

Japan and the values of German democrats in the Age of Extremes: Miyazaki Hayao's Animated Film "The Wind Rises" and the German Song "Das gibt's nur einmal" ("It Just Happens Once")

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The animated historical drama "The Wind Rises" was released in July 2013. In this movie Miyazaki Hayao tells the partly fictionalized story of a real human being, Horikoshi Jirō (1903-1982), who worked for the Mitsubishi Company during the Second World War and was then one of the main designers of Japanese fighter planes.¹ His achievements were widely known in Japan after the war, not least because, in 1956, he and a Japanese general published a book about the "Zero" fighter plane and the engineer's contribution to the war. In this book Horikoshi expresses his negative feelings against the destruction caused by the war,² conveying the ambiguous stance towards militarism that characterizes Miyazaki Hayao's film. The artist was born in 1941 and, as the son of the "Miyazaki Airplane" director, he may have read or heard about this gifted engineer in his young years: on the one hand the movie illustrates a strong, almost adolescent admiration for a man who embodied the very high scientific and technical level and creativity of Japanese researchers and inventors, on the other hand – and we will focus on this aspect – it does not at all magnify the war and the militarism of authoritarian regimes in the first half of the 20th century. So – may our reader forgive us this anticipation – the movie, whose worldwide potential and actual audiences consist of people of all ages, results in fact from the harmonious juxtaposition of several stages of the author's personal development: in his youth he may have known and admired Horikoshi Jirō's scientific and technical achievements, and as an adult artist – a manga writer, screenwriter and film maker, who is known and appreciated throughout the world – he still harbors this admiration, but addresses now universal and positive values such as the rejection of hatred, dictatorship and violence and the love of life and freedom on an individual and political scale.

¹ "... his best was the Zero, a single-engine fighter designed for agility rather than endurance." *The New York Times*, January 12, 1982, Section D, Page 23, <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/01/12/obituaries/jiro-horikoshi-78-dies-in-tokyo-designer-of-zero-fighter-aircraft.html>.

² Okumiya, Masatake and Horikoshi, Jiro. *Zero! The Story of Japan's Air War in the Pacific*. New York: EP Dutton & Co., 1956.

The title of the movie is a “double quote”, a “mise en abyme”³, an artistic technique that consists for instance in painting figures who are themselves painting figures or in telling the story of a character who is himself telling a story. Miyazaki quotes the title of Hori Tatsuo’s Novel “The Wind rises”⁴ (1936-1938) – and the novel itself quotes a very well-known verse from Paul Valéry’s Poem “Le cimetière marin” (“The Graveyard by the Sea”, 1920). Paul Valéry’s poem – barely two years after the millions of victims of the First World War – is a long (and beautiful) reflection about death (“Tout va sous terre et rentre dans le jeu” – “Everything goes to earth and back into the game”...) and – in the last verse – the clairvoyant necessity of life, even if one knows where “everything goes”: “Le vent se lève, il faut tenter de vivre” (“The wind rises, one must try to live”). Tatsuo Hori (1904-1953) had translated French poets into Japanese and was himself a writer of poems and narrative prose.

While the significance of quoting Hori and Valéry has been addressed by many commentators and critics, interpretations of “The Wind Rises” have so far ignored its soundtrack and especially the song “Das gibt’s nur einmal”. The music, however, has always been a significant part of meaning-making in Miyazaki’s movies. We must also mention Fujisawa Mamoru here, known as Joe Hisaishi, the composer of the soundtrack music in most films by Miyazaki, as well as in “Porco Rosso” (1992). In this film about an Italian antifascist pilot, another song is repeatedly quoted like a Wagnerian “leitmotiv”: it is the melody of the French song “Le temps des cerises” (“The Time of the Cherries”), a nostalgic love song by Jean-Baptiste Clément (1836-1903), with lyrics and music from 1866, a few years before the author took an active part in the failed and brutally crushed revolution of the “Commune de Paris” (1871), so that his song began then to symbolize the nostalgia of a better and fairer Utopia where all human beings would be equal and enjoy a life of love and truth. In all parts of the world – even in France, where Miyazaki’s works are very popular – the audience may miss this “subtext”, because only a few people know this song, its story and political background, not to mention millions of children who are not supposed to have such knowledge. But the artist trusts in the power of this sentimental and somehow vigorous tune to make his audience understand who the seemingly ugly and uncouth Porco Rosso really is, a tender and brave hero. Miyazaki relies on the audience’s capability of unconsciously understanding the feelings and values the melody conveys. In “The Wind Rises” we notice the same device based upon the trust in the audience’s spontaneous intelligence, but with a much more complex system of quotations and innuendos. Even though the audience cannot break the encryption of this complex system, it is nevertheless also true that the artist knows what he is doing

³ This expression was coined by André Gide in 1893 in his diary: *Journal*. Paris: Gallimard, 1951, p. 41, and the technique used by him in his novel “*Les Faux-monnayeurs*” (1925).

⁴ We used the French translation : *Le Vent se lève*, translated by Daniel Struve, Paris, Gallimard, 1993. For the following sources that we quote we refer to the bibliography at the end of this paper.

and does not doubt he can reach his goal of creating a historically and aesthetically accurate and dense atmosphere of beauty and humanity around his main character.

Our contribution will concentrate on a short segment of the movie “The Wind Rises” and intends to show Miyazaki’s strikingly intelligent and subtle recourse to an old German commercial song (“Schlager”). We are nevertheless conscious of the fact that this choice is partial and leaves aside a lot of interesting allusions, for instance to the political and technical culture of the 1930s and 1940s in Europe (Italy, Germany). For instance, Horikoshi Jirō admires the Italian aircraft designer Gianni Caproni, the Austrian composer Schubert or the German novelist Hermann Hesse. The aspects we have selected are uniquely important because they define the general atmosphere of successive elements of the narrative. As we intend to show, the German song reveals how human beings from Japan and Germany share common personal and political values and think about their life in personally and politically very difficult times. The short discussion following the song discloses the principles they intend to follow for their own development. From this viewpoint, the fascination for technical achievements serving militarism appear to be more than mitigated by the focus on the profoundly human qualities of Jirō as a gifted and enthusiastic intellectual, a true friend, a connoisseur and a very kind, mild-mannered and decent person.

“Das gibt’s nur einmal” in “The Wind Rises”: A highly significant scene

The intertextual and intermedial system on which “The Wind Rises” relies is very rich and complex. In the short scene we have chosen to analyze we concentrate on the following four aspects, that cannot be separated from our main one, the third, which is the scene of the song “Das gibt’s nur einmal” (“Just once for all time”, according to the title of the English version of the song).

- 1920 Paul Valéry “Le cimetière marin” (“The Graveyard by the Sea”) : « Le vent se lève, il faut tenter de vivre » (“The wind rises, we must try to live”).
- 1924 Thomas Mann “Der Zauberberg” (“The Magic Mountain”)
- 1931 « Das gibt’s nur einmal » - « Just once for all time » (Erik Charell’s film “Der Kongress tanzt” 1931; “Congress Dances”) – Lyrics: Robert Gilbert – Music: Werner Richard Heymann.
- 1936-1937 風立ちぬ, Hori Tatsuo’s (堀辰雄) Novel “Kazetachinu” – “The Wind Rises” (quotes Paul Valéry – Rainer Maria Rilke)

In the last chapter of his novel *The Wind Rises*, Hori Tatsuo quotes the first verses of Rainer Maria Rilke’s “Requiem für eine Freundin” (“Requiem for a friend” 1908) in Japanese. Rilke’s poem is partly a tribute to painter Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876-1907) and the quoted verses mean that to the lyrical subject the dead usually seem to feel well in their “dead being” (“Totsein”) – but not so the young dead “you”

he addresses. Hori Tatsu seems to have no direct knowledge of Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*, 1924), a novel which is directly referred to in Miyazaki's film.⁵ The Japanese novel reflects the point of view of a young writer who does not seem to be in very good health himself⁶ and accompanies the beloved girl Setsuko to a sanatorium at the foot of the Yatsugatake mountains in the Nagano prefecture, having already been told by his friend, the director of the institution, that there is no hope for her. Setsuko herself is a painter, but has to renounce any activity. In the last chapter, one year after Setsuko's death, the author, who remains in the "Valley of Happiness", not far from the sanatorium, remembers how he met her father when she was dying and tries to accept to live now without her – and yet with her, because she may be a part of him now, the light that allows him to live and survive as well as notice the very soft wind that brushes past his chalet. In Miyazaki's movie Jirō Horikoshi falls in love with Naoko⁷ Satomi, whose life he had saved during the 1923 earthquake. He first loses contact with her and eventually marries her. Like Setsuko in the novel, Naoko is a painter and a TB-patient... who dies in the mountains whilst her husband brilliantly succeeds professionally: this death casts a terrible shadow on this success in the service of the Japanese Air Force in wartime.

However, the sub-textual peace loving meaning of the movie is reinforced by numerous details, for instance by the denunciation of nazi violence in Germany during Horikoshi Jirō's studies and work period in that country. The short film scene in the resort around the song "Das gibt's nur einmal" plays a central part here. It concentrates a lot of themes and meanings and tries to express them in a highly dense way, taking the risk that a large part of the meanings must escape not only the young spectators, but the overwhelming majority of the audience – and yet the message will reach everyone thanks to the interplay of image, music, lyrics and dialogue. The song is sung by an opponent to Hitler and thus expresses a clearly antitotalitarian stance. This opponent who has fled National Socialist Germany in Karuizawa, a resort of the Nagano prefecture, is named Castorp. In a brief dialogue before our scene Castorp warns Horikoshi against the danger of wars caused by the Japanese and German nationalisms: "Japan will blow up. Germany will blow up, too." After our scene, Castorp flees the resort and escapes the Japanese secret police. Hans Castorp is the main character of Thomas Mann's novel "The Magic Mountain" (1924), a book in which the author describes Europe as a thoroughly sick and moribund civilization at the eve of a catastrophe – the First World War. Jirō and Naoko's father chime in, Castorp stands up and joins them at the table. In the 1930s Thomas Mann, Nobel Prize

⁵ So writes Christopher Schelletter, pp. 338-339.

⁶ Actually Hori Tatsuo suffered and died of tuberculosis.

⁷ This name is the title of a Hori Tatsuo's novel, published in 1941, "which is believed to be reflective of the life of Ayako Yano", a beautiful young woman (1911-1935) who died of tuberculosis a year after her engagement with the author ("The prose and poetry of Tatsuo Hori." *Yabai*, 2018, <http://yabai.com/p/4495>. Date of access 19. 01. 2020).

laureate in 1929, is the world's best known German author and a representative of the German intellectuals who live in the exile of democratic countries and continue from there the struggle against the Nazi totalitarianism. In a brief exchange following the song Castorp and Jirō speak about love. According to Castorp love is a feeling that cannot survive the stay in the “magic mountain”. Jirō confesses on the contrary to Naoko's father that he deeply loves his daughter and protests gently: “You don't know me” – politely and softly contradicting the profoundly skeptical German émigré intellectual. Castorp smiles and willingly accepts Jirō's contradiction. Naoko's father tells Jirō that Naoko has tuberculosis and that she must recover. Of course this short dialogue does not mean that Castorp embodies a pessimistic point of view on mankind. In fact it just shows that a young man can be genuinely true, romantic and highly conscious of his responsibilities towards the people he loves – but nevertheless, on the other hand, be an efficient inventor who quite naively does not really think about the people or the cause he is working for, because he has not been educated in order to scrutinize the more than dubious ideological and ethical background of the work he is instructed to do.

Castorp only sings the chorus “It only happens once / [...] Maybe it's just a dream” from the point of view of someone who understands the full meaning of the song.⁸ The spectator knows that Castorp is a resolute opponent to National Socialism, so that he can understand the song's catchy melody as the consciousness that the joy of friendship and love in Karuizawa cannot last because of the danger of war represented by Hitler and his allies... and also because of Naoko's disease: unhappiness and death are looming in the world. So the song's chorus sounds like a utopian German anthem for a personally and politically founded appeal to peace and happiness in times that were bound for war and destruction. This interpretation of the song relies, as we intend to show in this paper, on a subtle understanding of its political and ethical scope. The movie “Congress Dances” was shot in Berlin and was the greatest success of the season in Germany at that time,⁹ and in France too where it was considered as the “master piece” of the “multiple-language-version films” shot in Berlin, usually in German and in French and sometimes also in English or Italian. These films were most of the time “Musicals” (in German “Tonfilmoperette”, in French “Film-opérette” or “opérette filmée”), where dialogues alternate with musical pieces, songs or even, in the case of “Congress Dances”, ballet scenes. The producer of most of these films was Erich Pommer (1889-1966), a German Jew, and most of the artists were Jews from Germany, Austria and Central Europe: these artists had a high musical and poetic culture and – contrary to German nationalists and racists – a quite positive attitude towards modern European societies after the First World War and Peace Treaties

⁸ We publish the lyrics and our English translation in the following annex.

⁹ Bandmann, Christa and Hembus, Joe. *Klassiker des deutschen Tonfilms 1930-1960*. München: Goldmann, 1980, S. 41.

supposed to create democracies guaranteeing in Europe the respect of human and civil rights for all and in the world a new order based upon the respect of international law in the League of Nations. Erik Charell who directed “Congress Dances” in the film studios of Babelsberg near Berlin, was a dancer and an actor, renowned as the director of “Dance Revues”.

We all know that the hopes conveyed by the joyful song “It happens just once” were at that time illusions, and Castorp saw through these illusions in Miyazaki’s movie: this explains why he doubts the possibility of a lasting love and how the joyful chorus precedes sad feelings in the movie, concerning Naoko’s tuberculosis and the hard political context.

During the Third Reich – on the 1st of October 1937¹⁰ – the film was forbidden, because of the high contribution of Jewish artists, but also because of its non “National Socialist” content. In the original movie of 1931, at the time of the Congress of Vienna in 1815, after the wars which occurred during the French Revolution and the following First French Empire, Christl, a charming glove vendor, has spent a nice evening in a Viennese « Singing pub » with Tsar Alexander I. Christl is played by the German-English actress Lilian Harvey (she could sing in German, French and English) and the Tsar by Willy Fritsch: both were the most popular couple of these German comedies. The following morning, in the shop, Christl is mocked by her young colleagues who do not believe her, when she says she spent so many hours with the Tsar himself... but suddenly a Russian soldier comes to lead her to a villa the Tsar has rented in order to spend pleasant moments with her. And then a wonderful scene takes place, which was entirely shot – not in Vienna – but in the studios of Babelsberg, an endless but very exciting tracking shot showing Christl singing the song sitting in a horse-drawn open carriage, a Viennese “Fiaker”: first her young colleagues follow her laughing and waving their hands, then on both sides of the road the crowds of men and women join in, until she leaves the town and discovers the villa the Tsar has rented for her in the countryside. The movie suggests repeatedly that Christl is really not an intelligent girl. In this long tracking shot an important detail has for instance been overlooked. When Christl sings about the “lovely birdies” rejoicing with her, the movie shows geese honking.

“Das gibt’s nur einmal”: one song, five interpretations

In fact the song can be understood in many ways. We try to distinguish here five hermeneutic approaches of the song and to define a global approach in the end. The first, quite superficial, approach is “touristic”, the second “moral” or “ethical”, the

¹⁰ <https://web.archive.org/web/20050903132417/http://www.deutsches-filminstitut.de/zengut/df2tb149z.pdf> (Date of access 22.01.2020).

third “political”, the fourth “geo-political” and the fifth “melancholic” (it corresponds – so are our findings – to the way the song is staged in Miyazaki’s movie). In the end we try to define a global interpretation including all approaches.

The song must have been popular throughout the world, because we have found a footage showing a very gifted singer interpreting it at the German Festival of Ichikawa in 2012 as a joyful German song.¹¹ The singer and the orchestra wear traditional Bavarian costumes, which have nothing to do with Metternich’s very urban Vienna, but symbolizes not only in Japan the “typical Germans”, which of course express as little the real diversity of the country as the “typical French” or the “typical Japanese”, as everybody knows everywhere in the world. Here the song is intended to signify Germany and to motivate people to buy German products or to consider a trip to Germany. More interesting is the fact that the ambiguity of the original song, as it was staged in Erik Charell’s movie, is absent of both more or less faithful remakes shot in Austria and Germany after the Second World War, “Der Kongress tanzt” (Dir. Franz Antel, 1955, Austria) and “Der Kongress amüsiert sich” (Dir. Géza von Radványi, 1965, Germany, Austria, France). In the first movie the original tracking shot does not try to reenact Metternich’s Vienna in a film studio, but portrays it like an ordinary touristic documentary with typical streets and squares of Vienna and the poor Christl (Johanna Maatz) waves her hands at an absent crowd, a quite ghostly way of hinting at the strongly artful and vivid scene of 1931.

The moral approach shows that the whole song is a lie for the (fictive) person Christl: in fact the young glove vendor acts unworthily. She is ready to cheat on the young man to whom she is engaged, to prostitute herself, her body, her dignity and her freedom, and become the Tsar’s mistress. Another scene, at the end of our long tracking shot, shows her lying in the bed of the Tsar’s villa with her legs wide apart... This “prostitution” does fortunately not happen in the movie, Christl does not succeed in becoming the Tsar’s mistress – although she tried very hard!

The third – political – approach highlights the kind of regime the Tsar and all monarchs represent, in fact a very authoritarian regime... and many details show that the Tsar does not have real consideration for the glove vendor from Vienna. He will in fact never have the time to spend the planned « pleasant moments »... and sends her a (rather stupid) Doppelgänger who would like to seduce the girl, but is not allowed to touch her. The political subtext reflects a Jewish and liberal view of the world, in favor of the principles of the French Revolution: civil equality, end of all discrimination, people’s sovereignty, freedom of the press and of speech – and against the restoration of old monarchies with their inherent inequalities and discrimination. To the European Jews, tsarist Russia was the country that invented pogroms, the systematical massacres of Jews of both sexes and of all ages. The authors of the movie may have expressed their conviction that the brutality of Stalin’s Russia did perpetuate

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGdKf0jdvDE> (Date of access 22.01.2020).

the crimes committed by tsarist Russia. Robert Liebmann, one of the writers of Erik Charell's "Congress Dances" was murdered in Auschwitz and the producer, the director, the composer, the song writer were German Jews.

The song conveys the geo-political meaning of Erik Charell's film. Christl's joy of giving herself to a powerful man who only desires her body symbolizes the fact that the old European monarchies are cheating the European people out of their freedom and their dignity. The Congress of Vienna divided the European continent into five parts, in three authoritarian Monarchies (two empires: Russia, Austria and a monarchy: Prussia, the future German Empire) whilst the United Kingdom « ruled the seas » and conquered a World Empire. The other countries were isolated, especially France because it had embodied the "new ideas"... In 1931 mocking the Congress of Vienna and celebrating, as it happens in the film, Napoleon's return from Elba as a danger that immediately disperses a quite cowardly crowd of monarchists meant a commitment for the reshaping of Europe after the First World War. The peace treaties consisted in the dismantling of old Empires and in the foundation of new democratic states. This was a very brave commitment in a German-speaking world where nationalist, revanchist and racist propaganda was very strong, and the dream of free democratic countries that cooperate for the benefit of all citizens failed in Europe, as we know, for many reasons with many names: American isolationism, Lenin, Mussolini, Stalin, Hitler, Franco and many others... Since 1989 Europe, as it was shaped after the First World War, has returned on the scene and nobody, even fanatic "Brexiters", would seriously wish to have the old Empires back...

The melancholic contrastive approach of the song, from the later perspective of a world threatened from all sides by nationalist and aggressive regimes, characterizes the scene of Miyazaki's "The Wind Rises". Here the ephemeral joy of sharing music, friendship and love is doomed by the international and national political situation and paralleled by Naoko's tuberculosis, so that Jirō's future professional achievements will just cause – besides all pride – another delusion and disappointment.

In Erik Charell's and in Miyazaki's films, the song implies a critical distancing from the authoritarian regimes in the 1930s. In "The Wind Rises", Castorp from Thomas Mann's "Magic Mountain" and Naoko, Jirō's TB-suffering wife, who dies in 1945, represent the entanglement of public and private « glaciation » of societies in the years of dictatorships and wars... The difference between Erik Charell's and Miyazaki's films, is that the latter knows that an opener and freer world will come, the world Castorp, Naoko, her father and Jirō were longing for in the 1930s... Miyazaki is very critical towards what he considers a nationalist turn of Japanese governments and, more generally, towards the natural destructions caused by an

overwhelming technique and industrialization.¹² Our world may thus not be perfect and is certainly not so, but Miyazaki's film "The Wind Rises" reminds us that we should acknowledge that it is definitely in a better, not only political, shape than in the 1930s.

¹² For instance Miyazaki's interview in the French daily newspaper "Libération", January 10, 2014, https://next.liberation.fr/cinema/2014/01/10/j-aspire-toujours-a-une-societe-plus-juste_972054.

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Das gibt's nur einmal (Lyrics: Robert Gilbert / Music: Werner Richard Heymann). We reproduce and translate here the text sung in "Der Kongress tanzt" ("Congress Dances"), 1931.

<p>I. Träum ich? Wach ich? Wein ich? Lach ich? Heut weiß ich nicht, was ich tu. Wo ich gehe, wo ich stehe, Lachen die Menschen mir zu. Heut werden alle Märchen wahr. Heut wird mir alles klar.</p> <p><i>Refrain</i> Das gibt's nur einmal. Das kommt nicht wieder, Das ist zu schön, um wahr zu sein. So wie ein Wunder fällt auf uns nieder Vom Paradies ein gold'ner Schein. Das gibt's nur einmal, Das kommt nicht wieder, Das ist vielleicht nur Träumerei. Das kann das Leben nur einmal geben, Vielleicht ist's morgen schon vorbei. Das kann das Leben nur einmal geben, Denn jeder Frühling hat nur einen Mai....</p> <p>II. Liebe Sonne, Welt voll Wonne, Heut' bist Du schön wie noch nie. All' die lieben Vöglein üben Selig die Glücksmelodie. Heut' kommt das Glück von Haus zu Haus. Komm, such Dir etwas aus!</p> <p>III. Herrlich Blüten Leuchtend glühend</p>	<p>Am I dreaming? Am I awake? Am I crying? Am I laughing? Today I don't know what I'm doing. Wherever I go, wherever I stay, People give me a friendly laugh. Today all fairy tales come true. Today I understand everything.</p> <p><i>Chorus</i> It only happens once. It won't happen again, It's too beautiful to be true. A miracle falls upon us A golden shine from Paradise. It only happens once. It won't happen again, Maybe it's just a dream. Life can just Offer it once Maybe tomorrow it will be over. Life can just offer it once For every springtime does just have one month of May.</p> <p>Dear Sun, Happy World, Today you're more beautiful than ever. All lovely birdies sing The melody of happiness. Today happiness goes From home to home. Come, make your choice!</p> <p>Magnificent blossoms, Bright and luminous,</p>
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Dringt's aus den Büschen empor Wie in Träumen All die Bäume Bringen die Blüten hervor Horch, jede hat ein Wort für dich, Heut blühe ich nur für dich...	Pushing upward from the bushes Dreamlike All the trees Produce blossoms All of which, listen, have a word for you, Today I bloom only for you.
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