

21G.039 Japanese Popular Culture

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Lecture 1: February 5, 2003

New Boundaries, New Connections

Masamune (1991)

Two robots question their identity.
From *Ghost in the Shell*

NAKAZAWA Keiji *Barefoot Gen*
(*Hadashi no Gen*)

KON Satoshi (Dir.) 1997 *Perfect Blue*

Celebrity, Fans, and Identity

AMANO Yoshitaka

TEZUKA Osamu (1928-89)

Self-portrait

from Schodt (1996) *Dreamland Japan*

MIYAZAKI Hayao

"No matter what becomes of the world, we should celebrate the blessing of being born."

Comic Box Bessatsu Vol. 6 Chihiro no Daibouken (2001)

Miyazaki (1988)

My Neighbor Totoro (*Tonari no Totoro*) 1988

Nature, Gods, Humans, Technology

Princess Mononoke (1997)

Spirited Away (*Sen to Chihiro*)

Miyazaki (2001)

Highest grossing box office receipts in Japanese film history

Japanese Popular Culture

- What's Japanese?
- What's popular culture?

Defining Popular Culture

- formal
- aesthetic
- quantitative
- sociological
- political

Ganguro fashion, late 1990s

Lawrence Grossberg (1989)

1. Formal

- popular culture relies on formulas
 - soap operas
 - teen idol pop
 - action movies

Sakamoto Kyu in 1960s

2. aesthetic

- popular culture as opposed to high culture
 - not opera, symphony, ballet
 - yes, theater, rock 'n roll, disco

Graffiti art *kanji* as CD cover

3. quantitatively

- popular culture is mass culture
 - hit songs, not playing piano at home
 - hit TV shows, not home videos

UTADA Hikaru (1999) *First Love* debut album sets record

4. sociologically

- popular culture is everyday culture of the people
 - karaoke box
 - video games
 - cell phones

Nikki Lee's identity art

5. politically

- popular culture is folk culture
 - not mainstream culture of the powerful
 - yes, culture of marginal groups
 - Grafitti on walls, but not in art museums . . . ?

Kazz Rock panel in
Sakuragi-cho, 2000

"You Better Listen Up"

- Alternative visions of society
- Media power in economics, politics, and culture
- Fan and artist positions
- The future of culture is in the balance

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Assignment for Monday

- Reading:
 - Horkheimer and Adorno
(handout)
 - Treat, "Introduction"
*Contemporary Japan and
Popular Culture*
- Video:
 - "The Japanese Version" at
the LLARC, 6th floor,
Building 16

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21G.039 / 21G.037 Japanese Popular Culture
Spring 2003

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