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Castle of Cagliostro Research: Movement, Fluidity, and Camera Depth

When you ask the average casual viewer what their favorite Hayao Miyazaki film is, they will likely list one from when Studio Ghibli was at its height of popularity. When you ask the average casual viewer why they like that movie, more often than not the answer will usually include the way Miyazaki's Ghibli movies handle environmental movement and visual texture.

When I say, "environmental movement" and "visual texture" I refer to the way that the environments and objects within the Ghibli films usually interact with the characters to provide a lifelike effect. I don't mean lifelike as in realistic. I refer to how the viewer can more easily process these movements and relate them to their own real life sensory experiences. Yet, with one of Miyazaki's earlier films, *The Castle of Cagliostro*, there's a groundwork for the future Ghibli films to come, but the way some of the characters, objects, and environments are animated are less fluid. Though in this way, it doesn't make them any less appealing to watch. In some ways, "less is more" in terms of motion.

According to Lamarr on his writing which talks about cinematism and animatism, he first explains how Otomo Katsuhiro's *Steamboy* first has a scene where the viewing of the scenery

through the train window looks like a diorama, as though it was made of layers. He cites Wolfgang Schivelbush's argument that with the rise of trains came the rise of trains in the movies, since when you look out of the window through the train window, you are seeing the world go by. In a sense, the train acts as a moving camera in this instance. But where Lamarr contrasts with other cinematism critics like Paul Virilio, is that he notes *Steamboy* as mentioned before separates the landscape into layers, instead of wholly putting the audience's point of view as the camera for a moving apparatus, like a bomb or a speeding train. In Lamarr's work, he defines animetism as "the separation of the image into multiple planes. The result is a multiplanar image". We as the viewer have a higher suspension of disbelief because we are easily aware that animation does not reflect reality, so we're able to easily get further drawn into the scenery.

To bring it to what I initially claim about Miyazaki's films, there is a sense of motion that is inherently unrealistic, but that doesn't make it impossible to sense to the viewer. Lamarr claims animetism offers not simply a way of how we see the world and environment works, but also how we live in it, saying "animetism not only implies a different way of *perceiving* the world, but also promises a different way of *thinking* about technology and inhabiting a technology-saturated world". Even more interesting is how animetism is meant to move. It's not meant to put your eye into depth in the world, so Lamarr says, it's supposed to put your eye head on the image, or in between in the images, in something that Lamarr calls the animatic interval. Most animated images when it comes to the background and foreground look as though they have been placed gently on top of each other, thanks to the layering of cels.

But I wouldn't say depth is completely absent, even if there may be less of an emphasis on it as Lamarr claims. Just as layers of rings can be stacked on top of each other to create the illusion of depth, so can movie animation planes create depth with plenty of background and other environment paneling on top of each other. For example, when Fujiko is disguised as a reporter and heading down the stairs to the basement where the printing presses are located, the perspective creates a sense of depth that draws the viewers eyes to the top of the stairs before she heads down them. Earlier, when Clarisse is fleeing the Count's men just before Lupin and Jigen give chase, we see them rapidly approach the audience perspective before they speed off into the distance. The size of both of their cars creates a very prominent effect of depth on the viewer's eye.

Would this initial scene be considered an effect of one-point perspectivism? It's actually a sort of combination between one- and two-point perspectives. The two fixed points in the scene are from when Clarisse is driving towards the viewer's perspective, and the horizon where they drive away from the viewer, and Lupin. The camera pulls the viewer from a single one-point view over to the next, to give the impression of being dragged along a multi-point perspective, much like how animetism in general relies on multiple stacked images moving in tandem.

Lamarr claims Miyazaki is a master of motion. In *The Castle of Cagliostro*, nowhere else is this more evident than during the opening car chase sequence. Lupin's car slides around on the road, eventually riding up along the side of a hill on the side of the road to cut off another car that is chasing yet another car that's being driven by a runaway bride. The animation of the car,

especially when it just starts up to give chase, isn't very fluid at all. It skids and slides around on the road, but I think the lack of frames in the movement only contributes to the weight and how fast the car is moving. It's generally common in this film for most close-up sequences in this film to be animated fluidly, while shots with less focus on the foreground, or for moments where there's meant to be an intended comedic effect, there's less fluid animation. The way limited animation is employed here is meant to give a further impact to the scene, so that the audience can process how the objects or environment are meant to move rather than how they actually move.

To contrast, the opening title sequence of the film is very laid back and slow, especially when it's set to a slow ballad. Lupin and Jigen are driving along the countryside, while the cars and boats go by. The vehicles move along the planes without any extra needed motion, they mostly just glide along. It's meant to give the audience a moment to breathe before the action starts to pick up.

Later when he tries to climb up to meet Clarisse, he climbs up the roof, only to quickly slide back down. While he's climbing the roof, his movement is quick and smooth, and the roof moving past him is fluid as well, up until the moments where he's about to fall, where his movement switches to being more limited. Then Lupin falls back down the roof, he ends up moving in a strikingly limited manner, having only a few frames while he's falling down the roof. Like I said before, this instance is more so meant to emphasize a comedic effect. It's easier to animate and more effective to the audience to have less frames during a lighthearted comic

relief moment, since the lack of motion in between character poses gives the audience less time to react, and the abrupt transition would add to the comedy.

Throughout most of his film work, Miyazaki has been resistant to implementing modern digital techniques in his work. Later, a fellow animation director, Oshii Mamoru, criticized Miyazaki's adherence to these traditional standards. Miyazaki, according to Lamarr, stylizes his films in a "manga-film" style. But Oshii finds that this style has its own flaws, "The manga-film, in fact, because of its methodological limitations, points to a transitional form that cannot ripen into 'cinema'". In short, Miyazaki's comic-style of animation doesn't truly evolve into a movie because of the limitations behind manga-film style.

I think Oshii has a point with Miyazaki's animation style, even if I disagree with some of it. Where I disagree is that Miyazaki's works could never become cinema. According to Lamarr's words, true cinematism has the viewer observe depth from the perspective of the moving projectile. But I think that the viewer as a silent observer deserves to be taken into account. Like Fujiko towards the end of the film, the audience is following the action with a camera of their own. It may not be that the viewer needs to follow the motion through the mobile apparatus's eyes, they just need to follow its motion.

But where I agree with Oshii is on Miyazaki's manga-esque inspiration. It has a distinct simplistic feel to it, where in most aspects the viewer is instead watching a storybook play out on the screen, much like a pop-up book. Given the quality of the films, however, I think this

simplicity owes more to the limitations of the technology that is used in Miyazaki's style within these films, and of cel animation in general than with anything else.

The most notable example of this simplistic style I find is the use of lighting. With cel animation films, the animators need to paint each detail of the parts that need to be animated of scene out exactly, with little to no post editing. The shading, the lighting, the colors, everything must be exactly as the animator paints it. I find a great example in the wedding scene during *The Castle of Cagliostro*, just after Lupin has crashed the wedding, spooked the wedding guests, and revealed himself as the disguised priest to the Count.

When Lupin has exposed the Count of Cagliostro's counterfeit money printing schemes, he makes his escape with Clarisse after setting off plenty of fireworks. The effects from these fireworks are bright and colorful. But all of the lighting on the rockets and fireworks are just one color per spark and firework particle. They just have the illusion of brightness because the colors of the sparks contrast and work well with each other, and they're rapidly layered on top of each other too.

Even before the fireworks are set off, the lighting under the cape below Lupin's jacket is only two colors. One for light, and one for the contrast in shading. This pattern of lighting is present on just about everything in the frame. The rockets, one shade bright yellow, the other is black. Lupin's green jacket, most of it is green being lit up by the rockets while the back part of it is darkened for shading contrast. Clarisse's wedding dress is partially shaded yellow to reflect

the lighting from the rockets. The only area that doesn't immediately go for this standard of two-toned contrasting shading is the flame from the rockets, which I don't see as two-toned shading but instead a form of two-toned coloration. Here the rocket flame's orange and yellow instead highlight the intensity of the rocket flames instead of the juxtaposition between light and darkness.

As a technique, this style of cel-shaded lighting is very time consuming for animation, and very expensive as well. To contrast, Shinkai Makoto's films such as *5 Centimeters per Second* or *Your Name* use a post-edited lighting that shines down on the world and characters. It's bright, colorful, and gives the scenes a sort of luminescent sheen, almost as if the sun or the stars themselves are shining down on the world. But even with the environmental lighting being multi-faceted and colorful, the lighting on the characters is as simple as Miyazaki's two-toned shading. The colors are merely less stark in contrast when it comes to shading and lighting, as they look more subtle.

Simple shading in Miyazaki's films doesn't necessarily mean that every single aspect of his films is simple though. The backgrounds present in his films are nearly always rendered in detail, from the lost Roman city at the end of *The Castle of Cagliostro* to the inside of the clock tower at the final climactic confrontation with the Count. But in a sense, detailed backgrounds further emphasize the "manga-film" style that Miyazaki had intended. I feel like some of the simpler ways Miyazaki animates and directs his work helps to make the more detailed areas like the backgrounds or the texture movement stand out even more so.

In regard to texture and movement, borrowing from what Lamarr had initially said about animetism, the way different textures are animated offer another way of thinking and existing within the world, one that only the director of that animated film has created. In my own interpretation, the way that people can think about and exist in the world doesn't just come from the audience viewpoint, but from the motion of each object as it is animated. For *The Castle of Cagliostro* as well as plenty of Ghibli films to come after it, the food has a unique place. The spaghetti noodles flow this way and that, adding to the texture of how spaghetti typically feels rather than how it looks. Another example is when Lupin is swept away by the castle's aqueducts and is trying to swim back up. There the water is falling in a fluid manner, and the shining highlights on top add to the water's texture.

While the spaghetti and the aqueducts are examples of how fluid movement can add to the texture of an animated film scene, a lack of fluid motion can also contribute as well. In the aqueduct scene, there's a brief shot where Lupin is struggling to swim back up. While it's slightly comedic in tone, his frantic movements help to sell the idea that the rapid current flowing through the aqueducts is too much to fight against. Another moment I feel stands out is when Lupin is trying to reach Clarisse in the tower. He accidentally loses his footing, before rapidly running down the side of the roof, before jumping off and using the momentum to jump-glide across the buildings. In this instance, Lupin running down the roof uses a rapid motion of a few frames, while him jumping across the buildings uses almost only one frame as it slides across the cels.

These examples may not necessarily connect to texture in how an individual object may feel, but I think of texture here as how an action or movement would feel to the audience. In this case, the lack of frames and sliding during the jump helps the audience feel just how fast, high, and far Lupin is traveling, even if it's a break in between rapidly running across the rooftops.

For all that is said and done, it's obvious with the changing landscape of film and animation that there is no one way to go about movement and perspective. As long as the movement fits the proper tone of the scene it can be just as effective to use limited animation as it is to use full fluid animation. In addition, I feel that in contrast to Lamarr and Virilio's thoughts on cinematism, that being the motion into depth, the motion behind animation can become cinema if the audience is able to move along with the character's perspective instead of only the character's direct viewpoint.

Citations

LaMarre Thomas. *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*. University of Minnesota Press 2009.