyazaki does much more than simply allow her freedom of movement in the physical sense, but rather opens up possibilities for larger conversations about autonomy and movement in terms of a more metaphorical definition. For Kiki, this freedom of movement comes prominently into play when she leaves her parents' home to pursue her career as a witch in a new city, and is faced with having to adjust to essentially being the "new kid in town."

Broom. In this scene, Kiki is elated over finally being able to use the new broom she has made to travel to her new home for training. Her elation is quickly cut short when her mother urges her to leave her broom behind and take her old broom instead:

Kokiri: Dear, are you going with that broom?
 Kiki: Yes, I just made it. Isn't it cute?
 Kokiri: It won't do; it's so small. Take Mother's broom.
 Kiki: Oh, no! It's so old.
 Kokiri: That's why it's just right. It's been through a lot, and will weather any storm. Take it, OK?
 Kiki: But I worked so hard to make this one. Right, Jiji?
 Jiji: I think your mother's broom is better...
 Kiki: Backstabber!
 Dora: Kiki, when you get settled in your new town, you can make your own, can't you?
 Kiki: (Resignedly) Well... (switches brooms with Kokiri).
 (Miyazaki, 1984)

While we can assume Kiki's mother (Kokiri) is speaking with only the best of intentions, we already start to see ways in which an authoritative dynamic between parents and children begins to play out. Although not said outright, tones of authority are implicit in Kokiri's word choice in the way she uses age and tradition as a means to back up her insistence that Kiki not take the

broom she made herself; in her view, it is only the “old” weathered broom that will ultimately lead Kiki to success. Kiki’s hurt and disappointment can be clearly seen not only in her words but also through her body language and facial expressions as well. Kiki’s excitement over the broom she made quickly turns to a frown and we see her slouch inward at her mother’s suggestion.

For Kiki, it is not simply just a broom. The broom itself is the first thing she has made on her own, an accomplishment that she is indeed quite proud of. She didn’t make the broom to act as proof to her mother or friends, but to prove to *herself* that she was indeed ready to leave home. We know this is something Kiki is deeply worried about from the previous scene in which she confides in her father that she is scared to fail. By her mother challenging her in this regard, her first independent act en route to adulthood is seemingly crushed, and failure would seem to be closer to Kiki than she would like. The broom thus becomes symbolic for Kiki not only in terms of becoming a witch, but also being able to go out and succeed on her own terms: it is her key to being able to freely move, and ultimately, autonomy.

Symbolic connotations aside, the broom for Kiki also quite literally represents her ticket out. Not only is her broom the means by which she arrives at her next home, but it also becomes essential in the delivery business Kiki starts in order to support herself. All witches have a specialty of some sort, and for Kiki, this specialty is flying. Using her broom to fly even further solidifies the importance of the broom itself in Kiki’s pursuit of autonomy through her freedom of movement.

By taking the broom, an item entrenched in histories of both domesticity and witchcraft, Kiki transforms it into a positive tool of labor and one in which she is freer and less confined by household duties or obligations. In doing so, Kiki additionally flips the way we look at children

and labor more generally. Work in this example becomes an essential and positive facet of Kiki's transition into adulthood. Although at times we do see Kiki lament over the fact that she has to work, she is generally optimistic that she can use her talents not only to support herself but to help others as well. This is in fact precisely how she meets many of the characters she becomes close with in the film (e.g. Osono, Ursula, Madame, etc.). It is hard to say whether or not these characters would have played key roles in Kiki's life had she not had her broom to aid her in her delivery business or if they would have even have met her in the first place.

The broom once again becomes significant at the end of the film when Kiki is forced to overcome her doubts and fears in order to save Tombo. Here, Kiki's skill with her broom again comes into play in that Kiki is the only one who is able to reach Tombo up in the air as he hangs off the side of the crashed dirigible, her broom being essential as a tool for his survival. But much like we have seen before, the broom also stands in as a symbol for Kiki's transition into adulthood. It isn't simply about Kiki being able to use her broom to save Tombo but about her overcoming her internal doubts and fears that she is failing as well. In a way, this last major scene is a test for Kiki: will she break or will she accept herself, reservations or not, in order to truly overcome the sense of liminality she finds herself encompassed within. Miyazaki also flips the script from more traditional coming-of-age narratives in that it is Kiki (a girl) who saves the boy (i.e. Tombo), thus further "solidifying her passage on the road to genuine independence" (Napier, 2005, p. 164).

Kiki's broom plays a pivotal role in defining the character through freedom of movement, and as such participates, I suggest, in Miyazaki's challenge to conventional notions of animated girlhood. Kiki's movement between locations in the film reinforce her construction as a girl character who goes beyond the constraints of gender norms. There are two main locations in

which the film takes place: Kiki's childhood home in the countryside and the city of Koriko. Although the majority of the storyline takes place in the latter location, it is still important to acknowledge what Kiki's movement from country to city tells us.

Narratives that signal personal growth and change through a move from the country to the city are commonplace. The message that is often conveyed as these characters find success, whether socially or more individually, is that cities represent the perfect place for change to be seen as a positive manifestation as they learn to fit in and be more like those individuals who live in the city. I would be remiss not to acknowledge that there is of course some truth to this depiction given Kiki's overall success. Yet Kiki's success and independence seems to be more dependent on her actual rejection of these characters and norms as represented by the other young girls in the film. By placing Kiki in a location (i.e. Koriko) in which she not only comes face to face with other representations of girlhood, but actually *dismisses* them, Miyazaki creates a character in which alternative or counternarratives to normalized girlhood not only exist, but prevail.

Other girls. Kiki is constantly held in contrast to other girls, and even boys, who are characterized as around the same age as her. We see this comparison first play out in Kiki's going away party when Kiki is held contrasted with her friends from home when, for example, one of her friends suggests that Kiki take her (i.e. her mother's) broom. For the other girls, the prospect of Kiki leaving home and going out on her own doesn't seem to truly sink in. Their conversation mostly tends towards boys and crushes and while Kiki joins in on this conversation, she is also insistent that she will be doing much more than fawning over boys. Kiki's insistence that her life path will encompass more than such a heteronormative depiction of girlhood allows,

brings her into close alignment with Nausicaä and San, and suggests that Miyazaki has long centered independence as an important characteristic in his construction of girlhood.

This same level of surprise is exhibited by the girls in Kiki's new city as well. They are surprised by the fact that Kiki is working at such a young age, a drastic difference held in comparison to their seemingly more carefree lives cruising around the city with boys and hanging out at the beach. Because of this, Kiki begins to feel even more like an outsider; so much so that she automatically begins to cut off ties to those around her age (e.g. Tombo). It is at this same point in the storyline that Kiki loses her ability to fly, which results from her own personal struggles and lack of confidence about where she stands in the larger social order in her new home. In fact, this particular scene comes almost immediately after one in which Kiki is directly shown in comparison to one of the other girls in town, giving us a clear sense of Kiki's standing among her new peers.

In this previous scene, Kiki is asked to deliver a pie to a customer as part of her delivery business. Running late, caught in a storm, and utterly distraught, Kiki arrives at her destination only to find that the customer, another girl, is dismissive if not altogether rude at the prospect of being bothered to sign for a gift she makes clear she does not want. Standing face to face, we see how differently these two characters are depicted in terms of their clothing, hair, and bearing. The other girl answers the door dressed in a ruffled pink party dress, jewelry and manicured hair; meanwhile, Kiki is wearing the one black dress she owns, and is completely drenched head to toe from the rain. These differences recall many of Kiki's past struggles with fitting in, and as viewers we are aptly reminded that the path Kiki is following is very different from the other girls around her.

The level of disparity in terms of freedom of movement is also subtly present in their exchange as well. We are reminded of Kiki's going away party, one of the last true scenes in which any level of parental authority is displayed in relation to Kiki. Although Kiki was indeed frustrated with her mother's suggestion, she still left and went out on her own. For the other girl, this level of parental authority still determines her role at home and in relation to other characters. Even in a character who occupies a drastically different level of society than Kiki, freedom of movement is still key, albeit in a slightly different way. The only difference in this case, is that the other girl has not found, or been given, the same level of independence that Kiki has in order to explore her status as a girl. In the end, I would argue that this scene is in fact quite positive, despite Kiki's dismay, because it sets up Kiki's fall and then rise back to confidence as she learns to truly be comfortable with herself and in her position in the end.

Before we get to this point in the story, we see this level of comparison between Kiki and other girls her age called into question time and time again. Until the very end, most of Kiki's closest friends are in fact adults (e.g. Osono, Ursula, Madame, etc.), and I would suggest that this is not by coincidence. Being "the new kid" in town, Kiki is automatically categorized as an outsider, or othered. The fact that she came without her parents, is working to support herself, and living on her own all factor into further othering Kiki from those around her because while although she herself may not see it, she is in fact the new adult in town, rather than kid. As outside viewers, we are able to see the dual-sided nature of Kiki's position. For those around her, especially girls around the same age, Kiki's mere presence as an independent person is enough to mark her as somehow not quite fitting into typical narratives of girlhood. In doing so, Miyazaki delivers an interesting perspective on independence; for Kiki on a personal level, we can see she is indeed struggling and it takes the length of the movie before she seems convinced in her

abilities to not only support herself, but also do so in a way in which she is truly happy as well. On the other hand, from the perspective of others her age, and indeed many other people in town, Kiki as they know her (i.e. the witch in town) is already independent in and of herself as soon as she comes to town on her own.

Ursula. While girls around Kiki's age come to be seen as one possible path that Kiki could possibly take in her development of a particular girlhood (i.e. one that leads to becoming wives and mothers), Ursula, Kiki's slightly older artist friend steps in as being yet another path. Miyazaki depicts Ursula in such a way that we are reminded of Kiki and possibly look to the future and what she may become a few years in the future. Ursula is portrayed as a young woman, most likely in her early 20's, who is making a living on her own as an artist. We learn from her conversations with Kiki that much like Kiki, she came to the city herself when she was quite young to pursue art and comes to the woods by herself to find inspiration in the summers.

In many ways, Ursula's character acts as a type of foil to the other girl characters we encounter in the film. Although one could chalk this up simply to Ursula's age as she is indeed older and potentially more comfortable with herself because of this, she still exists to create possibilities in terms of the ways we can imagine Kiki further developing as a character. In many ways Ursula's character actually pushes back against normative ideas of girlhood even more so than Kiki's does. In addition to the fact that she left home at an early age, she also lives by herself in the woods, is not afraid to speak her mind, and dresses in less feminine clothing (e.g. jeans and plain shirt) - a point that a passerby doesn't hesitate to point out, saying he mistook her for a man simply because of this. Altogether, Miyazaki's depiction of Ursula seeks to remind us that girlhood does indeed come in many different shapes and forms. For Ursula, her carefree

attitude (dress included) and independence are key in defining who she is as a character with no thoughts given, consciously or otherwise, to how she may fit in or be viewed by those around her. In this way, girlhood can come to be defined less of a constraint for Ursula and possibly even Kiki in the future as well if she continues to follow the path she is currently on.

Conclusion

In following Kiki's story as she leaves home to finish her training to become a witch, we follow a story not in which Kiki's magical powers take precedence, but one in which the everyday struggles and worries of girlhood are highlighted. Kiki's overall ability to move freely both in terms of having access to her broom but also the ways she moved more freely between different levels of society were crucial in establishing Kiki as an independent and autonomous young girl. Overall, Miyazaki's depiction of Kiki is one in which a young girl was not only given the opportunity to go out on her own to try and make a name for herself, but one in which she ultimately succeeds and stays true to herself in the process.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This project used feminist textual analysis and close readings of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), *Princess Mononoke* (1997), and *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), three prominent films written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki, in order to gain better understandings of the way girls and girlhood are portrayed in animated film. Playing off the theories and scholarship of both girlhood studies and feminist film theory, I was able to situate these films within a common narrative of the ways girls are often displayed in film as domestic, dependent, and hyperfeminine, roles in which often directly align with larger conceptions of the way we as a society have historically viewed girlhood. Often in direct contrast to this, Miyazaki's girl characters stand out as offering a counternarrative to other representations of girlhood, and ultimately, of gender by their refusal to be limited or defined; specifically, girls' connections to and with clothing, relationships, and freedom of movement became crucial in constructing this counternarrative of girlhood.

For Nausicaä, we have seen how the practical side of clothing becomes crucial in her role as both a hero and simply as a girl who likes to go out and explore her surroundings. By placing her in clothing (i.e. clothing with pockets and places for weapons and tools) which allows her this freedom, Miyazaki creates a space for girls, and princesses in particular, to truly have adventures; there are no lavish skirts or glittery ball gowns to get in her way.

In a similar fashion, this same level of freedom and independence is seen in the way San from *Princess Mononoke* holds herself in relation to Ashitaka. For San, her home and family come before all else; she has little to no interest in being caught up in narratives of love and romance. Her refusal to not only ignore Ashitaka's advances but to ultimately go separate ways in the end, solidifies this fact above all else. In doing so, we see a much more nuanced

understanding of girlhood, in which heterosexual love and desire play no significant role in our understandings of San's character.

And finally, there is Kiki; Miyazaki's depiction of Kiki is the ultimate portrayal of a young girl finding her way. For Kiki, freedom of movement, and the ability not only to leave home in the literal sense, but to also move through a society in a way in which a positive understanding of her character can still be held, is crucial in our understandings of how we come to define girlhood. Although she may have struggled along the way, Kiki shows us a rare glimpse into a version of girlhood that is not ultimately tied down by the domestic realm, social pressures, or failure.

Together, these films and their subsequent portrayal of girls pick up on key elements of what is commonly used to determine girlhood in order to paint a bigger picture of the various ways girlhood comes to be defined in the first place. Although Miyazaki does seem to step outside the narrow boxing in of girls in relation to gender, this isn't to say that his particular depictions are better or superior to those we may see in Disney or other animated films; rather, they represent a larger and more nuanced possibility for alternative forms of girlhood. In doing so, he has destabilized the very process of how we come to think gender is constructed in the first place. In providing a window into such alternatives or differing depictions, Miyazaki has continually given a wider breadth of individuals the chance to see themselves represented in animated film in significant and meaningful ways.

In the current era of globalization, these particular films continue to stand out in a world in which animated film from around the globe has been dispersed on a much more extensive level. One simply has to look at the prevalence of anime currently being circulated in the United States or conversely, the influence of Disney's animation in countries outside the United States;

furthermore, take the simple fact that I, myself a United States citizen, has been empowered to embark on a thesis in which Japanese anime is central as yet another example of animated films global influence.

Even so, such a global scope can also have its downsides as well. Although it is clear that Miyazaki does indeed offer, at the very least, a different perspective into girls and girlhood, some scholars have pointed out that Miyazaki is simply recreating a different set of tropes in which adventurous, independent girls become the “new normal” in the ways we think about girlhood. Likewise, one could also question the role of commodification of these very characters and storylines as a way to sustain such a global reach and influence.

Nonetheless, it is my hope that this project and others like it will serve as starting points for deeper levels of analysis into the ways we as a society, both here in the United States, as well as globally, construct and reconstruct categories of identity such as “the girl” and girlhood. It is not only important, but indeed *essential* to analyze media texts, and in particular, animated film, a genre which has often been overlooked because of its associations with virtue and innocence. As a way to determine the overall effects films such as those by Hayao Miyazaki have on young children, and girls in particular, it is my hope that I will be able to continue this research at the doctoral level by working firsthand with girls in order to parse out the narratives and messages they receive from these films.

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