STUDII

On Musical Vulnerability

The Joy of Life and the Power of Love as Expressed in Hisaishi Joe's Anime Soundtracks

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1. Introduction: cultural synkretism as commonplace

Largely regarded as animation "made in Japan", the anime – a genre, a technique, an aesthetics, an ideology and a medium – has developed during the last decades to the status of the main carrier of Japanese cultural assets, in addition to manga (Japanese comics). Slowly, it has turned into a quotidian phenomenon able to mediate outside of Japan for non-Japanese audiences the Japanese cultural elements. In more practical terms, this refers to an established, and increasingly powerful, international fan-base whose members surprise outsiders with the employment of Japanese words and concepts in their everyday language and who gradually start to represent such seemingly forgotten values as honesty, courage and perseverance (Maas 2000:88, Poitras 2000:7). Moreover, in its perception and acceptance as one of the most globalized cultural appearances of recent decades, the anime emerged as a strongly market-oriented product, whose relevance resides in its saleability; it is, as such, an exceptionally creative and multifaceted phenomenon, which reflects in its colossal quantity and quality the massive individual, social and historical energy and power held within the framework of "postwar Japan" as a

reputed monolith (Iwabuchi 2004:60; see Kinsella 2000:4): a homogenized, consumption-conditioned medium to respect prevalent rules and regulations in its relation to the nation it belongs to, and a progressive significant 'ambassador' of Japanese cultural assets targeted at the international community.

In addition to the visual dimension, the auditive dimension of the anime is fundamental within its framework as a cultural product, constituted of background sounds and background music, usually called OST (Original Soundtrack) or BGM (Background Music). The background music contributes massively to creating a specific atmosphere, to emphasizing a particular emotional and mental state and to facilitating the transitions between them. Additionally, it is connected to a very strong market-segment: Anime soundtracks are professionally composed and merchandized nationally and internationally, the offer-&-supply hardly covering the huge demand. Understanding the fact that this so-called "background music" is considerably more than plain "background auditive information", as for instance, in Richard Wagner's employment of the orchestra as a commentator of the visual or narrative events, is essential in observing the promotional mechanism of anime-related musical products as independent goods and assets in the field of the entertaiment industry and of the cultural consumption. At times, the (title) songs and the musical themes accompanying anime movies and anime series become independent brands and turn into big hits, being sold by Japanese production companies on international markets as self-sufficient products, while the respective artists become stars practically over-night. There is no exaggeration in asserting that a strong, almost intrinsic relationship has emerged between anime soundtracks and the artists who stay behind them: On the one hand, famous composers and musicians contribute significantly through their music to the success of an anime product; on the other hand, less famous composers and musicians may become stars of national and international reputation in a very short period of time by getting involved into the production process of anime works. In the first

category, names as Hisaishi Joe and Kanno Yôko can be included, while in the second category, the Japanese *visual-kei* band WORLD (*Death Note*, anime TV series, 2007) or the girls band AmuYumi Puffy (*The Tale of Prince Genji: The Millennial Chronicle*, anime TV series, 2009) can be taken as relevant examples.

The current paper focuses on Hisaishi Joe and his numerous anime soundtracks composed for anime movies released by Studio Ghibli.[1] On his real name Fujisawa Mamoru藤澤守, Hisaishi Joe久石譲 was born on December 6th, 1950, in Nagano; he started his career as a composer of serial-minimal music during his study at Kunitachi Music Academy. After his first album Information (1982), he received in the year 1983 the offer to create the Image-Album for *Nausicaä from the*

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[1] Since its foundation in 1985 with a stable location in Higashi-Koganei, in Western Tokyo, Studio Ghibli has turned over the decades into a symbolic institution of the Japanese entertainment industry. The name mostly associated with Studio Ghibli is Miyazaki Hayao 宮崎駿 (born in 1942), who has collected the most recognition, but he is, in fact, solely a member of what might be called "the Ghibli Quartet", consisting of Miyazaki Hayao, Takahata Isao 高畑勲 (1935-2018), SUZUKI Toshio 鈴木敏夫 (born in 1948) and HISAISHI Joe. The "founding quartet" included TAKAHATA Isao, MIYAZAKI Hayao, SUZUKI Toshio and TOKUMA Yasuyoshi 徳間 康快 (1921-2000), with the last two serving as producer and manager, respectively. The composer Hisaishi Joe is the only one to come later to join the Ghibli enterprise. Nowadays, one can talk of the Studio Ghibli in terms of an expanding "Ghibli corporation", with a Ghibli Museum founded in 2001, and located in Mitaka, Tokyo (projected and built under the supervision of MIYAZAKI Gorô 宮崎五郎, Miyazaki Hayao's eldest son, born in 1967), a real-life replica of Satsuki & Mei's House from the anime movie *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988) situated on the EXPO 2005's site in Nagakute, Aichi prefecture (by Miyazaki Gorô, as well), and a long-expected Ghibli theme park in Aichi prefecture, to be opened most probably in 2020.

Valley of the Winds (『風の谷のナウシカ』 *Kaze no tani no Naushika*). Miyazaki Hayao and Takahata Isao, the grounding directors of Studio Ghibli, were so deeply impressed with the result, that they allowed Hisaishi to compose the whole soundtrack for *Nausicaä from the Valley of the Winds*. Subsequently, it was released as an anime movie in 1984 by Studio Ghibli, under the direction of Miyazaki Hayao. Throughout the decades, Hisaishi composed the music for *Laputa: The Castle in the Sky* (『天空の城ラピュータ』 *Tenkû no shiro Rapyûta*, 1986), *My Neighbor Totoro* (『となりのトトロ』 *Tonari no Totoro*, 1988), *Kiki's Delivery Service* (『キキの宅急便』 *Kiki no takkyûbin*, 1989), *Porco Rosso* (『紅の豚』*Kurenai no buta*, 1992), *Princess Mononoke* (『もののけ姫』*Mononoke hime*, 1997), *Spirited Away* (『千と千尋の神隠し』 *Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi*, 2001), *Howl's Moving Castle* (『ハウルの動く城』 *Hauru no ugoku shiro*, 2004), *Ponyo* (『ポニョ』 *Ponyo*, 2008), *The Wind Rises* (『風立ちぬ』*Kaze tachinu*, 2013) and *The Tale of Princess Kaguya* (『かぐや姫の物語』 *Kaguya-hime no monogatari*, 2013). With the exception of *The Tale of Princess Kaguya*, which was directed by the late Takahata Isao, all other anime works mentioned previously were directed by Miyazaki Hayao. Besides anime soundtracks for anime movies produced by Studio Ghibli, Hisaishi Joe has been composing soundtracks for live-action movies and TV dramas released both in Japan (particularly under the direction of the Japanese director Kitano Takeshi) and in other Asian countries (i.e., South Korea, where he has an impressive fan base due to his music for the movie *Welcome to Dongmakgol*, 2005, directed by Park Kwang-hyun, and for the MBC drama series *The Legend: The Story of the First King's Four Gods*, 2007, directed by Kim Jong-hak and Yoon Sang-ho), as well as solo albums and piano scores. In

addition, to his compositional activities, Hisaishi has been working as a conductor, typesetter and orchestra arranger.

The choice of Hisaishi Joe falls back to his position as creator of (until now) undisputed milestones in the history of the genre of anime soundtracks due to his major association with Miyazaki Hayao, and the powerful position this anime director has taken over, and carefully kept, as one of the main messengers of Japanese cultural assets in the world at large. (Murakami Haruki and his writings would be a further example.) Like Miyazaki Hayao and Murakami Haruki, Hisaishi Joe's contribution to the dissemination and implementation of Japanese cultural assets resides chiefly in the depth of the stylistic expression modes and the idealistic foundations of his music. Particularly significant is the fact that in Hisaishi Joe's anime soundtracks the possible accusation of an uncreative imitation of Western counterparts is overcome through a critical examination of Western sounds and their employment in an innovative, future-oriented manner within the framework of their own compositional endeavors. More exactly, simultaneous with a self-reflexive examination of Western compositional paradigms, a vivid questioning and a blunt revelation of the self takes place, of one's own cultural heritage, in the light of the other as a studied and absorbed (unfamiliar) entity. Just as heroes are driven in their initiation trips by love and the desire to discover the meaning of life, Hisaishi Joe embarks in his quest for suitable means to give expression to his creative ideals in an open confrontation with the Big Other of creative models (to refer to Jacques Lacan's parlance of a powerful system of reference). Authenticity, authentic music or authentic musical style encompass thus the dynamic compilation of most various musical directions, languages, trends and fashions, which unfold in a rainbow-like combination of different languages and genres, from heavy metal to ethno-pop, from Western classics to Eastern modalisms and back to hip-hop: identity and culture emerge, therefore, as results of a hybrid combination of appropriated strategies.

Anime soundtracks can be observed from a variety of perspectives – as a medium, a genre, a technique, a form, an

ideology or an aesthetics. The current paper brings in the foreground the ideological-aesthetical parameters of anime soundtracks, particularly and directly derived from the individual visions of Hisaishi Joe as an exemplary composer. It takes into account precisely the very magic and the deeper levels of significance embedded into animation as a means of expression. The analysis unfolds in three stages: in a first step, the stylistic history of Hisaishi Joe's path is explained, as revealed in the anime movies released by Studio Ghibli, followed by the detailed explanation of the last two anime works from 2013 – *The Wind Rises* and *The Tale of Princess Kaguya*. In the *Conclusions*, I shall succintly summarize the main elements of the musical construction of the Japanese cultural identity as it emerges from Hisaishi Joe's anime soundtracks, and resulting from the juxtaposition of Japanese flair and Western technique: it itself, a typical concretization of the mid-19th century slogan *wakon yôsai* (和魂洋才 "Japanese spirit/roots, Western technology/knowledge") which has been dominating the whole Japanese modernity (since 1868).

While it is true that academic research and corresponding publications on anime have been booming in recent years, it is mainly the visual dimension to get the credits, with the auditive/musical dimension being mostly dragged in the background of the scientific discourse. Analytical debates in commercial journals, mostly published by fans, provide plenty of important ethnographic information, however, they reach only seldom the level of academic depth and severity. As outlined further below, on the basis of existing scientific research on anime, I shall deliver a thorough empirical analysis of Hisaishi Joe's anime soundtracks, completed by insights provided by intensive discussions with anime entrepreneurs (directors, composers, producers) and anime consumers (fans), in quantitative and qualitative approaches. Additionally, I observe musical phenomena both intrinsically, in the cultural context of their emergence and development, and extrinsically, on the social, economical and political background of their popularity and circulation. This historical contextualization supplies the

scientific enterprise with credibility and consistency, not least due to the lack of referentiality backed by secondary sources.

2. Hisaishi Joe and the quest
for a Japanese musical identity

While the plot, the character design and the drawing techniques are fundamental dimensions of any anime work, the auditive background plays an equally important role in shaping the structure and balance of an anime production, and thus decisively contributes to its success: In addition to the voice-over (the ubiquitous narrator), dialogues and monologues, sound effects and background music are to be taken into consideration (Wells 1998:97-99, Poitras 2000:88). The background music is essential, in anime productions as in cartoons and live-action movies as well, in creating a specific atmosphere and in emphasizing particular emotional states and transitions; some composers of anime music – e.g., Hisaishi Joe or Kanno Yôko, more recently, Kajiura Yuki and Kawai Kenji – have become popular by composing music for anime works. In particular, the albums of anime soundtracks represent a strong professional industry branch, domestically and internationally, due to an unexpectedly strong demand. Accordingly, so-called "Domestic CDs" relying on the most popular anime productions (e.g., *Sailor Moon*, *Revolutionary Girl Utena*, *Rurouni Kenshin: Romantic Tales of a Swordsman in Meiji-Japan*, etc.) have been locally produced with nation-specific features, meaning that the title songs are translated into the language of the country in which they are merchandized.

Furthermore, so-called "Original Soundtracks" of anime productions, also named "Image Soundtracks", are inspired by the music of a particular anime work and consist partially of single albums of the anime protagonists and their voice actors/actresses of the respective anime work. Voice actors and actresses (*seiyû*) are very important as well, and possess their own magazines, e.g., *Voice Animage*, who may become at times as popular as live-action actors and actresses: An

impresive celebrity is Hayashibara Megumi who started her carrer as voice actress in 1986, and lent her voice to such anime characters as Faye Valentine in *Cowboy Bebop* (*Kaubôi Bibappu*, Japan, 1998 director: Watanabe Shin'ichirô, music: Kanno Yôko), Ayanami Rei, Ikari Yui and Pen Pen (the Penguin, in *Neon Genesis Evangelion*), Ranma-chan in *Ranma 1/2* (*Ranma ni bun no ichi*, 1989-1992, director Mochizuki Tomomi, Shibayama Tsutomu, Sawai Kôji, Nishimura Junji), Achika (in *Tenchi Muyô!*, 1991-2001, director Ozawa Kazuhiro Hayashi Hiroki, Yatani Ken'ichi), Ai in *Video Girl Ai* (*Bideo Garu Ai*; Poitras 2000:16; see Ledoux/Ranney 1995). Conclusively, it is correct to assume that the background music, together with the plot, the character structure and the visual design, reliably reflected, historically speaking, the events and the ideas from the immediate reality, which is an important function of the arts in their entanglement with humanity and its quests.

2.1. Appropriation and individualisation: from "domesticating plagiarism" to "hybridizing authenticity"

Hisaishi Joe does not intend to faithfully accompany with his music the images created by Miyazaki Hayao: rather, he is searching for ways to enhance their aesthetical and ideological force. According to this vision, Hisaishi Joe designs a musical universe full of uncanny contrasts and playful contradictions, which clearly illustrate the permeating underlying tension between hopeless love and self-fashioned apocalypse. His work can be divided in three stages, depending on the diversity of the musical language, on the one hand, and on the active contribution to the vitality of the images, on the other hand. The long, at times strenuous, progress from "domesticating" the other without cheap plagiarism, towards that type of authenticity, which both allows the self to express itself and guarantees the access to the wider landscape of international perception and appreciation, is displayed in the anime products released by Ghibli Studio throughout its history; particularly

those to which Hisaishi Joe has composed the soundtrack are important steps in this process.

The first stage starts with *Nausicaä from the Valley of the Winds* (1984), which is officially a pre-Ghibli anime work, and lasts until *Porco Rosso* (1992), which carries in its musical language the playfulness and that sense of curiosity mostly associated with the youthful joy of life. *Nausicaä from the Valley of the Winds*, with its heavy tones of personal discovery and individual loss on the background of a post-nuclear human world, prepares the ground for the lofty, more lighthearted music of *Laputa: The Castle in the Sky* (1986), of which the title-song *[Riding the Wind] With You* (「君を乗せて」 *Kimi wo nosete*) addresses directly audiences seeking solace and certainty. The orchestration of the soundtrack reminisces in both cases of post-Wagnerian intensive employment of wind instruments to carry the main musical message, while the dynamic dialogue between the strings (particularly in *Laputa: The Castle in the Sky*) serve to re-create a colorful universe of flying castles in a typical steam-punk set-up. A fairly different atmosphere is encountered in the next two anime works, both of which depict powerful, and deeply inspiring, coming-of-age stories: *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), the tale of the two sisters in Japan's late 1950s striving to assist their parents in the mysterious, friendly countryside, displays a contagiously happy music, bubbling with joyful tones reminding of the dancing melodies of childhood. They are plain, though highly memorable melodies, which have eversince mesmerized almost two generations of children (in Japan as worldwide). A slightly more serious process is told in *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), where the 13-year old witch Kiki is supposed to leave home, according to the rules of the witches' world, and find her own way for one year. Hisaishi's music explores Kiki's various emotional states and accompanies her on her initiation journey with suitable soft music, designed to confer depth and authenticity to her persona, and thus, to create a subliminal relation to audiences. Generally regarded as Miyazaki's most personal work, *Porco Rosso* appears equally as a transitional

product, reflecting both the disenchantment process occurring in the Japanese society in the aftermath of the economic recession and the paradigm shift in the anime industry towards a more compassionate, less competitive approach to audiences. Here, Hisaishi creates a musical background respiring the hopeful air of the 1920s in Southern Europe, which was recovering after war, before the militarization and hatred took hold of history again. Italian canzonettas and military march music are combined with French chansons and waltz rhythmicity, and create a multicolored sound environment, in which the joy of life and the hope for the future prevail unconditionally.

Porco Rosso introduces the maturity age of Ghibli Studio with epic animation works like *Princess Mononoke* (1997), *Spirited Away* (2001) and *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), ending in *Ponyo* (2008), again, a transitional work towards the grand stories of love and existential questions of the last stage. *Princess Mononoke* is a nostalgic work, which draws its creative energies from the bright humanism of *Kiki's Delivery Service.* A long way from the utopian idealism in *Nausicaä from the Valley of the Winds*, the mature and warm humanism in *Princess Mononoke* unfolds in the depiction of epic battles between gods and humans: regardless of the final solution, the world after the death of gods will never be the same. Hisaishi Joe constructs in *Princess Mononoke* an universe of ludic allusions and contradictory combinations which are indicative of the fragmented fabric of cultural identity in late modernity. The scene towards the end of *Princess Mononoke* in which the forest god Shishigami is killed by the greedy merchants is deeply revealing: the musical background of this scene unifies symphonic structures reminiscent of Anton Bruckner and intimist echoes of pentatonic scales. The brutal sound cluster and the overwhelming instrumental combinations alternate with lyrical melodies in dynamic rhythms, which, together, construct a hymn of life as the best asset one possesses and could ever possess. At the same time, the confrontation between temperate sound constellations and non-temperate sound spaces indicates the impossibility of the return to a safe space

of love and belonging. Thus, while Miyazaki's characters struggle for the preservation of nature or for the improvement of their own living conditions, Hisaishi's music is a reminder of the fullness and freshness of life and of all living beings reunited with nature. The continuously reinforced motto of *Princess Mononoke* is "Ikiro!" ("生きろ！") or "Live!". This message stands out more powerfully in *Spirited Away*, in which the story about the need for dreams and gods in a crumbling world finds itself symbolically representd in a little girl's efforts for her true self and for means to rescue her parents from the deadly curse of greed and arrogance. More importantly, like in *Princess Mononoke*, under the surface of an ideological glorification of pure nature as contrasting the stupidity of humans, *Spirited Away* celebrates a dramatic hymn to life and love as the most valuable assets to be possibly ever possessed (Murase 2004:65). Accordingly, Hisaishi's musical background strengthens the atmosphere of cooperation among humans in their quest for love and repentance, rather than the ecologist message, and prepares the stage for *Howl's Moving Castle*, with its focus on superficial, aesthetic beauty on the costs of inner richness. Thus, the next movie is symptomatic in ist divisional structure: on the one hand, there is Howl, the beautiful magician with ist split personality, both hating and playing war, and obsessed with his physical appearance; on the other hand, there is Sophie, the young lady transformed by the evil Witch of the Waste into an old woman, who is forced to re-define her role in the world. Hisaishi's music supports their development and quest for identity, with complex symphonic structures counterpointing frolicsome moments of emotional intimacy and mental vulnerability.

A late echo of *My Neighbour Totoro*, *Ponyo* returns to the emotionally safe space of folk-tales and childhood discoveries, with their sense of innocence and faith. *Ponyo* is, simultaneously, the other end of the rainbow initiated by *My Neighbour Totoro*, as it draws on friendship, courage and self-confidence, and a contagiously joyful music reminiscent both of folkloric tones and of kids' rhymes. After the previous turbulent

epics, *Ponyo* reminds once again of the necessarily bearable lightness of "just being", beyond any compulsions and fears, and the existential strength, which comes from the occasional contact with – and return to – the magnificent world of childhood. Easygoingly, the music flows with images, and re-calibrates them alongside a historical reality marked by isolation, confusion and loneliness.

Simultaneously, *Ponyo* fulfills the transition towards the third stage in Hisaishi Joe's career, in which this alternative type of Enlightenment with the epic of life as a singular event at its ideological core appears even more powerfully repeated and relentlessly reinforced. The climax of this third stage is 2013: *The Wind Rises* (2013) and *The Tale of Princess Kaguya* (2013). It relates to a type of Enlightenment in which creators and artists celebrate the human being in its uniqueness and unrepeatability, with its failures and confusions, but also with its joys, hopes and dreams. The idea behind this alternative type of Enlightenment is not to banish the biological, animal-like elements from the human being and to exclusively enforce the rational side, but to coordinate these two dimensions harmoniously. Rather than a struggle between the two sides of the human, they are regarded and dealt with a deep-seated quest for harmonization and understanding. Building on this foundation, Hisaishi Joe constructs his music in both *The Wind Rises* and *The Tale of Princess Kaguya* on the premises of an emphasis on the humanity of Miyazaki's and Takahata's characters, with their moments of bliss and frustration, with their worries and dreams, idiosyncrasies and contradictions. For once, in *The Wind Rises*, interwar sonorities, suggesting the freedom and elation of the 1920s as well as the increasing bleakness and brutality of the 1930s-1940s, break through the fourth wall of the title-song *The airplane cloud* (「飛行機雲」 *Hikôki-gumo*), originally released in early 1970s (November 20, 1973) by the Japanese singer and songwriter Yuming (real name Arai Yumi, born 1954). However, in *The Tale of Princess Kaguya*, Hisaishi return to sonorities and instruments traditionally associated with classical, premodern Japan:

particularly *koto* sounds in the key scenes of the main character's development – such as the folk tune *Kids' song* (「童歌」 *Warabe-uta*) – and the ineffable impermeability of pentatonic scales, softly combined with the tense imponderability of modal resolutions in the title-song *Memories of life* (「命の記憶」 *Inochi no kioku*, originally composed by the Japanese singer and songwriter Nikaidô Kazumi, born 1974), integrated in the flow of musical landscape. Love – for nature, for the human fellows, for the future – is absorbed artistically in parallel with the sensitive consideration of the historical environment implying cultural events on the wider world stage: While Hisaishi Joe does his best in creatively coping with the tense climate of the early 2010s, he clashes against the commandment of critical realism. Hisaishi chooses to avoid the entanglement with the political disenchantment typical for the era with a keen observation of the social fabric, by transcending the tangible reality of the society – and of the potential audiences and cinema-goers – in the sounds of an orchestration full of vitality, of unlimited hopes and of courageous exuberance. In doing so, he aligns with similar efforts of other Japanese creators of products of popular culture – anime, manga, live-action movies, video-games, J-Pop, etc. – who have been carrying on this task for the past 35 years: to send out in the world the message, which reiterates life as the most valuable asset to be ever possessed by the human being, and by all living entities – a message of love and of acceptance, of tenacity, integrity and faith.

2.2. Back to Japan: 2013
and the temptation of *wakon wasai*

The rise and increasing popularity of the Ghibli Studio has to be seen within the historical context of recent decades (roughly since late 1970s, with the emergence of the so-called *Nihonjinron* movement, translated as "theories on Japanese [people] and Japaneseness", see Yoshino 1992:37) and by the

efforts of Japanese intellectuals to actively establish Japan's position in (late) modernity. The economic recession inside the country since the early 1990s, on the one hand, and the fact that Japan's direct relations to the world community have been increasingly impacted by globalization, especially in its economic dimension, since early 2000s, on the other hand, forced its leading political elite to acknowledge the necessity to observe international changing standards of cultural "nation branding" – or "re-branding", as in case of those nations such as France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, which had a past of imperialist endeavours –, so that Japan would gain a central seat at the global table of nations. Framed as the cultural version of classical imperialism (which was mainly focused on trade and its economic immediate benefits) and pursued by means of artistic products of the entertainment industry (hence its interchangeable denomination as "Soft Power", in opposition with the "Hard Power" of military systems)[1], this more often than not intellectual development called "cultural imperialism" aimed, originally, at re-defining Japan's position from an importer of cultural elements into an exporter – and thus, into a trend-setter, internationally recognized. Since early 2010s, the Japanese project of cultural imperialism has gradually evolved and has been distancing itself from its US-American counterpart by the distinct affiliation to political interests (whereas in case of non-Japanese cultural imperialism, economic pressures and opportunities tend to dominate).

In this politically charged context, *The Wind Rises* displays in its re-consideration of biographic elements with individual responsibility situated ahead of historical context, a fundamental re-evaluation of cultural assets, genuinely wrapped-up as artistic entertainment. Similarly, from the other end of history, *The Tale of Princess Kaguya*, with its painful

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[1] There is, though, a series of subtle differences between Soft Power and cultural imperialism, the most important among them being whether it happens with a clear target at a specific nation or area (Soft Power) or whether it is diffused globally, without a direct regional goal (cultural imperialism; see Iwabuchi 2015:425, Rothkopf 1997:35).

yearning for slow tempos of classical Japan of Heian period (794-1185) might be seen as the ideological climax of a long history of transforming the external inputs into national cultural assets, which would later on turn into economic and political power. They are expressions of significant efforts to contextualize the Japanese version of late-modern cultural imperialism as a dynamic continuation of the Meiji period (1868-1912) slogan *wakon yôsai* (Japanese roots/spirituality, Western knowledge/technology) and to integrate the preoccupation for cultural liberalism and social cohesion as fundamental premises of economic prosperity and political stability. (Murakami Haruki's latest novels, the monumental *1Q84* from 2009-2010 or *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* from 2013, are potentially literary expressions of the same tendency.) During the Meiji period (around the 1880s), the pre-modern slogan *wakon kansai[1]* (和魂漢才 "Japanese spirit/roots, Chinese technology/knowledge") was replaced by *wakon yôsai* ("Japanese spirit/roots, Western technology/knowledge). Thus, Japanese technocrats at mid-19th century decided to gradually turn away from the Chinese models which had been serving as inspiration sources for centuries, and appeal to the Western paradigms of knowledge and technology. Furthermore, prior to this decision, there was a period of confusion and turmoil, in which the need to keep and develop a model according to the existing traditions and doctrines prevailed, as the slogan *sonnô jôi* (尊王攘夷, "revere the Emperor, expel the [Western] barbarians") illlustrates (McClain 2002: 140-144). This mentality clashed with the necessity to adapt to the Western policies and paradigms, as reflected in the slogan *bunmei kaika* (文明開化, literally meaning "[Western] civilization and enlightenment"; McClain 2002: 169-181). Furthermore, since late 2000s, the mid-19th slogan *wakon yôsai* ("Japanese spirit/roots, Western technology/knowledge) has been slowly, gradually developing

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[1] *Wakon kansai* refers to the long centuries in which China had served as the main source of information and instruction on all levels.

into *wakon wasai* (和魂和才 "Japanese spirit/roots, Japanese technology/knowledge"), a tendency clearly visible in present-day Japan. It is an important transition from a worldview based on imported artefacts, which underwent a process of "Japanisation", towards an existential paradigm in which national identity serves as a cultural construction of the "national self" (also known as "nation-branding") promoted, propagated and implemented on an international level.

The individual consciousness of historical belonging in what Miyazaki displays as a multi-layered "look at how Horikoshi Jirô's passion for flight was captured by capital-flow and militarism" (*Asia-Pacific Journal*) is subtly counterpointed by this emotional ambivalence towards the position of the intellectuals in times of historical turmoil. A symbolical return to Takahata's *The Grave of the Fireflies* (『火垂るの墓』*Hotaru no haka*) from 1988, *The Wind Rises* is both an appeal to accept war as an unavoidable and to a certain degree necessary evil, and a reminder upon the position of the individual within the political system. It is a late echo of the credo in intellectual activism strongly represented by the so-called *anpo* movement of the late 1960s, of which Takahata Isao and Miyazaki Hayao, the "Big Two" of the "Ghibli Quartet", were main representatives.[1] *The Wind Rises* depicts "war" simply as an additional dimension of "evil" transcending the limits of time and space, resulting in the revitalisation of the past via cultural artifacts in praising technology, human bonding and nature,

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[1] The *anpo* movement was a student movement in Japan, comparable to the Western 1968-movement, and opposing the renewal of the *Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan* 日本国とアメリカ合衆国との間の相互協力及び安全保障条約 *Nippon-koku to Amerika-gasshûkoku to no Aida no sôgo kyôryoku oyobi anzen hoshô jôyaku* (also known as *anpo jôyaku* 安保条約 or just *anpo*安保), first signed in 1952 in San Francisco, then amended in 1960 in Washington and extended in 1970, in spite of the protests in Japan by students and leftist intellectuals.

thus creating social cohesion and mutual acceptance among individuals living in here and now. In this *bildungsroman* (novel of formation) with the animated medium as representation channel, flying becomes a *raison d'être*, like in the oeuvres delivered by the French elite pilot and writer Antoine de Saint-Exupery (1900-1944), while airplanes are instrumental towards exploring a fresh existential attitude, as stated in the anime movie by the Italian aviator Giovanni Caproni (Jirô's imaginary mentor) at the beginning of the movie:

"飛行機は戦争や経済の道具ではない。それ自体が美しい夢なのだ。"

("Airplanes are not for war or making money. Airplanes are beautiful dreams waiting to be swallowed by the sky.")

On a slightly different note, *The Tale of Princess Kaguya* sends a reminder that in times of ubiquitous *Cool Japan* symptomatology, the re-invigoration of local myths and legends provokes a nostalgic U-turn towards a more classical worldview with the simultaneous intellectualisation of popular culture encompassing the rather conservative message that love, happiness and existential fulfillment are more than ever individual choices in late-modernity. Its mediated sense of *mono no aware* ("the pathos of things") emerges from images of life being the loveliest in its transience and of terrible finality. Rising above impossible standards of success and likeability, the late-modern "feminine woman" in the stature of Princess Kaguya decides that her destiny lies in the very choices she is making. Princess Kaguya doesn't find, indeed, her fulfillment in direct connection with a man, but rather in her decision to pursuit her own path in life, and in her determination and commitment to stay true to herself. It takes sacrifice and pain, as love is not something to take: it is something to give, to oneself and to the ohers, a mindful choice made every day – like happiness and the warm, soft sense of belonging. Beyond the solitude which might arise from such an attitude towards life, there is the ineffable promise of a better world to emerge from the chaos and confusion of this one, suffocated in sex, consumerism and hatred: a promise of acceptance and solace,

of quiet celebration of the human being and of humanity in its astonishing diversity and unleashed potential.

In this context, Hisaishi Joe's music is an excellent socio-cultural barometer of the Japanese society in transition as well as an aesthetic-ideological foundation of the Japanese entertainment industry in the spiral-like practice of internalizing external paradigms into a century-old system of constructing, propagating and implementing Japanese assets. Within this process, Japan shifted from its position as an 'outsider' to the Western world to an 'insider' to the Asian community. On a more technocratic level, Hisaishi Joe constructs and employs his anime soundtracks to represent precisely the late-modern ratio of cultural activism and intellectual apathy of the socio-cultural elites, as opposed to the economic leading class. He provides a sense of awareness of his position – the intellectual, the artist – within the historical continuum as an embedded element, which grounds a sense of expansion beyond the limitations of the animated medium, highlighting the idea that change is possible: change resides within the individual, who can transcend time and space in his quest for new shores. In this light, the transition from ethics to aesthetics and from imagination to ideology in the public staging of the world, as reflected in Hisaishi Joe's music, translates the metamorphosis of the anime from an insignificant socio-cultural medium to a powerful political and economic message in post-war Japan, continuing its previous efforts: cultural assimilation and national re-branding. Both *The Wind Rises* and *The Tale of Princess Kaguya* reveal this double-edged function of Japanese cultural products released by the entertainment industry and targeted at mass audiences: national reframing which subsequently turns into international impact. Cultural imperialism may be included in the national project of self-actualization of the role of the individual in relation to the community. However, while importing cultural assets and Japanizing them, the tackling of foreign influences and structures leads to a sense of expansion, orchestrated by unexpected insights and revelations. "The global revolution" incorporates the external inputs within the national system, and then transforming those elements into

outputs for change and progress, propagated and implemented worldwide.

To a certain extent, Studio Ghibli's anime works, vigurously enhanced by their music, are historical-emotional barometers of the Japanese society, sensibly expressing doubts in times of exuberance and releasing hope in times of confusion. Their public staging of love, freedom, justice, progress and innocence in post-war Japan transcends in a gentle, empathetic way the dramatic transition of works of arts from creative, introspective means of expression in early and middle modernity to intellectual tools of self-awareness and social awakening in late modernity, and establish a fresh, robust identity paradigm, in which compassion, kindness and self-confidence are its core elements.

3. Conclusions:
joy and love and existential paradigms

A typical phenomenon built on the stress ratio between the plasticity and sustainability of the Japanese culture, the anime has been proving during the last decades its ability to absorb external influences inspite of a solid, culturally intact core, and to adapt itself to the ever changing requirements of the market. Like identity, culture unfolds in anime products as a dialectical confrontation between self and other and between self and self-in-other, leading ultimately to a confrontation between the self and its transcendence by the other. It takes place in a dynamic ideological universe, in which the human being is not represented as an emotional-social recycling of various paradigms and structures, but as a future-oriented endeavor to refresh, fulfill and elevate the greater whole.

Anime soundtracks dig deep into the main problematic of our times due to the rapid changes in their narrative tempo, due to their constantly transcending symbolism, due to the highlighting of metamorphose as fundamental technology as well as due to their amazing stylistic eclecticism which eludes altogether all attempts of localization: it is the slippery structure

of identity in a permanently changing society, a symptom and a metaphor for a world obsessed with upheavals, spectacular events and fluctuating information. This musical translation from ethics to aesthetics, from message to medium makes possible the Protean shape of anime soundtracks, where one can experience a similar tension – between composition and technique, realism and fantasy, traditionalism and non-conformism, plot construction and character structure – like in classical Japanese visual arts. It might appear as if the individual tries to rise above its plain function within the collectivist system – and anime serves, typically, as an ambivalent symbol of a 'new Japan' with deep roots in a glorious past (see Satô 1992:12): On the one hand, the so-called 'new Japan' is an imagined community consisting of selected artifacts of Western material culture, and a nation who would courageously and stubbornly resist any attempts from the outside (aka, from the West) to corrupt and/or to oppress it. On the other hand, this same 'new Japan' sees itself as a protector and carrier of Asian historical heritage, responsible for its preservation and perpetuation in the era of globalization.

In this ambivalent, partially optimistic, partially disenchanting, negotiation of cultural identity, anime soundtracks tell in their function as popular productions emerged in one of Japan's most uncertain historical times, of the necessity of National Cool (*Kakkoii Nippon*) in opposition to the Japan-defined cult of cuteness (*kawaii*) and in the stress ratio between "domesticating plagiarism" as tendencies borrowed from the West and "hybridizing authenticity" as structures strongly related to Asian values. For a long while, Japanese Cool was synonymous in Japan with the loss of Japaneseness (*nihonjin-banare* 日本人離れ), but such anime movies as those released by Studio Ghibli encourage a reconsideration of life as a cool adventure, reversible in its transcience – and as a playful enterprise in the framework of cultural identity as sounds and images, while embracing "Japaneseness", whatever that might mean. Even an outsider can be active, non-conformist and free, like in several of

Hokusai's and Utamaro's wood-block prints from premodern times, in which "being cool" during the restrictive Edo era (1603-1868) meant the show-off of elegance (*iki*) in contrast to "being boring" (*yabo*; see Screech 2002:29). Even as an outsider, one can rebel against the prevalent political or social order and emphasize one's own values and dignity, as it happened during the first half of the Shôwa era (1925-1989), when the *ero-guro-nansensu* phenomenon of the 1920s belonged to "being cool" as an anti-establishment movement against an increasingly oppressive government on the background of an equally incomprehensible reality. Even as a member of an isolated group or as an individual, one can experience one's own vitality and strength, by invoking uniqueness and unrepetability, and by leading by example in the name of such powerful values as social cohesion, family belonging, honesty, compassion, courage and integrity.

More than their images, the musical backgrounds of anime productions – familiar or disturbing, sad or uplifting, nostalgic or ceremonial – prove their ability to represent cultural identity as a freely fashioned self, to be crafted from the various offers-&-layers available on sale in the global supermarket (Mathews 2000:29). This process of "tinkering" (*bricolage*) is since Lévi-Strauss' analysis of the phenomenon no longer taking place outside of culture, but resides within culture, and opens the possibility to create one's own identity in the era of predetermined identity artefacts. Like comparable phenomena of the entertainment industry (manga, live-action movies, video-games, J-Pop, etc.), the anime industry is indubitably part of the organized capital, and serves in the same time, though, the unfolding of the individual and of the collective creativity in various ways, within a fourfold process: production, marketing, consumption and reproduction. Superficially conventional and stylistically eclectic, ideologically confusing and aesthetically challenging, naive and cool, the anime has emerged as a new form of Soft Power, actively threatening to dissolve traditional concepts of identity, self and culture, which were previously hardly questioned or evaluated. In addition to the visual dimension, typically identified by distinctive characters – mostly

highly androgynous appearances with endlessly long legs, incredibly big eyes and hairs dyed in all imaginable colors –, the auditive dimension of anime contributes to creating a fascinating, contradictory, interactive universe with the simultaneous re-negotiation of such existential paradigms as identity and alterity, historical awareness and artistic creativity, ideological disenchantment and aesthetic liberalism. By expanding the representation of reality and fantasy up to the breaking point where the directors stop re-creating it visually, anime soundtracks composers boil the intensity and expressive force of the images in sounds, which leads, in turn, to new levels of sensorial perception and emotional-mental processing. Cultural affiliation is transcended as emotional belonging, translated, consequently, into happiness as a chance to re-visit one's own childhood with the eyes and the experience of the mature mind. In this cacophony of identities, "invented emotions" allow for the transfer of significance in historical terms, which move, again, towards socio-cultural sustainability as a result of mindful choices, based on everyday events and personal life experience. This draws on the informal appearance of Studio Ghibli as a business nurturing co-existence with nature, and continuing the *anpo* ideals. Emulating Takahata Isao and Miyazaki Hayao, Hisaishi Joe re-creates the idealized memory of a serene world in which the principle of "competitive undertaking" is replaced by that of "peaceful togetherness" – a principle observed in an archaic nature able to regenerate and live on eternally. There is, as well, the powerful, encouraging suggestion of the admittedly more difficult alternative: discipline and hard-work, humility and self-confidence, loyalty and respect, the establishing of a life-goal and its steady nurturing, cherishing victories and learning from setbacks along the way. In displaying this existential alternative, Hisaishi Joe's music unveils the delusional charm of a worldview based on the cultural consumption of pre-fabricated emotions and instant gratification, and discloses the beauty of human life as a project of love, self-awareness, acceptance, respect and compassion.

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SUMMARY

Maria Grăjdian
On Musical Vulnerability
The Joy of Life and the Power of Love as Expressed in Hisaishi Joe's Anime Soundtracks

Widely regarded as the epitome of financial prosperity and popularity in terms of juxtaposing aesthetic-ideologic ideals and success at the box-office, Studio Ghibli has quietly turned since its foundation in the year 1985 into a symbol of animation produced in Japan and merchandized worldwide. An essential role in the existence of Studio Ghibli has been played by the so-called „Ghibli Quartet", constituted of the two main directors Takahata Isao and Miyazaki Hayao, the producer Suzuki Toshio and the composer Hisaishi Joe. This paper analyzes the music soundtracks created by Hisaishi Joe, one of the leading figures in the all-too-fluid landscape of Japanese entertainment industry, for the anime movies released by Studio Ghibli, with a particular focus on the stress-ratio between the animated images and the corresponding auditive structures, on the one hand, and on the dynamic relationship between the anime works as products of popular culture, subject to the ruthless jungle of the erratic behaviours of cultural consumers, and the historical environment in which they have emerged throughout decades.