The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus
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Miyazaki Hayao and the Asia-Pacific War 宮崎駿とアジア太平洋戦争
Jul. 21, 2013

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Miyazaki Hayao, director of famous animated films such as *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Princess Mononoke* (1997), and *Spirited Away* (2001), is one of the most popular and influential media figures in Japan. The premiere of a new Miyazaki film is a major event and on July 20, *Kaze Tachinu* (The Wind Rises), his first project since the 2008 hit *Ponyo* (an eco-fable discussed here by Susan Napier), arrives in theatres across Japan.

Kaze Tachinu, set mostly in the 1930s and based on the life of "Zero Fighter" designer Horikoshi Jiro, is a departure for Miyazaki. Each of his films since 1984's *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* has had significant fantasy (or at least "magical realist") elements. Miyazaki has consistently dealt with war and violence, however. On to Diana Wynne Jones' *Howl's Moving Castle*, a whimsical young adult novel about a wizard and his companions battling curses and searching for a missing prince, Miyazaki grafted an anti-militarist meta-theme and horrifying scenes of the bombing of civilians in wartime. Incensed by the American invasion of Iraq, Miyazaki refused to travel to the United States to attend the 2003 Oscars where he was to receive his Best Animated Film award for *Spirited Away*. There are ambiguities in Miyazaki's anti-war stance. He is fascinated by military technology, everything from Japanese fighter planes to German battle tanks, and has penned manga which arguably fetishize the weapons of war, but he also marched against Japanese rearmament and the Vietnam War in the 1960s and has been an outspoken critic of nationalism and violence in interviews and his own writings ever since.

Miyazaki's look at the Asia-Pacific War in 2013 with *Kaze Tachinu* comes at a time in which controversy over Japan's wars of the 1930s and 1940s and the memory, commemoration, and representation of those conflicts, is intensifying. Hashimoto Toru, the central figure of the Japan Restoration Party, caused an uproar in May when he blithely commented that the wartime comfort women system was necessary, a sort of "gift" or "reward" to soldiers risking their lives for the nation. While he has not been as outspokenly crass as Hashimoto since returning to office in December 2012, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's past statements and affiliations with groups that promote revisionist history have sparked controversy in Japan and internationally. How does Miyazaki Hayao's vision of history and his decision to bring the life of the designer of the Zero, one of Japan's most well-known World War II weapons, to the screen, fit with the current climate of debate on Japanese history and Abe's proposed revision of Article 9, the "peace clause" of the Japanese Constitution?

To promote *Kaze Tachinu*, Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli is distributing widely free issues of its magazine *Neppu* ("Hot Wind"[1]). Miyazaki and others at the studio are taking their time in the national spotlight as a chance to raise issues related to war, history, and current debates over constitutional revision. In Miyzaki's essay, the centerpiece of a long feature on the Constitution, he outlines his beliefs about war, empire, and their meanings for Japan's future.

The essay begins with a description of Miyazaki's own experience of war as a young boy: "I was born in 1941… and had a strong feeling in my childhood that we had 'fought a truly stupid war'. Many times… I heard adults speak boastfully of the horrible things they had done on the Chinese continent. At the same time, I also heard about the extent of the horrors of the air raids [on Japan]. I heard many stories and I started to think that I had been born in a country that had done stupid things and I truly started to hate Japan."

Miyazaki is not setting himself up as a model of pacifism or resistance. He believes that had he been of age, he would have been a true believer, drunk on stories of heroic sacrifice and wrapped up in the propaganda system. He writes: "If I had been born a bit earlier, I would have been a *gunkoku shonen* (Militarist Youth)." Miyazaki believes that he would have been a kamikaze volunteer and if turned down because of his poor eyesight, he would have enthusiastically drawn propaganda pictures or manga in support of Japan's military machine.

Miyazaki describes the national culture of wartime as "hysteria", driven by government and military elites, but remaining an object of responsibility and necessary reflection for civilians as well. During the war, Miyazaki's father was the manager of a factory that made military airplane parts. His father, he reports, was not a patriot. He went into the war business to make money and, as was common for Japanese who were adults in wartime, was completely unreflective about his role after the end of the conflict. He also quickly let go of wartime animosities, befriended American soldiers during the occupation, and even opened a dance bar featuring American blues and jazz. Nevertheless, Miyazaki recalls arguing bitterly with his father as a teenager, "trying to get him to acknowledge his war responsibility." In the *Neppu* article, Miyazaki clearly places responsibility on the "militarist government" for leading Japan to violent expansion and then to ruin, but also interrogates the war responsibility of his family and by extension, the wider civilian population. *Kaze Tachinu* protagonist Horikoshi, an engineer who had no choice but to work for the military if he wanted to continue to design airplanes, is seen by Miyazaki as an important figure for understanding the pressures felt by civilians in wartime and grasping "just how messed-up this country really was."[2]

Horikoshi's youth is also a window onto one of Miyazaki's signature themes – the tensions between industrial society and the environment. As a message for the readers of *Neppu*, Miyazaki combines criticism of nationalism with an environmentalist appeal. He reports that after returning to Japan following his first trip abroad to Sweden in his 30s, he started to have strong feelings for Japan's natural environment: "… I started to understand just how much I love the plants and the natural world of these islands. If there were no people, I thought, the Japanese islands would be unbelievably beautiful. I became aware that it wasn't the nation or the rising sun flag that I loved, but it was the land that is truly special." Miyazaki is no misanthrope, however. Later in the piece he outlines a vision of a Japan with a population of around thirty million with an economy that has been de-nuclearized and promotes shared prosperity, grounded understanding of how goods make it from farm, field, or factory to a consumer's hands, and environmental sustainability. If a market for animation no longer exists in such a country, Miyazaki adds, so be it.

For Miyazaki, the central importance of looking at the war, however, is peace and the "peace clause" of the Constitution in particular. Miyazaki turns to a specific critique of Prime Minister Abe and Japan's nationalist revisionists: "Of history [novelist] Hotta Yoshie said, 'History is in front of us. The future is behind.' It is only the past that we can really see. I understand how [some people] do not want to see the history of Japanese militarism. However, if you are a politician of the country called Japan, if you aren't educated about this and do not seek to find out about it for yourself, you simply will not be able to cut it in international society." Miyazaki calls out Abe for not studying history seriously and only paying attention to those stories he wants to hear: "... people want to say that 'Prewar Japan wasn't bad', but it just was. It is simply wrong to deny this. The comfort women issue is an important one for the honor and dignity of other peoples, so we have to properly apologize and pay compensation."

Miyazaki believes that the "peace clause" of the Constitution should be the cornerstone of Japan's international orientation at present: "It goes without saying that I am opposed to revising the constitution." He wants an immediate shift in discussion of Japan's territorial disputes: "For territorial disputes, we have to divide [the areas] in half or put forward a proposal to administer them jointly." In response to the idea of a "China Threat", Miyazaki writes: "China is expanding because of natural changes going on inside it. The contradictions that we see in China are a part of our contemporary global condition, they are not problems that we can address by increasing armament or making the JSDF into a 'national army'." Miyazaki does not make clear whether he is referring to the "expansion" of China's global influence or its military and maritime power. He sees a solution to stresses, however, in a broad rethinking of market fundamentalism, the ways that an obsession with production and a mercantilist obsession with trade causes conflict, and calls for closer consideration of environmental impacts, the need to share resources, and so on.

The *Neppu* collection contains other important articles. Ghibli Producer Suzuki Toshio argues: "It is through our representation of the wars caused by Japan that a vision of Japan's future starts to come into view." He explains that there are no battle scenes in *Kaze Tachinu*, nor does the film show people striving for the "sake of the country". Suzuki points out that in *Porco Rosso* and *Howl's Moving Castle*, Miyazaki crafted characters who fought for the nation but were left feeling empty, an anti-nationalist imaginary that Suzuki believes is vitally important in a time of international stresses and discord.

In another essay, Takahata Isao, another important Ghibli director and Miyazaki's longtime collaborator, questions the true depth of Japan's postwar pacifism: "we sacrificed the people of Okinawa and became collaborators in [America's wars]." He believes, however, that Article 9 represents a central ideal that Japan should move closer toward, rejecting Abe's desire to instead move farther away.

Now, in 2013, the Japanese left is in electoral shambles, relations with China are at their post-1972 low point, the ascendant Liberal Democrats are trumpeting nuclear restarts, the TPP is raising the possibility of a further plunge in agricultural self-sufficiency, and a new historical revisionist push by conservatives seems likely. Often lost amid these talking points, however, are the strong anti-militarist, anti-revisionist voices that exist among cultural figures such as Miyazaki Hayao and a host of journalists, authors, scholars, and other public figures. Even amid increasing tensions with China, the percentage of Japanese who wish to scrap the "peace clause" of the Constitution is by some measures lower than it was a decade ago. *Kaze Tachinu* fits with Miyazaki's oeuvre and the film and discussions surrounding it are representative of anti-militarist views and critical views of history that continue to be mainstream in Japan.

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[1] *Neppu* is a Japanization of "Ghibli", an Italian term originally from Arabic that marks a "hot wind" over the deserts of North Africa.

[2] This last comment is from a dialogue between Miyazaki and historian Hando Kazutoshi in the August edition of literary and current affairs digest *Bungei Shunju*.

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