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The Magic of Animation: A Global History of Animation and Comparative Analysis of Western and Eastern Historical Representations of Magic in Animation, Societal Perceptions of Magic, and Their Influences Upon One Another

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INTRODUCTION

As a unique culture develops, especially in an unexplainable and dangerous world, they must craft tales in darkness to make the night far less scary and explain the unexplainable. These myths, often woven deep with powerful figures performing the impossible, created and were magic. By explaining the world through these stories, passed from generation to generation, cultures develop an eye for the magical and the impossible, seeking to steal fire from gods, trick death, and make the words and pictures within our minds when we hear and imagine these stories come to life. Eventually, we would accomplish the last of those seemingly impossible feats with the birth of animation an unknown amount of millions of years after we first began telling those stories verbally. The medium, drawn and projected by modern storytellers, would allow for the impossible to be seen and for the magic in our minds when we heard these stories to be visualized. This comes at a cost though, as animation proves to be a time-intensive medium with every single frame of the twelve frames per second needed for the brain to see quickly flashing still images as moving pictures had to be drawn by hand. With this came a necessary sense of deliberacy not seen in other contemporary media. Just as animation requires the artist and creator to put so much of their time and effort to magically trick the eye into seeing animation into the work, so too does it require them to sometimes unconsciously put in their inherent biases and perceptions, as well as those held by their culture and society. This makes animation one of the best mediums by which one may analyze a culture or society as the deliberacy inherent in every single frame of every second of an animated film tells the purposeful observer more about the creator's society and its perceptions of a given topic. One such topic is, of course, magic. In the lifetime of animation, societal views and perceptions of magic have shifted dramatically in a relatively short time frame. As animation was the only

visual moving medium which allowed for anything the mind could dream of to be visualized, the two have a deep and shared history with the deliberacy of animation no doubt carrying with it those aforementioned societal perceptions. What one may see by looking into these two fields within history, the history of animation and the history of societal perceptions of magic, is this: there is a direct correlation between the two in global history and, in the societies where animation is most prevalently made and consumed, the societal perceptions of magic and their animation follow similar paths throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

To see this, one must first look at the global history of animation, specifically the way animation developed from the era before film to the current era of digital animation with careful focus on the people, movements, and developments that have occurred in both Western and Eastern animation. Next one should review both halves' societal perceptions of magic and what each half's relationship with magic, the occult, the supernatural, folk traditions and religions, and what is, by all means, magical. Following a review of both histories separately, one must find their common ground and look into how they have influenced one another in both the West and East with a comparative analysis of the two halves on how their cultural perceptions and animation impacted and influenced one another is due in order to best assess the two's similarities and differences. Finally, one must discuss the current state of animation in order to better understand where we may be headed.

A SKETCH OF THE GLOBAL HISTORY OF ANIMATION

Animation's history begins before the birth of film with shadows projected using light in the shadow play and the invention of shadow puppetry in Central Asia sometime in the 1st

millennia BCE.¹ It used intricately painted puppets of a thin leather, brightly colored, dyed, and painted so that when their shadows were cast upon the thin white sheet, if the light was bright enough, audience members could begin to see the puppets in color. Its screens, originally made from mulberry paper, a form of rice paper made from the paper mulberry tree's fibrous bark known for its incredibly thin yet brittle nature, would spread around the world thanks to the medium's ease of use, simplicity, and incredible ability to entertain.² The shadow play would even go on to spread to Europe, where it would go on to influence figures like Plato, later using the medium in his famous *Allegory of the Cave*.³ The next big step in proto-animation was the "magic lantern", a light which projected drawn still images which was incredibly popular since its creation in the mid-1600s by Dutch scientist Christiaan Huygens.⁴ It would go on to spread from Europe to the East, where it would catch on with a similar popularity as it had in the West.

The birth of animation as moving and projected images would come just over two centuries later in the late-1800s. French inventor Charles-Émile Reynaud's invention of the "Théâtre Optique" made him the first person to have a projected animated film with his *Pauvre Pierrot* being the only surviving film out of three made for the technology's original 1892 showing. The true first animated cartoon as we know it would not come until 1908 with Émile Cohl's *Fantasmagorie*. A relatively simple piece that did not tell any story, Cohl's

¹ Inge C. Orr, "Puppet Theatre in Asia," *Asian Folklore Studies* 33, no. 1 (1974): pp. 69-84, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1177504>.

² "Broussonetia Papyrifera (L.) L'Hér. Ex Vent.: Plants of the World Online: Kew Science," Plants of the World Online, n.d., <https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:850861-1#other-data>.

³ Plato, *Allegory of the Cave*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Scotts Valley, CA: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2018).

⁴ Christiaan Huygens, *Oeuvres Complètes. Tome XXII. Supplément à La Correspondance. Varia. Biographie. Catalogue De Vente*, 2018, https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/huyg003oeuv22_01/huyg003oeuv22_01_0093.php.

Fantasmagorie established itself as being the first recorded instance of a projected, hand-drawn animated film.

From Cohl onward, animation would develop the status of an appetizer enjoyed before the main course, a feature film. In the Pre-War period, numerous small animators like John Bray, Max Fleischer, and Raoul Barré would begin their own animation studios with some studios revolutionizing the industry thanks to the talent they had on staff and the resources they were afforded. Earl Hurd, a Bray Studios animator, invented and patented the drawing of animation directly onto celluloid sheets, pioneering the practice later known as cel animation, the industry standard until the modern age of digital animation.⁵ Fleischer, before pairing with his brother to make his own studio, would invent the rotoscope technique in the very same studio. Rotoscoping, a practice eponymous with Fleischer animation, allowed for a live-action performance to be shot and traced over in an efficient manner by an animator, allowing for smooth and lifelike motion, both faster and easier than if one was to animate it by hand. This era also gave rise to some of the first true stars and icons, namely Pat Sullivan Studios' employee Otto Messmer's Felix the Cat, the first cartoon character to be heavily merchandised.⁶ Just before Felix's debut, we would even see the world's first animated feature, Italian-born Argentinian animator Quirino Christiani's *El Apóstol* in 1917.

In the East, animation had its start far later than in the West as it would not truly become anything more than a personal hobby until the 1910s in Japan and the 1920s in China, the two countries that would come to dominate the industry in the East. Sources generally cite *Katsudō*

⁵ Donald Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁶ Howard Beckerman, *Animation: The Whole Story* (New York, NY: Allworth Press, 2012).

shashin, a Japanese piece of animation discovered in 2005 and done entirely in private, as the first piece of animation in Asia. Due to its nature of being created entirely in private, no true date is known for the work's creation and completion, with historians dating it roughly from 1906 to 1911.⁷ The interest and appreciation for animation would continue on and, in 1917, the first professionally created and publicly shown works would be released in Japan by the men who would be known as, the "Fathers of Anime," Ōten Shimokawa, Seitarō Kitayama, and Jun'ichi Kōuchi with Kōuchi having the oldest surviving release with January 1917's *Namakura Gatana*, discovered in an Osaka antique store in 2008.⁸ The three men would continue to create pieces of animation steadily until, in 1923, Japan was struck by the Great Kantō earthquake, causing massive destruction and loss of life, as well as destroying warehouses where these pieces were held, losing some of the earliest and most important pieces.⁹ In China, the animation industry began with the Wan Brothers. Influenced by the 1918 Shanghai release of the Fleischer Studios *Out of the Inkwell*, these four brothers who were the founders of Chinese animation in a professional manner, creating their first piece and the first piece of Chinese animation in 1922, a now-lost advertisement for a typewriter.¹⁰ The Wan Brothers would go on to create more advertisements, eventually joining Great Wall Film Company in 1926 and creating *Uproar in the Studio*, a now-lost film which was their and China's first fully animated short, running 10 to 12 minutes in black-and-white.

⁷ Jonathan Clements and Helen McCarthy, *The Anime Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese Animation since 1917* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge, 2006).

⁸ Frederick S. Litten, *Animated Film in Japan Until 1919* (Norderstedt, DE: Books on Demand, 2017).

⁹ Clements and McCarthy. (2006)

¹⁰ "World Animation History," 央视网 (Jilin Academy of Arts, September 15, 2004), <http://www.cctv.com/cartoon/20040915/101529.shtml>.

This era's animation studios in the West would grow and grow, with small-name Walt Disney's own studio rising with its character Mickey Mouse. Disney and his studio would become the first to have a full-color film as, after collaborating with Technicolor in 1932 for his series *Silly Symphonies*, Disney was given exclusive access to Technicolor for animation. Leon Schlesinger's *Looney Tunes* and *Merrie Melodies* series would debut during the same era, rocketing to stardom and icon status alongside Bob Clampett's creation of Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and Porky Pig in the late 1930s, all voiced by the "Man of 1000 Voices" himself, Mel Blanc. The era would lead into the Golden Age of Animation, as Disney's release of the first full-length hand-drawn animated feature film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937 saw the market boom thanks to the movie's wild success.

The 1930s had begun a period of intense growth and development for Japanese and Chinese animation studios. Recovering from their earlier losses due to the Great Kantō Earthquake and becoming incredibly established alongside live-action filmmakers by the mid-1930s, Japanese animators went two ways. Those looking to cut costs in production by not using the expensive cel animation sheets imported to them began to use a limited, cutout style of animation while others, still looking to use cels, often needed sponsorships to afford the medium. Both had their successes with the cutout method being more popular amongst animators but it was the sponsored cel animations that are most notable as they were commonly made with sponsorship from the government, making not only educational short films, but propaganda.¹¹ 1933 would see the release of *Chikara to Onna no Yo no Naka*, the first animated talkie in the

¹¹ Katsunori Yamaguchi and Yasushi Watanabe, *Nihon Animeshon Eigashi* (Tokyo, Japan: Yūbunsha, 1977).

East, and a year later would see *The Dance of the Chagamas*, the first wholly cel-animated Japanese animation.

In China, the Wan Brothers would release *The Camel's Dance* in 1935, the first piece of animation with sound created in China. The country would be notably silent in this period as a civil war between the earlier government of the Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party grew, with most efforts of the Republic being put toward defending against the CCP before, in 1937, the Japanese invaded China. This invasion would develop into what would become one of the bloodiest invasions and the most devastating 20th century war in Asia, now known as the Second Sino-Japanese War. By the time it ended in 1945 with the defeat of Japan and the Axis Powers and the end of the Second World War, 10 to 25 million Chinese civilians and over 4 million military personnel, both Chinese and Japanese, either being missing or dead as a result of the war and its pursuant effects.^{12 13}

Soon after the beginning of this war, the Second World War would begin, leading both East and West to begin making propaganda films. Japan would release their first piece of feature-length animation *Momotaro: Sacred Sailors* in 1945, sponsored by the Imperial Japanese Navy. China, despite undergoing a brutal invasion, would beat Japan to releasing the first Eastern animated feature film as the Wan Brothers' *Princess Iron Fan* was released 1941. The Wan Brothers, still actively producing animations, would continue to do so as well, creating over 20 animated shorts acting as pro-Chinese propaganda in the fight against Japanese invaders. World War Two would also see studios putting their characters toward the war effort with characters

¹² Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1618-1991*, vol. 2 (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1992).

¹³ James Chieh Hsiung and Steven I. Levine, *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan, 1937-1945* (London, England: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015).

telling the audience about buying war bonds as well as endorsing the war in propaganda films.

During this Golden Age, Western animators like William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, Tex Avery, and Walter Lantz would all start to branch out, either joining more established studios or founding their own.

The next big developments in animation would not come until after the end of the Second World War alongside the end of the Japanese invasion and occupation of China. After Japan had released its held territories back to China as per the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, the warring factions of the CCP and the Republic of China once again began to openly wage war against one another. This coincided with the first even communist animation studio, the Northeast Film Company, in 1946. Despite not initially releasing animated works, opting for puppet and live-action films instead, their film *Emperor's Dream* would influence animators to make similar pro-CCP animated shorts like *Go After an Easy Prey* in 1948. Just a year later, the CCP would formally announce its control over mainland China under leader Mao Zedong, having forced the Republic of China and its government onto the island of Taiwan. With this, the Northeast Film Company was consolidated and moved to Shanghai, where it would later be renamed to Shanghai Animation Film Studio. The studio would become the primary producer of Chinese animation and would be a feeder company for the country's top animators and artists, namely the Wan Brothers and students from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, the nation's most prestigious art school. The first color animation in China would come from the Wan Brothers and Shanghai Film Animation Studios with 1956's *Why is the Crow Black-Coated*, the first Chinese animation to get international recognition. Within the year, the government began to sponsor the studio, making it not only the first, but the official animation studio of China. Thanks

to this national sponsorship, the Chinese animation industry would come to be on par with the rest of the world in animation.

These next few decades would bring with it new firsts for animation, especially in the now-booming post-war economy of the West, with *The Flintstones* becoming the first primetime animated television show as animation shifted from a theatrical focus to one of television. Most of the major studios would make this change, occasionally releasing an animated film but primarily releasing syndicated animated shows similar to the content they had been making for cinemas prior, with most studios opting to cease production of short theatrical films by the end of the 1960s. One of the few holdouts, especially in large studios, was Disney, which chose to continually release animated features and shorts. These features ranged from being commercial flops to instant classics and hits. As time went on, Disney's continued mission to do both would see the decline in both the quality and audience reception of their animated films, especially after the passing of Walt Disney in 1966.

Post-war Japanese animation, much like most of post-war Japanese culture, was heavily influenced by the United States, with American animation, like that of Walt Disney, inspiring a multitude of studios to get their start in Japan. One such studio, Japan Animated Films, would be bought in 1948 by Hiroshi Takahata, a man striving to be "the Disney of the East."¹⁴ Takahata would initially rename the studio to Tōei Dōga, later streamlining and westernizing it to Toei as he wished to make it easier for Westerners to reference. The studio would release the country's first full-color animated feature film, their first feature film as a studio, *Panda and the Magic Serpent* in 1958. Toei soon became the biggest studio in Japan, later releasing their films in the

¹⁴ Yamaguchi Yasuo, "The Evolution of the Japanese Anime Industry," nippon.com, May 30, 2020, <https://www.nippon.com/en/features/h00043/the-evolution-of-the-japanese-anime-industry.html>.

US in 1961 and making a new feature film animation every year. Known for their more unique approach to animation, Toei developed a number of industry practices, namely the “money shot”, a process of selecting a specific shot or shots for animators to specifically set aside in order to take special attention and care in animating, as well as the auteurist approach, where an individual animator was allowed to bring their own ideas onto a project and have greater say in the final project of their film. While Toei ruled the box office, one of their own animators and noted “Father of Manga,” Osamu Tezuka, would establish Mushi Production following his contract with Toei’s end in 1961. Mushi would do for TV animation what Toei did for theatrical animation in Japan, creating series like *Princess Knight*, *Kimba the White Lion*, and, most famously, *Astro Boy*, the first animation adapted from a manga. The immense popularity of the show would lead Mushi to become the first Japanese studio to have their animation broadcast in America, with NBC broadcasting *Astro Boy* in 1963.¹⁵

The 1960s would become a great era for Japanese animation as it would see a boom in production and popularity as well as the development of a consistent style that would be the hallmark of the genre later known as anime. Known for its characteristic large head, flapping mouth, and giant eyes, this specific style of anime would come to dominate the styles of Japanese animation as hit shows like *Astro Boy*, *Speed Racer*, and *Sally the Witch* popularized and familiarized Japanese audiences with the now-iconic style. The end of the Golden Age of animation in the West would grant shows like these a foothold in the American market, as they could be dubbed over by English voice actors and exported to the US at a fraction of the cost of creating a brand new show wholly produced in the West. With broadcasts of these shows

¹⁵ Richard Keller, “The First 10 U.S. Anime Imports in Chronological Order,” CBR, April 8, 2021, <https://www.cbr.com/first-anime-imports-united-states/>.

beginning in America and other Western markets, the genre slowly gained the popularity it had in its home country in the world beyond Japan.

As Japan was beginning to dominate the whole of Eastern animation with the development of anime as we know it today, China was undergoing rapid change at the hands of their new leader and the communist party. The period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s is recognized as the Golden Age of Chinese animation with Shanghai Animation Film Studio making remarkable animated films recognized at a global level like *Havoc in Heaven*, shown at the 1965 Locarno Film Festival.¹⁶ But this Golden Age would come to an end with Mao's Cultural Revolution in the mid-1960s. This froze all projects from Shanghai Animation, prohibiting all previous and current works except for two, one about overthrowing evil landlords and the other praising Mao Zedong and the CCP. During this period, animators who worked on the now-banned projects were often forced to work in labor camps. Those who could remain working were often forced to make animated propaganda for the CCP meant for the illiterate.¹⁷ It is thanks to this Cultural Revolution era that so many of the rare early examples of animation, especially those by the Wan Brothers, are lost to history. The era would end in 1976 but animation within China would never recover to its former state and would not produce their own popular animation until the 1980s. Instead of creating their own works, they would import animation to re-dub and syndicate, ensuring its messaging was for the state and its values.

Whereas China was struggling, Japan was continuing their rise and dominance over Eastern animation with anime. By the mid-1960s, anime was well established and growing at a

¹⁶ "Locarno International Film Festival 1965," MUBI, n.d., <https://mubi.com/awards-and-festivals/locarno?page=2&year=1965>.

¹⁷ Hao Gu, "It's Time to Pour Water: A Glimpse of Chinese Animation," Qingyun.com, 2004, https://web.archive.org/web/20060521124159/http://www.qingyun.com/cgi-bin/ut/topic_print.cgi?id=60678.

near exponential rate, leading for more risks to be taken in what kinds of shows they were creating. New genres were created, with some combining anime with other genres like sports stories, literary classics, realistic dramas, and space operas while others were wholly new like the genres of mecha and shojo. Mecha anime, like *Mobile Suit Gundam* and *Space Battleship Yamato*, is a genre typically intended for a young male audience, primarily focusing on stories about large robots piloted by humans fighting an enemy, with subsets delineating whether the mecha is more realistically or fantastically portrayed. Shojo on the other hand is anime typically intended for a more female audience, typically targeting young girls and teens, with stories spanning a number of other genres but generally all tying back to a central theme of gender and sexuality with these stories later featuring LGBTQ representation and stories far before Western animated programs. Television became a primary market for anime with there being over fifty shows airing on television around the globe by 1978. Alongside these new genres and success on the small screen, anime also developed in a cinematic sense, with now-legendary animators and directors founding their own studios and ushering in an increase in quality into the 1980s. One of the most legendary of the era would be Hayao Miyazaki and what would soon become his Studio Ghibli who would release *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* in 1984, now heralded as one of the best anime films of all time and an incredible influence on the genre.¹⁸ The mid-1980s would also see the release of 1986's *Dragon Ball*, the first in a long series of anime television shows that would become incredibly popular worldwide, influencing young animators and storytellers around the globe. Its signature fight scenes, use of bright colors and striking visuals, and long running plot would become iconic and would influence a number of different anime like *Naruto*, *One Piece*, and *Bleach*, each incredibly influential and applauded in their own right. The success

¹⁸ "A Brief History of Studio Ghibli," TokyoTreat, September 11, 2018, <https://tokyotreat.com/blog/history-of-studio-ghibli>.

of anime, both on TV and in film would continue, and with the rise of home video rentals thanks to companies like Blockbuster, a new market for anime arose, leading to the creation of the OVA, or Original Video Animation, created just to fill this market.

In the West, the birth of the MPAA and the subsequent dissolution of the Hays Code, a set of self-censorship guidelines for films lasting from the 1930s until 1968, triggered a new wave and a rise in counter-cultural and more adult-oriented animation. It was Ralph Bakshi who would solidify adult-oriented animation. Bakshi's work, especially his adaptation of *Lord of the Rings*, would become cult classics, influencing a number of future animators during a period when animation studios had slowed production to a fraction of their Golden Age output. The focus in animation, from then until the late 1980s, would be on children's television shows. With a focus on merchandising and toy sales through animated shows. shows like *G.I. Joe*, *Transformers*, and *He-Man* would all rise to incredible popularity during this time.¹⁹

In the realm of feature animation, most pieces would be based on existing properties, Disney was in a period known now as its "Dark Age," and the most successful pieces not based in merchandising were imported from places like France or Japan with animators like Miyazaki gaining some notoriety in America. Domestically, ex-Disney animator Don Bluth would be the most popular and successful in the era, making *The Secret of NIMH*, *An American Tail*, and *The Land Before Time*. Robert Zimeckis' *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* would come to be incredibly popular as well, pioneering the combination of traditional hand-drawn animation with live-action movies and reintroducing a new generation to classic characters from the history of animation.

¹⁹ Ranker TV, "The Most Unforgettable '80s Cartoons," Ranker (Ranker, April 5, 2022), <https://www.ranker.com/list/best-80s-cartoons-v1/ranker-tv>.

The end of the 1980s in Japan would bring with it a number of notable events in anime. 1987 and 88 would see the release of the two most expensive anime films ever with *Royal Space Force: The Wings of Honneamise* and the now-iconic *Akira*, which despite its original commercial failure in Japan, has gone on to be a cult hit and is currently ranked number one on numerous lists of the best anime films of all time.²⁰ Studio Ghibli would release 1989's *Kiki's Delivery Service*, the top-grossing film in Japan of 1989.²¹ Despite all of these successes though, anime would soon begin to see a decline as the bubble burst as *Akira's* initial failure on such a massive budget signaled to those in the industry that anime, especially big budget theatrical anime, was on its way out.

Back in China, the 1980s saw the return of Chinese animation on a small scale. Most of the animation done in China, despite being beaten in popularity by imported and cheaper animated shows from outside the nation, was still occurring and being put out from Shanghai Animation Film Studio, who would release 219 films throughout the 1980s.²² They would have a few award winning films but, even into the modern age, they would be overshadowed by other countries' animation, even in their own country. To this day, despite animation studios creating 33 films in 2012 and over 260,000 minutes of animation for television, Chinese animation has since become far less popular, especially on a global scale, than most other countries.^{23 24}

²⁰ Jason DeMarco and Toussaint Egan, "The 100 Best Anime Movies of All Time," *pastemagazine.com* (Paste Magazine, April 27, 2021), <https://www.pastemagazine.com/movies/best-anime-movies/the-100-best-anime-movies-of-all-time/#1-akira>.

²¹ Marc Hairston, "Kiki's Delivery Service (Majo No Takkyubin)," *Kiki's Delivery Service*, November 1998, <https://web.archive.org/web/20011215142927/http://utd500.utdallas.edu/~hairston/kiki.html>.

²² "World Animation History"

²³ "Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China on the 2011 National Economic and Social Development" (National Bureau of Statistics of China, February 22, 2012), https://web.archive.org/web/20120806094456/http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/newsandcomingevents/t20120222_402786587.htm.

²⁴ Patrick Frater, "China Bo Exceeds rmb17 Billion," *Film Business Asia*, January 10, 2013, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130115052657/http://www.filmbiz.asia/news/china-bo-exceeds-rmb17-billion>.

In their place, however, is South Korea, who, despite not having any animated features until 1967, has since become a powerhouse of animation. Even though the nation has a number of original characters with above average popularity like Dooly the Little Dinosaur or Pororo the Little Penguin, South Korea is best known in the animation industry as being the home to “in-betweener” studios. As previously mentioned, to produce fluid and viable animation, it takes twelve frames, or individual drawings, per second. Not all of these frames are done in-house by the studios which produce the animation though, with only the key frames, the frames of animation which indicate certain key elements, usually being done in-house. These key frames often require many frames in-between them to make the twelve frames per second required for animation and for a domestic studio to produce them, it would cost much more than the alternative, outsourcing the work to somewhere else. This is where South Korean studios like Studio Mir, AKOM, and Rough Draft Korea come in. These studios take the key frames and any direction from the studios and actually create the final product. Today, an estimated thirty percent of all of the world’s animation was actually produced in Korea.²⁵

Back over in the West, 1989 would mark the first Disney hit in years with *The Little Mermaid*, ushering in an era known as the “Disney Renaissance” in the 1990s as well as featuring the first example of computer animation in a feature film. Two years later, their *Beauty and the Beast* would become the first animated movie nominated for the Oscar for Best Picture. 1994 would see Disney release *The Lion King*, which would go on to be the highest grossing animated film of all time, a record they previously held before the Renaissance films came out

²⁵ Kate Torgovnick May, “A New Age of Animation,” *The Atlantic* (Atlantic Media Company, June 13, 2016), <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/05/a-new-age-of-animation/483342/>.

since their release of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* 60 years prior.²⁶ Their success led to other film studios previously not creating feature animated films expanding into the genre with their own animation studios, as Warner Bros. Feature Animation, DreamWorks Animation, and Fox Animation Studios would all be established in order to compete with Disney. During this time, animation on TV took a different path. With the success of shows like Matt Groening's *The Simpsons*, more primetime adult-oriented animated shows began making their debuts in the mid-to-late 1990s with Seth Macfarlane's *Family Guy* on Fox, Trey Parker and Matt Stone's *South Park* on Comedy Central, and Mike Judge's *Beavis and Butthead* on MTV. Warner Bros Studios would also announce a new channel in 1992, Cartoon Network, a 24-hour cartoon channel showing the classic cartoons they had in their roster as well as later creating a number of original shows, lauded to this day as classics like *Dexter's Laboratory* and *The Powerpuff Girls*. Their success led other industry leaders to similarly expand, creating other, more kid-focused channels, with Viacom/CBS' Nickelodeon, Disney's Disney Channel, and PBS' PBS Kids all rolling out soon after, each with their own collections of animated shows that would become instant classics.

During this era, anime proved those who thought it was on the way out wrong and began its meteoric rise to global popularity. The 1990s saw the releases of anime like *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Ghost in the Shell*, and *Cowboy Bebop*, all incredibly popular. Series like *Sailor Moon*, *Dragon Ball Z*, and *Pokémon* were created, with *Sailor Moon* launching the magical girl anime genre to massive international success, *Dragon Ball Z* building upon and furthering the already massive influence and impact its predecessor already had, and *Pokémon* becoming the

²⁶ "Highest Grossing Films by Genre: Animation," in *Box Office Mojo* (Seattle, WA: IMDB, 2021), https://www.boxofficemojo.com/genre/sg4242469121/?ref_=bo_gs_table_23.

largest and highest grossing media franchise of all time, a record still held by the series carried by its iconic children's anime, still running and currently on its 24th season.²⁷ The new millennia would see anime have an even more influence and reach in the American audience, with companies like Funimation dubbing anime into English and programming blocks like Adult Swim's Toonami and Warner Bros.'s 4Kids regularly airing anime on American television stations. Alongside this, anime expanded to include the romance and slice of life genres and began to adapt iconic light novels and manga into anime. We also begin to see the influences of anime on Western animation as programs like *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, *Samurai Jack*, and *Teen Titans* all first debut, having distinct and recognizable influences from classic anime. Theatrically, Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli's *Spirited Away* would become the highest grossing anime film internationally, winning not only the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival, but the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature, making it the first non-American film to win the award since its introduction and one of only two non-American films to do so at the Oscars. This success would only increase as, with the rise of streaming services, anime was now available to most every demographic as it was easier than ever to view the genre. Just this year, the anime *Jujutsu Kaisen*, *Demon Slayer*, and *Tokyo Revengers* were marked as being among the top ten shows discussed worldwide on Twitter and the show *Attack on Titan* just became the first ever non-English language series to win the "Most In-Demand TV Series in the World 2021" from the Global TV Demand Awards in 2022.^{28 29}

²⁷ Atul Talaviya, "Pokémon Became the Highest-Grossing Media Franchise of All Time with \$95 Billion, Beating out...," Medium (Medium, November 5, 2019), <https://medium.com/@atultalaviya9/pok%C3%A9mon-became-the-highest-grossing-media-franchise-of-all-time-with-95-billion-beating-out-13ab4ec54d72>.

²⁸ Michael Lacerna, "Jujutsu Kaisen Tops Squid Game, Wandavision in Social Media's 2021 Discussions," CBR, December 10, 2021, <https://www.cbr.com/jujutsu-kaisen-squid-game-wandavision-twitter-2021/>.

²⁹ Parrot Analytics, "Anime and Asian Series Dominate 4th Annual Global TV Demand Awards, Highlighting Industry and Consumer Trends towards International Content," WFMZ.com, January 25, 2022, https://www.wfmz.com/news/pr_newswire/pr_newswire_entertainment/anime-and-asian-series-dominate-4th-

The 1990s also saw the rise of computer animation, the industry's current standard. Not requiring expensive cel sheets for each frame, computer animation would soon be regarded as the industry standard, with pioneers like Disney-Pixar and DreamWorks pushing the boundaries of the medium. The first feature to be inked and painted using computers would come in 1990 with *The Rescuers Down Under*, followed five years later by Pixar's *Toy Story*, the first film to be entirely animated using computers. The advent of computer animation would mean that, unlike any era before, anyone could become an animator from their home. The release of software like FutureSplash Animator, the predecessor to Adobe Flash, in 1995 allowed for anyone with enough time and effort to make an animated film from their home computer as the program was able to run on both Windows and Mac personal home computers. This also meant that the animation could be done far faster and cheaper. This led Adobe Flash to become the norm for projects where quality could be sacrificed, like television shows and internet animation, while other computer animation programs developed in-house by studios became the norm for feature animation. Alongside this came the rise of 3D animation, which, thanks to Pixar, has since become a staple of the field, with most animated movies and shows now being created using these software programs. Now almost wholly digital, the technique of traditional hand-drawn animation has become a technique not really used due to its expense and lack of accessibility. The state of animation is, for now, based within digital and 3D animation.

A SKETCH OF SOCIETAL PERCEPTIONS OF MAGIC

The history of animation is a complex one but so too is the history of societal perceptions of magic. It is incredibly hard for one to find material talking about societal perceptions on a general scale, but the documents that do remain cataloging the opinions and attitudes held are heavily informative. Modern magic in the West as we know it began, primarily, with a resurgence of interest in the occult during the Victorian Era. The rise of spiritualists and fortune tellers as spectacles and events coincided with a loosening of some of the more traditional attitudes on magic and witchcraft, namely the hunting and killing of witches like in the witch trials. The era, thanks to a heavier focus on industry and capitalism, had less time to focus on solely religion. This also coincided with a number of medical and scientific advancements that contributed to a gradual lessening of the power of the church over most.³⁰ This was until new movements within the Christian church developed, seeking a return to more traditional beliefs and practices. This Fundamentalist movement would go on to take over certain circles within Christianity, especially Protestantism, often preaching using the threat of being damned to Hell if a person believed anything other than what their religion believed, even if their target were a modernist Christian.³¹ Naturally, due to these “Fire and Brimstone Preachers” as they were called, the movement was wildly successful with a wave of fearing zealots who were ready to be mobilized to advance the movement. This, along with the rise of megachurches, massive spaces for gathering and worship, led to the rise of Fundamentalist Protestant Christian policies and influences upon Western culture.³²

³⁰ Michael O. Emerson and David Hartman, “The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 32, no. 1 (January 2006): pp. 127-144, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.32.061604.123141>.

³¹ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022).

³² Emerson and Hartman, “The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism”

This wave led to not only the Prohibition movement, but a heavy focus on ensuring a morally good culture, with those morals being defined by their values of what good morals were. One of these morals was, of course, an intense zeal against the practice and portrayal of magic in culture. This push for a moral culture led to the establishment of a number of censorship programs in the early to mid-20th century, namely the Comics Code Authority governing print media and comics and the Hays Code governing film and television. These policies, while they were not mandatory for creators to follow, acted as gatekeepers for pieces of media. This meant that if a creator either did not submit their piece to the Hays Code investigators for approval or was turned down for not meeting their moral standards, the piece would be locked out from most major distributors and theaters.³³ If theaters were found showing a movie without the code's approval, you would be fined up to \$25,000 dollars.³⁴ The Hays Code in particular is interesting not only for its forbiddance of interracial relationships and homosexuality, but its requirements of films to follow three principles:

1. No picture shall be produced that will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.
2. Correct standards of life, subject only to the requirements of drama and entertainment, shall be presented.
3. Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.³⁵

³³ Leonard J. Leff and Jerold Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

³⁴ This fine, when adjusted for inflation, totals to \$413,613.10

³⁵ Motion Picture Association of America, "The Motion Picture Association of America Production Code," *The Motion Picture Association of America Production Code* (Los Angeles, CA: MPAA, 1930).

The application of the Hays Code marked an era where the idea of morality in culture was rampant and, until the mid-1960s, the Hays Code would reign supreme.

This moral panic in the early 20th century coincided with the rise of neopaganism and occultism in Britain and the West, with figures like Aleister Crowley and organizations like the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn spurring secret resurrections of occultism.³⁶ Eventually, as time went on and the authority of these major moral entities like the Hays Code faded, these pseudo-religious organizations began to spread to America, with Anton LaVey's Church of Satan beginning in 1966. These organizations rode the wave of counterculture in the 1960's to a boom in the 1970s, with other religious groups like Wicca and the Temple of Set being founded and having some increasing popularity during the decade. This led fundamentalist groups to respond strongly, fighting back in the 1980s with the rise of the movement now known as the "Satanic Panic".

The Satanic Panic was an era characterized by Fundamentalist Christian dogma spreading into and governing every aspect of Western culture, especially within America.³⁷ It began in the mid-1970s when Jerry Falwell Sr., an American Baptist Conservative minister and political figure, began his series of rallies around the country where he railed against the country's current state, citing a decay in the morality of the nation for our failures. Soon after taking over Christian Voice, a Conservative Christian political group, he was asked to found a group representing the supposed majority of people who wished for a more moral society, giving rise to the Bible-thumping New Christian Right in America. His Moral Majority movement as it was called would

³⁶ Jeffrey S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1993).

³⁷ David Waldron, "Role-Playing Games and the Christian Right: Community Formation in Response to a Moral Panic," *Journal of Religion and Pop Culture* 9 (2005), <https://web.archive.org/web/20130104131941/http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/art9-roleplaying-print.html>.

become one of the largest Conservative lobby groups, fighting in the government for the establishment of the Christian perspective as what is moral and legal. They were known for fighting back against women's rights, gay rights, and secularization within schools. With them loading the cannon in America and the West, the Satanic Panic shot off with the publishing of Canadian psychiatrist Lawrence Pazder's now heavily criticized book, *Michelle Remembers*. The book details how Pazder, through the use of a heavily scrutinized and debunked method, unlocked his patient and future wife Michelle Smith memories of Satanic rituals and their linkage to child abuse. The book, carried alongside the Bible by the Moral Majority, spread like wildfire, allowing for the group to permanently establish a foothold in American politics, seeding the Western populace's mind with the idea that magic was linked to Satan, child abuse, and human sacrifice.³⁸

This led to entirely unlinked topics that just contained the word "magic" as well as anything with fantasy elements to be demonized and considered as recruitment tools for Satan and his army of evildoers. The conspiracy theories spread in the movement specifically sought to target educators as well, seeing them as the ones brainwashing their children and teens into ruining the moral foundations of the country by listening to Heavy Metal music and playing Dungeons and Dragons, the tools in their systems of indoctrination.³⁹ The end of the Satanic Panic would leave behind a lasting cultural taboo toward the things outlined as tools of the Satanists by the movement as well as a negative Western perception of magic, especially in more Christian areas. In the years since, the games, media properties, and groups of people stigmatized have since recovered despite the presence of the New Christian Right within politics fighting to

³⁸ Victor, "Satanic Panic"

³⁹ Waldron, "Role-Playing Games and the Christian Right"

reclaim the Moral Majority era. A gradual shift toward a more secular society in combination with a stronger focus on understanding the things stigmatized rather than trusting the word of the Moral Majority led the change in the over thirty years since the publication of *Michelle Remembers*. Alternative systems of belief like Neopaganism and Wicca have seen resurgences with their supporters often saying that it is one of the fastest growing religions in the United States, especially amongst those who were raised within the Christian church.⁴⁰

In sharp contrast to the West, especially America, Eastern perceptions of magic are notably different. As American culture is primarily built upon a white and Christian moral background, especially that of the Anglo-Saxons, so much of the traditional and more magical elements of culture have since been moved to the fringes, hence why our aforementioned societal perceptions were so negative toward magic. But this influence of Christianization, more specifically the monotheistic manner of viewing anything magical as heretical, reached Asia and the East far later than it did the West. In fact, China, what can be interpreted as the gateway to Asia, was notably hostile to Christian missionaries, viewing them and their preaching as being condescending considering they were only usually seen in times of great defeat.⁴¹ The most dominant religions in fact embrace these traditions in some manner with both Hinduism and Buddhism having integrated some elements of folk religions into their practice, belief system, or stories. To this day, Japan's most popular religion of Shinto is a religion of animistic and polytheistic belief and numerous Eastern countries, especially those in Asia, still celebrate and hold festivals honoring these past religions like the Japanese 7-5-3 or Shichi-Go-San Festival and

⁴⁰ Charlotte Richardson-Andrews, "The Pagan Boom – Why Young People Are Turning to Non-Traditional Religions," *Dazed*, February 8, 2019, <https://www.dazeddigital.com/life-culture/article/43242/1/the-pagan-boom-young-people-non-traditional-religions-druids-witchcraft>.

the Korean Dongji and Sangdalgosa Festivals. It is China that holds an interesting position in this metric.

As previously mentioned, China underwent a series of cultural changes and revisions with the rise of the CCP and Mao Zedong. One such change in Mao's Cultural Revolution was a shift away from religion, viewing it as a corruptor and distractor of the populace from the true way of communism, seeing religion as something which belonged in the past, not a present and modern communist nation. In Maoist communist thought, religion and magic are often in opposition of the way forward, viewing it as a ball-and-chain in the pursuit of a true and just society rather than a societal anchor and source of comfort. For Maoists, the comfort provided by religion and holding to religious traditions takes away from one's service to one another and one's nation. To summarize it, a quote from Marx, founder of communist thought, who in his *A Contribution to the Critique to Hegel's Philosophy of Right* said, "Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is, indeed, the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself, or has already lost himself again... Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."⁴² Maoist communism obviously was derived from this logic and, in its modernization of theory published over a century prior by Marx and Engels, applied this school of thought in the reforms during the Cultural Revolution. This revolution also led China to declare itself an atheist country, having no need for recognizing a state religion and also further emphasizing the active disapproval for the people to have religious sentiment and belief.

⁴² Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

Relatively little remains of what traditional religious systems and beliefs were practiced in the period of time between the dawn of the 20th century and the cultural revolution considering it was less than a full century from today's date that the Cultural Revolution began. From what has been gathered and remained, prior to the rise of Maoist communism and the CCP's control over mainland China, folk religions and belief systems more on the magical side were prevalent amongst the common people. On a more official basis, Confucianist thought and belief was held to be the religion of the state while belief systems more in line with animism and polytheism were common amongst average people, usually in the average citizen or farmer classes within society.⁴³ These folk religions often had some basis in Buddhism and Daoism, something the two deny, but they often included a number of magical practices like geomancy, fortune telling, or alternative "witch doctor" medicine.⁴⁴ Their belief was often focused into two halves with the first honoring heavenly spirits and more unanimous deities across a given group as well as a family's ancestors while the second would focus on more locally renowned spirits or those of a given industry, trait, or feature. These spirits would often be honored both privately as well as with a town or village of neighbors at local temples or shrines with ceremonies and rituals honoring them or calling upon them in some way.⁴⁵ This balance in folk religion and magical belief would hold strong, as it had since at least the Imperial Era, until Mao's CCP takeover of mainland China and his subsequent Cultural Revolution nearly destroyed them. Despite incredible efforts to destroy any religion, let alone those which shifted devotion so far from the state to one's own history in their ancestors, the Revolution did not fully snuff out religion.

⁴³ Jiping Zuo, "Political Religion: The Case of the Cultural Revolution in China," *Sociological Analysis* 52, no. 1 (1991): p. 99, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3710718>.

⁴⁴ Chan Kim-Kwong, "Religion in China," *China Review*, 1994, pp. 19.1-19.23, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23451523>.

⁴⁵ Zuo, "Political Religion"

In the period following the Revolution, to openly practice any religion was strongly taboo. It had specifically caused a number of religions, including those folk religions and practices described above, to become wholly illegal with some others like Buddhism allowed to exist in an incredibly reduced fashion, not only closing down some of their temples, but also requiring their use outside of their religious purpose and mandating that their use and practice to be strictly secular. This forced a number of sects to go underground, practicing in private and secret in order to avoid punishment, imprisonment, or worse.⁴⁶ In the years since, religious practice has actually become a form of personal expression in an increasingly modernizing China. While it is still mandated that any member of the Chinese Communist Party is an atheist and does not practice religion, it has since opened the opportunity to join one of five state-recognized religions, those being Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Islam, with organizations needing to register with a state organization which ensures practice is patriotic and sanctioned by the state. Despite this, folk religions and practice are tolerated on the whole, despite their illegality according to the government. According to figures from the World Religion Database, 30.8% of the country's population practices folk-religious beliefs as an unknown amount of folk religious temples estimated to be in the hundreds or thousands not registered with the state are tolerated due to their being held as being deeply Chinese and tied to the nation's deeper culture.⁴⁷

In sharp contrast to this is Japan and Korea. Japan especially is a nation incredibly tied to its folk religious belief and practice. Codified and formalized into the religion of Shinto during the Meiji Era of the 19th Century, Shinto combined a number of practices and beliefs of folk

⁴⁶ Kim-Kwong, "Religion in China"

⁴⁷ Eleanor Albert and Lindsay Maizland, "The State of Religion in China," Council on Foreign Relations (Council on Foreign Relations, September 25, 2020), <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/religion-china#chapter-title-0-8>.

religious practices that came prior and formalized them into a system of belief and way of living. The basis of Shinto is the belief in the kami, a “conceptually fluid” group of spirits or gods which can represent any number of topics and are not necessarily immortal, omnipotent, or omniscient with some humans having become kami according to Shinto.⁴⁸ There also exist other spirits, oni, who are known for their malevolence as well as magical creatures or animals like the tanuki, kappa, and kitsune which can either serve kami and oni or exist as supernatural entities in and of themselves. In addition to this, both kami as well as the other supernatural figures may have shrines with notable shrines existing for local kami, more widespread kami like Hachiman, and creatures like the kappa, with the latter variety specifically often being to protect and appease the spirit for one’s own protection.⁴⁹ Shinto has existed in Japan in a prominent manner since its foundation and, as previously mentioned, stands as the most common religion in Japan with nearly 101 million adherents, 84,000 clergymen, 81,131 temples and shrines, and almost 4000 churches and missionary stations in 2012.⁵⁰

Korea has experienced a similar progression as Japan in the regard of their folk religions and shamanism, called Muism. For South Koreans, Muism is the combination between the Confucianist, Daoist, and Buddhist traditions of surrounding areas with more traditional folk magical aspects. It had a notable interaction with Shinto, especially during the State Shinto Era of Japan during the Imperial Era as in their conquest of China, they also captured Korea. State officials attempted to combine Muism into the state-sponsored State Shinto of the Japanese Imperial government, but ultimately failed. In the post-war period, Muism was viewed incredibly

⁴⁸ James W. Boyd and Ron G. Williams, “Japanese Shinto: An Interpretation of a Priestly Perspective,” *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 1 (2005): pp. 33-63, <https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2004.0039>.

⁴⁹ John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

⁵⁰ “Number of Religious Groups, Number of Teachers, and Number of Believers,” Number of religious groups, number of teachers, and number of believers § (2013), <https://www.stat.go.jp/data/nenkan/back64/zuhyou/y2322a00.xls>.

positively and was seen as a symbol of something purely Korean in essence. The division of Korea came with a number of changes though, most notably in the case of Muism, its near death as the pro-communist North was in line with the Marxist view on religion and wished to eradicate it in favor of atheistic support of the government while the South was incredibly pro-Christian and viewed the traditional religion as heretical, much like American Christians did.⁵¹ In the North, the shamans of Muism and their families were systematically targeted, noted as being in a “hostile class”.⁵² Those in the South had to face discrimination of a different kind as practice of folk religions like Muism was banned and traditional shrines, especially those of families meant for ancestors, were destroyed.⁵³ Despite this hostility toward the folk religion, it has persisted, much like that of its neighboring country China. In both the North and South, Koreans still practice Muism and other Korean folk religions. Current estimates place North Korean practitioners at 16% of the nation’s population while the South is noted to have had a significant resurgence in recent years.^{54 55}

THE IN-BETWEENS: HOW THE TWO HAVE INTERSECTED AND IMPACTED ONE ANOTHER

Finally having looked into both side’s respective histories, we may now look intersectionally at how the two compare in the lens of how magic was portrayed in animation.

⁵¹ Clark W Sorensen, “University of Washington Faculty Works,” University of Washington Faculty Works (Korean Political Science Association, July 1995), <http://faculty.washington.edu/sangok/folklore.pdf>.

⁵² Barbara Demick, *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea* (New York, NY: Random House, 2015).

⁵³ Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Nostalgias, and the IMF: South Korean Popular Religion in Motion* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2010).

⁵⁴ “Religious Intelligence Country Profile: Korea, North (Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea),” Religious Intelligence (Religious Intelligence UK, October 13, 2007), <https://web.archive.org/web/20071013201130/http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk/country/?CountryID=37>.

⁵⁵ Joon-sik Choi, *Folk-Religion: The Customs in Korea* (Seoul, South Korea: Ewha Womans University Press, 2006).

The Pre-Hays Code animations were very much emblematic of a genre that, while it was popular, was still in its infancy. Despite the numerous advances made at the time, the animation done in the 1910s and 20s was mostly done in order to fill the purpose of the appetizer before the main course feature film. This combined with the genre's young age meant that most depictions of magic were confined to the characters doing seemingly impossible things. For example, Fleischer Studios' 1922 film *The Dresden Doll* portrays their protagonist Koko the Clown magically moving around and then hopping off the page, walking over telephone wires, drawing a mechanical ballerina and summoning himself a band for her to dance to.⁵⁶ Depictions of magic within this early infantile stage of animation were, by all means, the purest expressions of the belief that animation itself was magic. This ties in directly with the societal perceptions of the time. The fundamentalist movement had just hit its stride by the time Fleischer released the short, meaning any strong magical themes would alienate this audience. This, in addition to growing support of conservative social movements, meant that studios were pushed further and further toward the eventual reality that the Hays Code ushered in.

In the era following the Hays Code's adoption and enforcement, animation had just hit its stride as an artform, now in color and with sound. This led to a number of studios wishing to push the boundaries of the code and people's sensibilities, including magic but keeping it to something either a villain often will do in order to thwart the virtuous hero or a mentor character that falls in line with Western folkloric tradition like those from the Classical mythology or old European folktales. Representative of this era is *Fantasia*, Disney's 1940 feature film anthology which combined orchestral pieces with animations that were intended to represent the piece.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *The Dresden Doll* (Fleischer Bros. Studios, 1922), en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mechanical_doll_(1922).webm.

⁵⁷ *Fantasia* (Walt Disney, 1940).

The film itself was actually critiqued and censored by the Hays Code with the original version of the *The Pastoral Symphony* segment showing the female centaurs' bare chests. Disney was then asked to cover them with garlands and minimal clothing in order to receive the MPAA seal of approval. As for how the film depicts magic, the examples we get are exactly on par with how animation depicted magic at the time. The *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* segment perfectly encapsulates the first of the two usages for protagonists, based on a European folktale, cataloged in a poem of the same name by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1797. The other depiction of magic by a protagonist is in the Greek mythology-themed *The Pastoral Symphony* with Zeus hurling his lightning bolts at an indulgent Bacchanalia. The final segment, *Night on Bald Mountain / Ave Maria*, also features magic, being wielded by the character Chernobog who the presenter says is Satan. This character is forced to return back to a dormant state by not only the light of dawn but church bells as the song "Ave Maria" is sung, the title being in reference to the Christian figure Mary, Mother of Christ. The depictions of magic in *Fantasia* show that, during this era of animation, the culture's heavily Christian values expressed through things like the Hays Code meant that the only people able to wield magic were either villains defeated by the virtuous light of God, Classical figures with modern morals, or figures from European myth who learn a moral lesson.

Finally, looking to the Satanic Panic and Moral Majority era of the 1980s, we may look to the show *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, the first syndicated show to be based on a toy.⁵⁸ *He-Man*, despite being what was by all means a show intended to sell children's toys, offered some of the few animated depictions of magic and acts as a fairly emblematic

⁵⁸ *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, September 1983.

representation of how magic was shown during the Satanic Panic era. Being a show intended for young boys, *He-Man* focuses on a young prince named Adam in a magical fantasy world where he, using a magical sword gifted to him by the Sorceress of Grayskull, can transform into He-Man so he and his friends can fight the various magic-wielding enemies led by his nemesis, the evil skull-faced demon Skeletor. With *He-Man* and the majority of shows made in the 80s with strong depictions of magic, the people using the magic are usually enemies like Skeletor and his henchmen, figures paralleling the Arthurian Lady of the Lake in gifting power to our hero to fight evil, or as bumbling comic-relief characters on the hero's side like He-Man's ally Orko. Orko, for reference, is a small floating magic user from a different parallel world whose spells often go wrong to humorous effect, meaning his magic was never really used in a serious sense and only for the occasional gag. While it may seem like the opinions have not really changed since the previous period, with the retention of the depictions of magic from an evil user and magic as a gift to vanquish evil sticking around into the current era, the inclusion of a magic user in animation who was on the side of good shows just how far perceptions had changed toward magic's occasional allowance in animation. On the opposite side, the fact that our magic user on the side of good is almost always a gag character whose magic is sparingly used to anything other than comedic effect shows that the era still had to play down the positive depictions of magic users in the medium. This ties in directly with the Moral Majority era as the stark definition of magic as evil meant that those wishing to make commercially successful products like *He-Man* needed to make sure they did not represent magic users as anything that would make children or teens interested in learning how to do it, painting the only actual uses of magic beyond jokes as something only villains do.

As one could reasonably see, much like the West, Eastern societal perceptions of magic and the different folk religions with which they are associated follows a similar track to the history of a nation's animation. China, both in its treatment of animation and magic, had a great basis and potential for success. China's animation began strong and, while they were behind Japan in timing and certain deadlines, made some notable firsts thanks to the Wan Brothers and the work of Shanghai Animation Film Studios. In the same vein, their folk religions and magical traditions were strong with a number of strong cultural elements with a functional balance between the upper and lower classes as well as a number of unique traditions and practices. Both animation and folk religions suffered at the hands of Mao and the Cultural Revolution with their open disapproval and banning of religion, destruction of shrines and temples, and jailing of practitioners and animators being jailed, moved to labor camps, or forced to work on pro-CCP propaganda or else have their work banned like everything deemed not state-approved. Even in the time since the Revolution with the gradual progression from Maoism to the CCP's current state, while these two have since recovered, they never have been able to reach the potential they had prior to the Revolution and the Second Sino-Japanese War, both of which severely limited their potential and growth in China.

Japan, as previously mentioned, could not be more opposite. Having lived up to the potential they had since the start, both animation and the folk religions and magical practices native to the archipelago have thrived and even attracted popularity outside of their home. It began incredibly strong, having a solid and codified Shinto religion from the previous Meiji Era and having made notable strides early on in Eastern animation thanks to the Fathers of Anime and private creators like the unnamed creator of *Katsudō shanshin*. From there, thanks to state-sponsorship, the medium grew and changed, with animation growing more toward propaganda

and Shinto being adapted into State Shinto. After the war, the two continued to grow and develop and, to this day, are incredibly prominent in Japanese culture with anime being one of Japan's biggest exports and an international phenomenon while Shinto is Japan's most prominent religion and system of belief with incredibly popular festivals recurring every year.

Finally, we come to Korea, which had the most difference between its histories. Despite this, there are some similarities. Muism is notably quite similar to Chinese folk religions and had faced some level of influence from the invading Japanese and their attempts to integrate the religion into State Shinto. Korean animation is similar in this regard as, while they have had their own successes with original animated characters, the primary basis for their success in animation is their importation as a primary location for the outsourcing of in-between animation. This nature of Korean animation and folk religion as being heavily influenced by outside entities is not unique to this as Korea is very commonly known for being heavily influenced by the two nations to its East and West, Japan and China respectively, with it often being nicknamed the Little Dragon as its culture was so heavily influenced by the two in its development.

The two had significant impacts upon one another, as one can see from the actual media produced in the different countries and time periods. The animation done in the East relies heavily on science fiction and magical elements, especially in Japan. Religious items like charms used in Shinto can be seen in anime specifically dealing in the supernatural with some even featuring shrines and Torii gates, both incredibly tied to Shintoism as a religion. As for China, the original animations they had produced relied on traditional magical elements and belief with shorts like *Pigsy Eats a Watermelon* drawing directly from the classic 16th century Chinese novel *The Journey to the West*. But with the Chinese Civil War, subsequent invasion, occupation, and war with the Imperial Japanese, and turn to Maoist communism under the CCP and its later

Cultural Revolution, China and its traditional magical roots have since been severed as the government actively seeks to criminalize and suppress traditional folk belief systems, only allowing them to exist in secret or in a thinly-veiled tolerance. Finally, South Korea's magical tradition and folk religions like Muism cannot really be seen in their animation as their primary output in the field is based in the work on other properties from nations like Japan and the United States. Because of this, much like with the suppression of Muism as a heretical belief system by their pro-Christian government in the 1970s and 80s, their unique perspective in animation has since become more rare than other nations, having opted to make something created outside of their nation work for them, as they did with Christianity in the South.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EASTERN VERSUS WESTERN

From looking at the Eastern and Western traditions in animation as well as societal perception of folk religion and magic, one can notice some sizable similarities across the two very different cultures. While the start of animation and its progression in the two halves is not the same, with the West having started animating earlier, the overall progress made is about on target with one another as roughly thirty years after the first rudimentary examples of animation as we know it in black and white, color was added. In contrast though is that the West invented these techniques just ten years after the real beginning of Eastern animation and it took the same amount of time for it to be invented from black and white for it to spread to the East. Another notable similarity between the two is that whenever an outside system of belief, whether it be Christianity or Communism, gets involved with a nation, the nation's animation as well as their perceptions of magic change drastically corresponding to the degree of severity in the overall societal change. We see this especially in the case of China and the impacts it had on the two by

Mao's Cultural Revolution as well as in the case of the rise of the Moral Majority during the Satanic Panic with its impacts on how magic was allowed to be used in a socially acceptable sense.

Beyond this, one may also note the differences in how magic is seen in both Eastern and Western animation. In the West, magic is almost always used according to its specific era's societal perception of magic and folk religious practice as a whole. Whether it be the Hays Code Era and its restriction to either evil characters or more mythological usages or the Satanic Panic's restrictions on magic only being used by villains and comic relief characters with the subtext being that only evildoers use magic successfully as the good characters can only use it with certain comedic side effects, the Hollywood-dominated West primarily sticks to these societal and industry norms. Eastern depictions have a notable shift from this. As they never were founded after the dominance Christianity like America was, they were more free to hold onto traditional belief systems more in line with folk religions and magical practices. It was only when outside forces that were either heavily influenced by Christianity or Western society interfered that this demonization of these traditional belief systems could be seen. In societies more untouched by this however, like Japan, systems of belief more in line with a folk religion are the dominant theological system with most people celebrating polytheist, animist folk religion-based festivals and embracing the more magical elements like the kami and charms meant to protect someone from the oni. For Japan, unlike other nations which had more significant Western-influenced or Christian-influenced cultural and societal cross-contamination, their media is significantly more magical from the start with series in the Magical Girl genre gaining popularity since the early-1980s, showing magic users who were actively doing good while using magic or items directly loaned from Shintoism and traditional Japanese religions.

The quintessential Magical Girl anime, *Sailor Moon*, even had one of their Sailor Soldiers, Sailor Mars, one of the main characters of the show, be a miko or shrine maiden, working to help her Shinto shrine function, selling amulets to those who want good luck, and ensuring the shrine is properly maintained. Even in the time since the Cultural Revolution, China, which has since become more tolerant toward their own traditional folk religious and magical past, has had positive depictions of magic in their animated films and series with films like *Lotus Lantern* which tell traditional and magical Chinese folk stories.

CURRENT STATE OF ANIMATION

Looking to our current era, we can see just how much our past has shaped the state of animation and our views on magic as a whole. In the West, from the rise of fundamentalist Christian thought and morality to the induction of the Hays Code to the Moral Majority and Satanic Panic era to the era of burgeoning interest in the systems of belief magic allows, we as a society have changed our opinions on magic across the past century. And so too with it, our depictions of magic within media, especially animation, have changed with them. Looking at animated media today, one may see a plethora of positive representations of magic users, from Disney's TV show *The Owl House* to movies like Pixar's *Onward*. These properties are just the most recent in a long line of animated depictions of magic and, thanks to those that came before, we can definitively say that not only do our societal perceptions change how we depict magic in animation, the two seemingly different fields are inseparably linked within culture.

As it currently stands, Eastern animation is dominated by anime. While China and Korea do create a number of animated pieces to this day, Japan's control over the world in the realm of animation make it the primary producer of animation in Asia and the East. Modern anime is

notably different from where it started with genres expanding at a rapid rate. Now, with the rise of streaming and a growing preference in English-speaking audiences for subtitled anime as opposed to fully recorded English voice over dubs, anime is easier to broadcast on a global scale in an understandable manner for everyone who wishes to watch it. In recent years, large media companies like Netflix and Hulu have even taken to commissioning their own anime series like Netflix's *Seven Deadly Sins* and Crunchyroll's *Tower of God*. Even the themes within anime have developed far beyond what they originally were. Instead of *Astro Boy*'s simple plot about a robot boy fighting evil, we now have plot lines like *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* which ponder not only our existence in the world but also what it means to be morally correct and whether good people can do bad things for the right reasons or even to do good. We have also seen greater Queer representation in anime, a genre known for its censorship when exported to nations outside of Japan. Whereas storylines like *Sailor Moon*'s lesbian relationship between Sailor Soldiers Uranus and Neptune were turned into two cousins in the English localization, removing one of the first positive examples of a lesbian couple in media, now series like *Yuri!!! On ICE* are standout examples of how to depict Queer themes, relationships, and people in a positive way without resorting to stereotypical or derogatory depictions. Korea, as previously mentioned, is the primary location of "in-betweeners" animators in both Japan and America, the largest producers of animation in the East and West respectively. This is a trend that seems to hold true, as this has been the case since the 1970s at the earliest. South Korea saw a necessary gap and filled it, playing a vital role in the rise of animation as a genre since the outsourcing of animation began to their nation as without their studios' work on doing the majority of the actual

animation of record-breaking and award-winning shows like AKOM's work on *The Simpsons* and DR Movie's work on *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure*.⁵⁹ ⁶⁰

CLOSING THOUGHTS

From the very first moments, animation has been a magical way to do things you would never be able to do in real life, a certain type of magic in and of itself. From clowns who can lift themselves off the page and make entire symphonies appear to a talking mouse who puts on his master's cap and commands a broom to a prince who transforms into a hero using a magic sword so he can fight a demonic magic user with a skull for a face, magic and animation go hand in hand. This is not solely a Western or Hollywood perspective though as both in the East and the West this holds true. Where this differs is in how the two societies handled their respective magical traditions and the magic of animation in an increasingly rapid and ever-changing world. Whether it be Japan holding fast to their roots of Shintoism or the resurgence of magic and traditional folk religions like Muism in Korea and Modern Neopaganism in the Americas, it seems magic is something inherent to human nature but how a given society can handle it is what matters most. It seems, however, that the ways we view magic and that particularly wonderful medium of animation are inexplicably linked. Hence why a society's changing perceptions of magic almost always comes with incredible changes to the magic of animation.

⁵⁹ "AKOM Studios Portfolio and Awards," AKOM, 2011, <http://www.akomkorea.com/main.php?mm=s13>.

⁶⁰ "디알무비 - 포트폴리오 (DR Movie Studios Client Portfolio)," 디알무비 - 포트폴리오, 2022, <https://drmovie.co.kr/index.php?mid=Works&category=120&country=Japan>.

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