

## Introducing the MAC Interchange and *The Wind Rises*

**Key Discussion Point: the moral tension in *The Wind Rises*.**

### An Introduction to *The Wind Rises*.

The wind is rising!... We must try to live!  
The huge air opens and shuts my book: the wave  
Dares to explode out of the rocks in reeking  
Spray. Fly away, my sun-bewildered pages!  
Break, waves! Break up with your rejoicing surges  
This quiet roof where sails like doves were pecking”

Quoted above is the last verse of Paul Valery’s poem *The Graveyard by the Sea* (first published 1922) and the first line yields the title of the film. The first line of this verse is uttered alternately throughout the film and quoted by Jiro on his first meeting with Nahoko the two central characters in the love story as they meet for the first time on a train. She catches Jiro’s hat before it flies away, taken by the wind. The wind punctuates the film in this way, bringing these two characters together and ultimately taking them away. This line from Valery’s poem doesn’t just indicate the title however. The wind is clearly one of the film’s most prominent motifs and points us in the direction of one of Miyazaki’s major themes throughout many of his films: flying; the impact of the wind on his character’s behaviour; or more generally, the impact of the forces of nature on the course of people’s, Miyazaki’s character’s, lives.

First released in 2013 in Japan, the film was the highest grossing film in Japan for that year. It has since been released to audiences worldwide to much critical acclaim and arrived in cinemas in the UK earlier this year. It is apparently Studio Ghibli’s last film and there are many ways in which it is possible to see this film as a kind of ‘swan song’ from Miyazaki and his colleagues. Miyazaki first started illustrating scenes from the life of Japanese airplane designer Jiro Horikoshi in 2008 and published the drawings in manga form (Maughen, 2008). Tim Shone, in his enlightened review of the film suggests it is “probably the gentlest animated feature about an armaments designer you’ll ever see” (Shone, 2014).

The film also takes as one of its main sources scenes from a novel, *The Wind Has Risen*, a fictionalised account of Japanese author, Tatsuo Hori’s, experience of, and eventual loss, of his fiancée to tuberculosis. (You can see the connection). In addition, there is another, direct link here to the title of the film.

#### *Significant narrative elements:*

- A young Japanese boy, **Jiro Horikoshi**, dreams of flying and his dreams meets the famous Italian plane designer (**Giovanni Caproni**).
- A love story.
- An earthquake.
- A tuberculosis epidemic. As Japan pulls itself out of its agrarian past and into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and simultaneously prepares for WW2.
- The eventual and tragic death of the central character’s (Jiro) wife and love of his life (**Nahoko**), from tuberculosis.

### A Moral Dilemma

The film presents its audience with a moral dilemma. It’s expressed by the Italian plane designer (Italian aviator Giovanni Caproni) in one of Jiro’s dreams:

**“Airplanes are not for war or making money. Airplanes are beautiful dreams waiting to be swallowed up by the wind.”**

Thus, there is a stark and rather deadly paradox; albeit a paradox that is articulated through the subtlety and gentleness of the film's storytelling and in its approach to animation; the economy and boldness of its lines, the clarity and simplicity of its drawings.

Jiro was the inventor of some of Japan's most deadly air fleet in WW2, planes that went on suicide missions, some responsible for the destruction of Pearl Harbour. (Incidentally, some audiences in the US apparently objected to the absence of any reference to Pearl Harbour.)

So there is a stark tension between the real historical events that forms the film's background and the progress of Miyazaki's characters. Jiro is a gentle prodigy, a designer in search of perfection but his designs become instruments of war.

The paradox can be expressed in the following way:

1. The celebration of the aesthetics of design, engineering, aviation, of technology.
2. The use of technology, in this instance aircraft, as instruments of war, of mass destruction.

#### *References*

Shone, T. (2014) 'The Wind Rises: a flight into Hayao Miyazaki's magic and poetry', in *The Guardian*, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/feb/21/wind-rises-hayao-miyazaki-animated-film-review>

Maughen, T. (2008) 'New Miyazaki Manga: details and images emerge', Tim Maughen Books website. <http://timmaughanbooks.com/2009/03/03/new-miyazaki-manga-details-and-images-emerge>

#### *Illustrations*

1. Drawings from manga
2. Storyboards
3. Details from film showing the impact of the wind on Miyazaki's characters.