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## Searching for Freedom: An Investigation of Form in Japanese Storytelling and Animation

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Searching for Freedom

An Investigation of Form in Japanese Storytelling and Animation

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Summer Research

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By

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## **Abstract**

This project investigated characteristics of storytelling within Japanese animation known as anime. Through the use of textual analysis and historical research methods, I explored the story element of theme and its relation to *character development* and *narrative structure* within the anime and manga series, *Attack on Titan (Shingeki no Kyojin)*. I identified two story themes: 1) The World's Cruelty, Oppression of man and 2) Searching & Fighting for freedom against the cruel world—and a strong influence of folklore and Eastern and Western art that attribute to the story structure and aesthetic elements of the anime story. These findings informed my creative activity where I completed a film scenario, mood board, and storyboard to communicate the visual aesthetic of the final film production. This project will result in a better understanding of the traditions of Japanese storytelling within anime and strengthen my own creative practice.

**Keywords:** Japanese animation – Attack on Titan – anime – Storytelling – Narrative structure – story – theme(s) – character

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of Study**

Anime has become one of the most popular visual storytelling mediums in the world, reaching audiences far past its geographical creation. Although anime can be defined as Japanese animation in simple terms, it is “an audiovisual genre of Japanese origin whose name corresponds to the word ‘animation abbreviation’”. The uniqueness of the medium “lies in its narrative complexity and particular aesthetics” (“Anime”). Anime presents the ability to push creativity to limits that live action cinema does not in comparison. The Japanese genre was brought out in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and represented the transition from traditional to globalized Japan. It originated from manga, Japanese comics “or rather, an art that unites the style of traditional Japanese painting (ukiyo-e) and the format of Western comics” (“Anime”). The term was created by the painter Hokusai, famous for

woodblock paintings in Japanese history. His art presents an artistic style where people are small compared to the vast power of nature. In addition, lots of empty space exists in Japanese art compared to Western art. This characteristic seems to be prevalent all throughout Japanese art history. This same style is exemplified in anime today.

Although Hokusai was given credit for the name of this medium, it was Osamu Tezuka who got the title as the “father of anime”. As the popularity of manga rose in Japan, its counterpart quickly made waves amongst the nation. Anime began to expand in the 1960’s which allowed some sub-genres such as the Giant Robots to become popular, “[and] the first production of this type is Tetsujin 28-gō (Iron Man 28). But its most significant milestone was in the 70s with animes like Mazinger Z or Gundam, in which they usually fought against monsters like the mentioned Godzilla. In the 90s, the anime begins a close relationship with the cinema and suffers an explosion of successes at the international level with Pokemon, Sailor Moon, Sakura Card Captor, Dragon Ball, and Digimon,” (“Anime”). Anime has now surpassed the success of the shows that first brought craze to the genre. It seems the background of this development creates an advantage in solidifying the storyline for the screen. It is very common for anime to be first adapted from the manga. In the manga state, the story is solidified as text prior to its translation into audio-visual storytelling. As an illustration, *Attack on Titan* is an anime series derived from a manga (Japanese graphic novel) by the same name written by Hajime Isayama.

Among existing scholarship, research on Japanese storytelling vary. A closer look into the development of characters, themes, and story structure displayed in anime will provide a better understanding of Japanese storytelling characteristics.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

This research was important to help fill the gap between practical storytelling characteristics within the Japanese visual medium from a filmmakers perspective and the plethora of existing

scholarship solely focused on a theoretical frame work. By researching Japanese storytelling in anime, I will further my knowledge of Eastern storytelling characteristics and take aspects of anime to incorporate in my work and apply to my own creative practice as filmmaker.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

In my research study, I will be using the anime series, *Attack on Titan* as a case study to investigate storytelling elements such as theme and it's relation to character development and narrative structure to better understand characteristics of Japanese storytelling within the visual medium of anime. The knowledge gained by this analysis will then be used in a creative activity: anime story as influence to a short story resulting in pre-production for a short film.

### 1.4 Definition of Terms

Story elements can be simplified as characteristics of story derived from a particular medium. Within the medium of cinema and other visual storytelling mediums such definitions are needed to minimize misinterpretations when discussing story elements in this study.

The first terminology is **theme**. Defined broadly as a reoccurring and or overarching concept in the story—the central idea “that integrates everything in a story — the nature of its characters, their motivations, and arcs, as well as their conflicts and all the events of the plot” (Creative Screenwriting). More specifically, the theme within a story can be better expressed as more than a single word. For example, “the concept of freedom can form the foundation of a story’s theme, which could be anything from “one should not sacrifice freedom for security” to “freedom is worth dying for” (Writing Forward).

The second terminology is **character development**. “Character Development happens over the course of the story as the [character] reveals who they are through the actions they take [and the traits they possess]” (Story Grid).

The third terminology is **narrative structure**, sometimes broadly referred to as story structure. “[It] consists of the traditional parts of a story and the order in which the reader encounters them; these provide a framework for the unfolding of the story” (Chegg).

## **2. Literature Review**

The anime series *Attack on Titan (AOT)* has been used as a source of study among a variety of scholars. Such existing studies have focused largely on applying different theories to analyze themes depicted in the show. In addition scholars have also studied connections between Japanese folklore and anime stories—although these studies have not looked at *Attack on Titan* in specific. These studies can be categorized into three major perspectives: political, gothic, Western, and Eastern.

### **2.1 AOT from a Political Perspective**

Several scholars have explored the political themes presented in *Attack on Titan*. As seen in Mahmood and Brinkhof’s research studies, they often correlate the oppression exhibited by characters in the series to Nazi Germany and events of the holocaust. Brinkhof affirms that part of the author’s success is accredited to the “surprisingly sophisticated incorporation of Nazi ideology into his narrative” (21). In connection, Mahmood’s study claims that the city of Marley and its treatment of Eldians is similar to the treatment of Jews by the Nazi government in the holocaust.

Through their analysis of political motifs presented in *AOT*, Mahmood’s study focused specifically on war history to perceive “the dominance of certain people over the lives of others” (5049), whereas Brinkhof makes a connection to fascism to claim that “explicit references to Nazi culture [in the series]...reveals that totalitarian sentiment is not just stylistic influence on his world-building; it is an it is an integral part of the story he is trying to tell” (22). In sum, both studies utilize a theoretical approach of using the Nazi government’s as a lens for presenting the cruelty demonstrated against the Eldian empire. While their approach draws on a political framework to present the significance of oppression, and or themes of dominance and totalitarian sentiments in the story, my

approach aims to analyze the series from a storytelling perspective to present that such themes are readily evident in the visual storytelling medium without such framework.

## **2.2 AOT from a Gothic Perspective**

In addition, an analysis of gothic motifs have also been addressed in studies looking at the anime series. Grifis' study introduces that most fans do not realize that the show "also represents classic Gothic techniques". She argues that the Titans are a metaphor that suggests that "humanity itself is monstrous. Titans, with their eerie human-likeness, are the literal representation of this repressed fear" (1). Declared in the series, humans are the main source of food for the titans. The titans do not seem to be eating them out of necessity, but as their natural function of being. This theme is also suggested by Dam in her analysis of the complex relationship between humans and monsters in *AOT*. In comparison, both studies use Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (1996) as a lens to read the gothic themes depicted in the show. Dam examined the settings and characters within this titan filled world and concluded that the "story initially labels its monsters as villains that afflict their world, but there is a gradual progression that debunks or even reverses this idea" (137), which is presented several times in the series. To conclude, both studies offer a perspective through the theoretical use of the Gothic to surface the theme of humans innately having monstrous tendencies depicted in *Attack on Titan*.

## **2.2 Western Perspectives: Norse Mythology**

Scholars have also focused on analyzing mythological themes within the anime series. Specifically looking at Norse mythology—myths of the Northern Germanic people—and its influence on the series. The use of these myths can be connected to themes of fate or free will as well as the reoccurring representation of cruelty in the world. In their studies, Yamazaki and Truong highlight the use of Germanic names and suggest the creation of titans can be connected to the Norse stories about giants and gods. Through a comparison of Norse stories about giants, Yamazaki presents that "human

beings repeatedly attack the huge creatures as they struggle to exist and, in some cases, to find honorable deaths in battle” (30), this similar to the characters in *AOT* that spend the entire series fighting to eradicate the titans and in contrast, hoping to live on another day. Yamazaki primarily focused on a literary study of the story while Truong presents strong parallels of the nordic cycle of fate using three Eldian characters: Ymir, Eren, and Levi to “comment on the idea of a cyclic and unchangeable destiny” (2). Truong determines that Ymir, the first Eldian, succumbed to her fate and allowed herself to be killed by the world, Eren unlike Ymir broke the original cycle through his decision to fight but gets stuck in a cycle of violence, while Levi’s cycle of selfishness can still be broken. She concludes that the author of the series, utilizes the retelling of Norse myths to “serve as examples of the best and worst ways to fight fate and the ‘cruel world’” (89).

#### **2.4 Eastern Perspectives: Japanese Folklore**

In connection, several scholars have taken a look at the roots behind Japanese stories and contemporary storytelling mediums such as anime and manga. As seen in Mínguez-López and Slaven research studies, there exists a strong connection between Japanese folklore and anime stories. In order to make this connection, Slaven first addresses the development of anime and its connection to Western cinema along with it’s Japanese counterpart, manga. She states that the medium and it’s artistic style was created from a combination of traditions: “traditional Japanese art, Western comics, and other Asian influence” (113). Mínguez-López shares in his study that it is “important to understand that Japan has been a recipient of cultural products from various origins (Levi, 2006:63)” (6), such as European folktales. In Slaven’s study she utilized three central themes: content, structure, and function in order to make her argument. She found that:

In Japanese animation, many plots, imagery and characters can be compared to magic tales and incorporate a number of the same characteristics, particularly those categorized as fantasy. The nature of these characteristics generally involves fantastic elements that normally take place in a fantastic setting. (57)



In addition, in anime there is a use of “subliminal dark psychological occurrences...as a catalyst for the path of the hero” (77). Slaven exemplifies this point through several animes, one being *Dragon Ball Z* and its connection to *Journey to the West*, a Chinese novel with similar story elements to Asiatic folktale. Similarly, Mínguez-López uses the anime series *Dragon Ball Z* and its connection to *Journey to the west* as a case study to identify the relationship between Japanese folktale and Japanese anime. Within his study he argues that western audiences have trouble analyzing Japanese works due to the fundamental differences of cultural background and religion:

Thus, some characteristics in *Dragon Ball* would be expected to be associated with folk formulas that do not meet Western expectations. The surprising endings of some chapters, the weird scale of values, even the relationship between characters, responds to a tradition strange in Western countries but that it is present in Japanese folktales. (6)

The anime proves itself to be a representation of Japanese folklore translated into a contemporary visual medium. From his study, Mínguez-López concludes that a strong connection to Japanese folktale seems to allude to the uniqueness in characteristics presented in Japanese stories within anime. Alike Slaven’s study, this furthers the point that the historical traditions in Japanese culture have strong influence on Japanese animation.

Both studies exemplified limitations. Mínguez-López focused majority of his study on analyzing a specific folktale story with influence to *Dragon Ball* and addressing limitations of Western perspectives on Japanese animation, while Slaven broadly analyzed characteristics of folktales to several anime stories and “did not include any insight based on fieldwork” (115). This missing aspect will be addressed in my research through the application of *Attack on Titan*. She adds that the addition of this aspect will bring greater understanding about the role of anime internationally rather than limiting it to a Japanese perspective.

Theoretical perspectives such as political, gothic, and Western have been greatly discussed among scholars researching the manga and anime series of *Attack on Titan*. In addition, scholars have studies the strong relationship between Japanese folklore and anime and manga stories. Still, little

attention has been paid to researching practical elements of this Japanese visual medium from a storytelling perspective. Therefore, my research is significant to help add to information available on characteristics of Japanese storytelling identifiable in the medium of anime. In addition to filling this gap, my research will also present the use of such Japanese characteristics as an influence for a film project in the West.

### **3. Methodologies**

This project was addressed using a qualitative research approach of textual analysis and historical research methods. By textual analysis, I watched the first season of *Attack on Titan*, a total of twenty-five episodes for two rounds. Within the first round, I focused on identifying major themes, moments of character development and characteristics of the anime characters, and significant changes in the anime's story structure. In the second round, I analyzed specific findings from existing scholarship to focus on noting direct influences from Japanese folklore such as fantastical, religious, and spiritual elements in the anime series.

Secondly, I employed historical methods by analyzing Eastern and Western art that aesthetically influenced the anime series. The purpose of this approach is to look at the past in order to better understand the present. By comparative analysis, I placed the frames of the Western painting by Goya, *Saturn Devouring His Son* and Eastern painting by Hokusai, *The Great Wave* next to freeze frames of season one of *Attack on Titan* to look at the similar contents within the images. I noted the characteristics that were taken from Western art vs. Eastern art to draw conclusions.

From my analysis of *Attack on Titan*, I then used my findings as application to a creative activity where I used characteristics of Japanese stories in anime as influence for a short story. First, I applied *AOT's* story themes to shape my story the theme of my story. Then, I applied Japanese folkloric characteristics such as fantastical and spiritual elements to my story to explore the theme.

using characteristics of Japanese stories in anime as influence for a short story. This resulted in pre-production for a film including a film scenario, mood board, and a story board to communicate the visual aesthetics of my film.

#### **4. Historical Context of *Attack on Titan***

*Attack on Titan* was written and illustrated by Hajime Isayama as a manga series in 2009. Adapting manga novels into anime is common in Japan, and so the series was adapted into an anime series in 2013. The first 59 episodes of the anime series are directed by Tetsurō Araki, therefore I will acknowledge him as a secondary authors of the story series within my analysis.

The story of *Attack on Titan* revolves around the desperate battle of humankind against the mysterious Titans. Humanity has been protected by three walls for over 100 years; we follow Eren and his childhood friends, Mikasa and Armin through their first encounter with man-eating Titans that destroy their home and innocents. In efforts to seek vengeance and save humanity, the trio join the Scout Regiment, an elite military force who fight Titans outside the walls. For the rest of season one, we watch as the trio fight against Titans and seek to investigate the truth behind their existence.

As we look at the aesthetic elements of the anime series, there exists a clear influence of the Western painting by Goya titled, *Saturn Devouring His Son*. It can be seen that the origin of this idea of man eating Titans in *AOT* came from this painting. Goya employs a theme of man being cruel by depicting a large human giant eating one of his one sons, it's grotesque and "like their namesakes, the giants in *Attack on Titan* are allegorical, serving as the gruesome palette for an exploration of war and human injustice" (Romano, 2013)



**Fig. 1 & 2.** Romano, Aja, *Shingeki no Kyojin* vs. *Goya's Saturn Devouring His Son*, 03 Sep. 2013.

As we look at Eastern art, it can be seen that *AOT's* visual aesthetics draws influence to Hokusai's *Wave*. Looking at the two images, we see many similarities: the picture is asymmetrical, nature is very large, and men are small and almost nonexistent. These characteristics remain strong in Eastern visual mediums.



**Fig. 3 & 4.** Perry, Spencer, *Colossal Titan and Eren*, 18 Jan. 2017; Ashcraft, Brian. *Hokusai's Great Wave*, 20 Aug. 2015.

## 5. **The World's Cruelty, Oppression of man**

In the story of *Attack on Titan (AOT)*, "The World's Cruelty" is presented as an initial theme. In the first season of the series, this theme is quoted to being said by characters Mikasa, Armin, and Eren,

the core trio of the story. They experience this reality when the Titans first break down the walls and invade their home town. Upon the invasion within the first episode, Eren's mom is killed and eaten by a titan right in front of him. Then, once we are introduced to Mikasa's back story, we find out that her parents were murdered in front of her prior to moving in with Eren's family. Mikasa confirms this lesson and theme in episode seven after she believes Eren has died during the second invasion of the Titans.

Such a dark theme can be connected to characteristics of Japanese folklore. Within anime depictions of “murder, violence, blackmail, betrayal, [and] slander” (Lüthi, 1986:71)” are used as such catalyst (75).

Interestingly, these psychologically dark elements can act as catalysts for further action within the anime, such as preservation of self and family in *Dragonball Z*, looked at with revulsion or pity, such as in *Vampire Knight*. (77)

This can be connected back to episode one of *Attack on Titan* where we see the invasion of the titans destroying Eren's home, watch his mother get eaten, and lose everything he's ever known.

This theme is addressed by Brinkhof and Mahmood through a political perspective. Brinkof states that The Eldians were persecuted “for their ability to turn into Titans—an ability that, Isayama tells us, is linked to their ancient and mythological bloodline [and were] separated from ordinary Marlyan society through internment camps reminiscent of Jewish ghettos, and required by law to wear armbands denoting their race, which are similar in design to the Star of David.” (22). As we further look into the political themes identified, a connection can be made to a bigger theme of the existing cruelty in the world—frequently stated in the series.

Over the years, fans and critics have speculated extensively on the reasons behind Isayama's explosive and...unprecedented success. Theories [ranged from]...to the artist's supposedly unique ability to capture “the hopelessness felt by young people” in modern society.<sup>6</sup> But the most interesting—and sinister—of these hypotheses, and one that has only gained in prominence as *Attack on Titan* approaches its final episode (January 2022), can be traced back to the very moment of the [story's] inception: the insidious notion that our world is, fundamentally, cruel (22).

He further infers that this theme carries on past season 1 since this reveal of the Marlyan society is presented in Season 3. It is later in the series that viewers find out alongside the main characters that they and everyone living inside the walls are actually Eldians and all possess this titan ability rather than being human. And so, Mahmood (2020) and Brinkhof's (2021) limit the discovery of this theme by largely focusing on the Eldians treatment by the Marley government in their studies. This theme is one that can be seen beyond the use of a political perspective. It is clearly presented through the visualized scenes and demonstrated through character development as we learn more about Mikasa, Armin, and Eren. Eren our main character "concludes the real enemy to be the world itself" (Brinkhof 2021).

### **Oppression of man**

In addition, the theme of "Oppression of Man" is presented in connection. First, when Eren is projected dead in episode six after we see him being eaten by a titan to save Armin and reappears in episode eight as a titan. It is important to highlight the significance of this new Titan ability. Within this titan transformation, another connection to elements of Japanese folklore can be made. Eren's transformation is not explained or presented in a scientific matter, but rather as a fantastical element as we see him bite into his arm or hand and magically transform. Similar to other anime referenced in Slaven's study:

The fantastical elements of his new life and acts as if the special abilities both the young girl and he himself has being entirely normal. Both of these examples demonstrate the one-dimensionality that occurs in anime, which acts as a contributing element in the analysis of anime as a part of this folk tale tradition. (83)



**Fig. 5.** *Eren Jaeger Transformation*, 02 Jul. 2018.

This major reveal, shifted the story as we were now presented with the main character—who vowed to kill every last titan—now being a titan himself. Then fast forward to the big court decision that determined whether Eren will live or die now that the word has spread along the walls of humanity; the military chooses to keep Eren alive and have him official join them. This is entirely contradictory since what was first identified as a monster—that being a titan—is now being accepted into the military with the purpose to save humanity.

Their desire for the Titans’ strength might reflect humanity’s mindless desire to be able to control nearly everything that happens to them and others, as well as the monstrous techniques used to achieve this goal as a way to compensate for their physical weakness. (Grifis 6)

The acceptance of Eren’s titan or “monstrous” abilities creates a huge shift in the story as the clear contradiction exists of titans and humans now merging into one. Then a change in Eren’s character as he continues to be driven by his desire to destroy every last monster while presenting as one himself. The end of season one connects this theme through a realization shared by all the characters “being that

to surpass monsters, you must be willing to abandon your humanity”. Ultimately, the story authors, use character and conflict to address “The World’s Cruelty, Oppression of man” as a major theme in this anime.

## **6. Searching & Fighting for freedom against the cruel world**

The theme of “Searching and Fighting for freedom against the cruel world” exists as a second theme in the series. Although the Eldians, lived protected behind the walls for over 100 years, characters Eren and Armin have always had a desire to be “free” and see what was outside the walls. They did not consider hiding behind caged walls for fear of the titans as freedom. Within the story, we see that each character has their own definition of freedom: Eren decides to fight to be free and Armin seeks knowledge to be free. Armin's definition of freedom is derived from his helplessly hopeful personality. He is ready to put all his trust in into his friends—Eren, Mikasa, and the Scout Regiment—and into the hope for the future. Within the series, we see that he is ultimately ready to give up his life for the sake of friendship and mankind. Armin unlike Eren, accepts that he has gained a sort of freedom, that being the joy he has experienced with his companions in the regiment. This encourages him to keep “fighting” and pushing forward—for his friends, and to confront risks as he continues to put everything in the hands of hope and the future.

In contrast, Eren is motivated by rage. After his mother is killed, Eren states that he will erase every single one of the titans from this earth—he is out for vengeance. Eren is then prepared to kill anyone who attempts to restrict his freedom. He even teaches Mikasa this sentiment when he first meets her as a younger child and saves her from getting killed by the men who murdered her parents. He tells Mikasa that she has to fight to live. This triggers a fight response in her that remains throughout the rest of the season. For Eren, it is later understood that regardless if it is individuals or titans, he is driven by his anger and will continue to battle for his own independence. His transformation as a Titan can be inferred as an illustration to solidify this rage in him. Regardless of



what it takes, his hope is in destroying all his enemies so that one day he will be free. His inner fire to fight is his way to be free until that day.

An additional illustration of freedom in the series, is the army corps known as the Scout Regiment. They are known as the “wings of freedom” and the symbols on their jackets employ such symbol; humanity’s hope for freedom. they were the military branch that went outside the fortified perimeter to encounter the man-eating Titans. Ultimately, It is in this regiment, that the trio solidify their different desires for freedom that carries them throughout the rest of the story.

## 7. **Anime story as Influence for my short film: *Épuisée***

Anime stories have gained enormous popularity in the West, and have influenced major Hollywood motion pictures such as *Ghost in the Shell* being influence for *The Matrix*. Therefore, I decided to use the findings from my study and apply it to a creative activity resulting in pre-production for my short film, titled *Épuisée*. The goal of my study was to better understand elements of Japanese storytelling and anime and use such knowledge to inform my creative process and as inspiration for *Épuisée*. Within my research, I found three significant themes depicted in the series, one being “Cruelty, Oppression of man and world,” along with a strong influence of Japanese folklore in anime stories which include an emphasis on spirituality, religious, and fantastical elements.

In *Épuisée*, I applied the theme of oppression in a nuanced way. Rather than presenting oppression as human to human, my main character Violet has anxiety which can be viewed as a form of oppression, whether mental or spiritual. Drawing upon the characteristics of Japanese folklore:

“Many Japanese anime and manga narratives...contain references to or examples of supernatural creatures, or *yōkai*.<sup>1</sup> As in Western culture, *yōkai*, which can be translated as monsters, spirits, or demons, are a rich source of material for contemporary pop culture narratives” (Shamoon, 276).

I depicted this anxiety through leaving our character's reality, where Violet is trapped in a dark forest running away from a dark spirit. Rather than showing her anxiety in the typical, hands shaking or body jittery, the audience will experience her anxiety in a fantastical way with added spiritual elements.

## **7.1 Pre-production Materials**

## **7.2 Film Scenario**

**Logline:** After her anxiety traps her in an eerie forest, Violet must escape the dark spirit threatening to destroy her in order to complete her presentation.

**Medium Synopsis:** Violet, an African-American student continues to hide her brittle mental anxiety as she preps for her final presentation at a prestigious prep school. When her teacher turns off the light to display the presentation, Violet's anxiety is triggered and she magically appears in an eerie forest reigned by a dark figure. For fear of missing her presentation, she runs and seeks to find a way out of the forest and away from this daunting spirit.

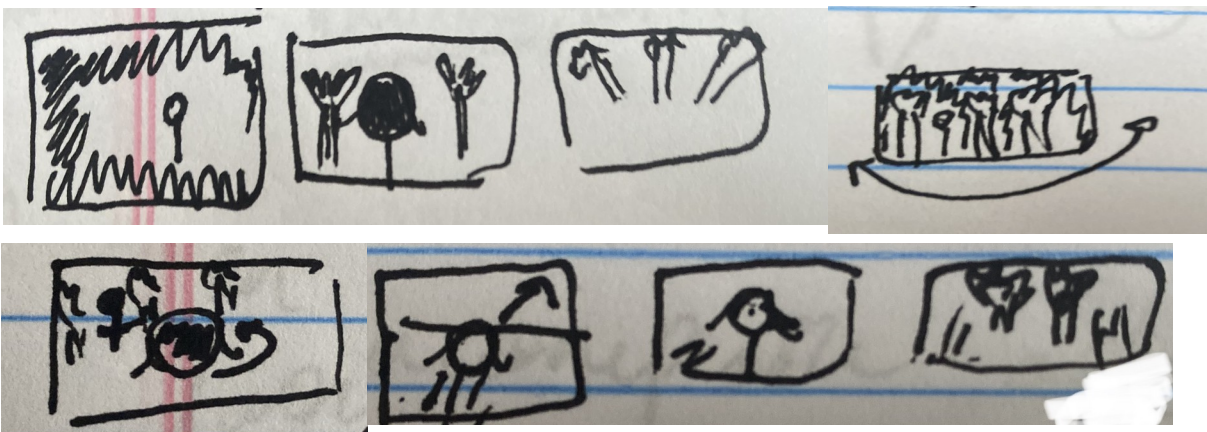
### 7.3 Illustrations

#### *Mood Board*



**Figure 6, 7 & 8.** The Academic Cottage, *Girl with bow*, 11 Mar. 2022; Ellacalm, *To the wonder*, 12 Aug. 2017; *Blurry girl*, 17 Mar. 2019.

#### *Storyboard of Violet woods scene*



## 8. Conclusion

This preliminary research was done by textual analysis and historical research methods to address characteristics of Japanese storytelling and animation—analyzing the anime series, *Attack on Titan* as a case study. From this analysis, the anime series presented two significant story themes: 1) The World's Cruelty, Oppression of man 2) Searching & Fighting for freedom against the cruel world; a strong influence of Japanese folklore that includes religious, spiritual, and fantastical elements; and an influence of Eastern and Western art that all contribute to the story structure and aesthetics elements of the anime story. Such findings were then applied to my creative activity: preproduction for my short film, *Épuisée* where I employed *AOT*'s theme of "Oppression" as the major theme of my story and utilized fantastical and spiritual elements as a tool to explore this theme. Conclusively, this project brought a better understanding of the traditions of Japanese storytelling within anime and presented an application of such knowledge as influence for my short film, and helped inform my creative practice. Further research can be done on manga (Japanese graphic novels) to better research story elements specific to Japanese visual storytelling mediums.



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