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Aesthetic journeys and media pilgrimages in the contexts of pop culture and the creative industries from and to East Asia

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Aesthetic journeys and media pilgrimages in the contexts of pop culture and the creative industries from and to East Asia

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REVIEWS

Anime tourism in Italy:
Travelling to the locations of the Studio Ghibli films[1]

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ABSTRACT

Film-induced tourism, intended as travelling to places where films and TV series have been shot or set, has been extensively studied in the last two decades in several disciplinary fields. For example, the term 'media pilgrimage' emerged in media sociology to highlight the sacred dimension these practices may assume, while fan studies have focused on the narrative of affection built upon specific places. Calling forth the relationship between film and landscape, these phenomena have been also explored in the light of film semiotics and media geography.

In the past decade, the representation of landscape and the construction of the sense of place in animation benefited from increased scholarly attention; however, the links between tourism and animation still appear under-explored. Japanese animation, because of its prominent use of real locations as the basis for the building of its worlds and the tendency of its fanbases to take action (even in the form of animation-oriented tourism), is an especially promising field, in this respect. In the last fifteen years, a debate on 'content(s) tourism' has involved the Japanese government as well as academic scholarship, referring to a wide variety of contents, from novels to films and TV series, anime, manga, and games.

The article presents a case study: a discussion of the experience of anime tourists who visited the Italian locations featured in the films by the world-famous animator and director Miyazaki Hayao, especially in Castle in the Sky *(1986) and* Porco Rosso *(1992). The experiences of anime tourists were collected from images and texts shared through the social network Twitter.*

1. Introduction

In the past decade, the representation of landscape and the construction of the sense of place in animation benefited from an increased scholarly attention (as testified by Pallant, 2015); however, the links between tourism and animation still appear under-explored in international film tourism research. Japanese animation, because of its

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[1] The planning and research for this article was carried out jointly by the two authors. Giulia Lavarone wrote sections 2, 4, 5 and 7; Marco Bellano wrote sections 1, 3 and 6.

prominent use of real locations as the basis for the building of its worlds, and the tendency of its fanbases to take action (even in the form of animation-oriented tourism), is an especially promising field, in this respect. However, in a recent article on the anime pilgrimage, Ono Akinori [2] *et al.* argue that 'scant research has been conducted on this phenomenon' (2020), while Hernández-Pérez (2019) highlights the lack of research concerning specifically anime pilgrimages 'out of Japan'.

This paper will report on ongoing research studying how memories of European settings from favourite series and films participate in orienting the travel desires and practices of the audience of Japanese animation. We decided to focus on Studio Ghibli films to kickstart our research, because of their widespread fame and cross-age group appeal. The main tools we used to question and interpret the qualitative data we collected about travel desires and experiences issue from theoretical frameworks developed by scientific literature on film-induced tourism and anime tourism. We particularly focused on the concept of nostalgia, with reference to its wide framework of interdisciplinary scholarship, here accessed through the specific lens of tourist studies and animation studies.

2. Film Tourism, Anime Tourism, and Nostalgia: Experiencing Authenticity through Emotions.

The wider theoretical framework of this research is film-induced tourism, intended as travelling to places variously connected with film and TV programmes, such as shooting or setting locations, production studios, film museums, celebrity homes, or festival premises (Beeton, 2005; Beeton, 2015).

Film-induced tourism has been extensively studied in the last two decades in several disciplinary fields, from tourism management to cultural geography and media studies (Connell, 2012). The term includes experiences that involve various degrees of tourists' interest in the film, which can be strong and determine the search for the film's actual locations, or weak and even non-existent, when 'serendipitous' film tourists 'just happen to be' in a place used for shooting (Macionis, 2004). In the first case, these experiences can be sometimes read within the framework of fan tourism, which

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[2] For Japanese names we use the surname-name order.

presents specific features such as fans' typical worries about the commercial exploitation of the beloved film or TV series (Williams, 2018). Film tourists' degree of interest in a film is often situated somewhere between the two poles, with tourists participating in film-related activities for different motivations, including the 'novelty' of this experience and its educational potential (Macionis, 2004). Film tourism is often integrated with other forms of tourism, such as heritage tourism, with which it is frequently paired by scholars (e.g., Schofield, 1996; Agarwal and Shaw, 2018). Film tourists are often interested in the actual history of the toured places, even if their 'historical imagination' is obviously mediated by the film or TV series (Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2017: 185).

Heritage, screen, and literary tourism have in common a strong involvement of the tourist in the co-creation of the experience, as she/he is directly engaged in attributing meaning to places 'only because of a person, event, movie and/or literary association featured there' (Agarwal and Shaw, 2018: 34). Inspired by Pierre Nora's definition of *lieu de mémoire*, Reijnders (2011: 8) has coined the term 'places of imagination' for places visited by film and literary tourists, which 'serve as a symbolic anchor for the collective imagination'. 'Places of imagination' are often authenticated by media tourists themselves, regardless of their being the places which have actually inspired the author of the work. The authenticity that film tourists look for is not necessarily that of the toured objects, it is rather identified in the existential value of the experience, as described by Wang (1999), or at least in a complex relationship between the two. According to Buchmann *et al.* (2010), the 'authenticity' of the film tourist experience is identified in the quality of the encounter with a unique place, that of shooting, in the analysed study case of *The Lord of the Rings*, Peter Jackson, 2001-2003. This encounter must appear as 'authentic' both physically—e.g., when the weather conditions are bad, because 'film tourists, like pilgrims, welcome physical exercise and even discomfort as a further validation of their experience as authentic' (Buchmann *et al.*, 2010: 241)— and socially, when the relationships with the guide and the other tour participants are recognised as sincere.

While originally dealing with case studies located in Anglo-Saxon countries, Western film tourism research has eventually focused on Asian countries (Connell, 2012), with recent publications exploring the Asian context at large (Kim and Reijnders, 2018). In parallel with the development of Western research on film tourism, a relevant debate

on 'content(s) tourism' has involved the Japanese government as well as scholarship (Beeton *et al.*, 2013). In a 2005 government report, 'content tourism' is defined as: 'the addition of a 'narrative quality' (*monogatarisei*) or 'theme' (*teemasei*) to a region—namely an atmosphere or image particular to the region generated by the contents—and the use of that narrative quality as a tourism resource' (Beeton *et al.*, 2013: 179). The expression 'content(s)' refers to all aspects of popular culture, including novels, films, TV series, anime, manga, and games (Beeton *et al.*, 2013). Linguistic barriers have inhibited the dialogue between these different research traditions (Beeton *et al.*, 2013) until recently, when many publications in English have appeared, including collections of articles dealing with specific case studies (Seaton and Yamamura, 2015), as well as comprehensive historical overviews (Seaton *et al.*, 2017).

The term usually employed to refer to these tourist practices in relation to anime is that of "anime pilgrimages". While the term '(media) pilgrimages' is frequently used within Western research in the disciplinary fields of media sociology and fan studies (e.g., Couldry, 2000), its diffusion in the Japanese context goes far beyond scholarship, being normally used by official tourist marketing and by tourists themselves. The expression fits the peculiar practices blurring the devotion to traditional gods with that of the anime world, like the writing of vows and prayers, or drawing of anime characters, on the traditional votive plaques (*ema*) in actual shrines (Okamoto, 2015; Yamamura, 2015; Hernández-Pérez, 2019).

Actually, the term 'anime pilgrimage' is often used to embrace a wide variety of practices that entail different degrees of fandom and in some cases blur with cultural tourism. Hernández-Pérez (2019) has proposed a classification of tourist forms connected to anime, within and outside Japan, distinguishing fan tourism (*otaku tourism*) from a wider 'contents tourism'. To the first category belong the properly defined 'pilgrimage' (*seichi junrei*), as well as 'scene hunting' (*butaitanbou*), i.e., taking photographs at the actual spot, aimed at reproducing anime scenes (on *butaitanbou*, see also Loriguillo-López, 2021). 'Content tourism' implies instead a weaker involvement with the media text itself and with fan communities, while often dealing with more institutionalised places and activities. It includes 'casual otaku tourism' (or 'anime tourism'), often moved by nostalgia for the anime watched in the past, as well as proper 'cultural tourism', like in the case of foreign anime tourists in Japan who are willing to discover Japanese culture at large (Hernández-Pérez, 2019).

Despite relevant research concerning tourism in anime locations situated in Japan, studies on Japanese animation-related tourism 'out of Japan' are still lacking (Hernández-Pérez, 2019). As regards non-Japanese places connected with Miyazaki Hayao's movies, two interesting contributions deal with places that are authenticated as 'places of imaginations' by fans themselves, despite not being the declared settings of the films, nor the source of inspiration acknowledged by the director. Norris (2013) analyses the case of the Tasmanian bakery connected to *Kiki's Delivery Service* (*Majō no takkyūbin*, 1989), while Yagi and Pearce (2017) focus on the worldwide attractions about which the TripAdvisor comments in Japanese mention *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (*Kaze no tani no Naushika*, 1984) or *Castle in the Sky* (*Tenkū no shiro Rapyuta*, 1986). The latter is mentioned in relation to 88 different attractions, 50 of which are outside of Japan, including Mont Saint-Michel in France (see the next section). If authentication processes of 'places of imaginations' by film tourists themselves are often recognised in Western film tourism, the disregard for a factual connection with actual movie production is sometimes patent in animation-related Japanese tourism, possibly because of two main factors. On the one hand, the specificities of animated films and series, which potentially leave free course to the imagination more than live-action films (Yagi and Pearce, 2017)—even if their being inspired by specific locations is sometimes well documented, and even if this connection is promoted by local institutions (e.g., in the case of the Spanish city of Cuenca: see Hernández-Pérez, 2017). On the other hand, cultural factors concerning Japanese tourists' concept of authenticity, 'more about the ability of the tourists' imaginative capacity to generate key emotions and values, and less about the search for truth, accuracy, and credibility' (Yagi and Pearce, 2018: 20).

Speaking of 'key emotions', nostalgic feelings can play a pivotal role in the film tourist experience (among others, see: Schofield, 1996; Grenier, 2011; Kim, 2017), as well as in the anime experience (see the next section). As regards animation related tourism, situated at a convergence of the two, the concept of nostalgia must be understood in multiple ways.

First, nostalgia for one's own past, including childhood memories (Norris, 2013; Yagi and Pearce, 2017; Geraghty, 2019), which Hernández-Pérez (2019), in his classification of anime tourists, relates to the large category of 'casual otaku tourists'. This understanding of nostalgia, which can be extended to film tourism in general when

dealing with movies watched in one's own past (e.g., Hong Kong movies watched by Korean audiences in the 1970s-1990s: Kim, 2017), relates both to the text itself and to the context of watching. Just like the very experience of watching, the objects seen in the movie (e.g., places, commercial brands, characters' gestures) join personal memories, thus possibly becoming the target of nostalgic feelings (Kim, 2017). The intimacy with movie characters, or places, originates actions carried out by spectators in the real world (Kim, 2012; Beeton, 2015), possibly including an active engagement with the real place and local communities (in relation to anime fans, see Yamamura, 2015).

Besides being an actual push factor for tourist visitation (Kim, 2017), nostalgia may be the main emotional mood of film tourist experiences on-site, regardless of their motivation. Kim (2012) suggests understanding these experiences with reference to three dimensions: 1) 'prestige and privilege', marked by the excitement of being in the 'real' location and taking photographs there; 2) 'beyond screen, sensory experience and re-enactment', entailing more active interactions with the place, such as the re-enactment of film scenes, gathering information about the movie production behind the scenes, or enjoying sensory experiences (e.g. tasting typical food); 3) 'intimacy and memory', referring to 'film tourists' attempt[s] to remember and experience how they were emotionally and behaviourally touched by the story, characters, and other production values' like background music (Kim 2012: 394). In the latter case, the toured destination appears familiar and stimulates personal memories, nurturing a nostalgic mood. Ono *et al.* (2020) adapted these categories in their study on anime pilgrimages, proposing a terminology which explicitly includes the word 'nostalgia': 1) 'immersive' experiences, based on the excitement of being in the actual locations that inspired anime scenes; 2) 'vicarious' experiences, based on the identification with characters and re-enacting of scenes; 3) 'nostalgic' experiences, based on the recognition of familiar objects and recollection of the anime narrative.

As regards the specific case of Japanese tourists outside Japan, the choice of touring anime-related locations, and/or referring to Japanese popular culture when visiting foreign attractions, must also be understood as a 'search for the familiar in unfamiliar places' (Yagi and Pearce, 2017: 285; see also Yagi and Pearce, 2018). Somehow paradoxically, foreign locations might even stimulate nostalgia towards traditional values perceived as lost (or in crisis) at home, an emotion blurred with nostalgia towards childhood. According to Rea (2000), the values of *furusato* (native places) can

be found 'away from home' by contemporary Japanese tourists when they pilgrimage to places like Prince Edward Island in Canada, the location that inspired the book series *Anne of Green Gables*, adapted as a famous anime series by Takahata Isao in 1979[3]. Tourists' nostalgia is addressed towards 'wondrous premodern (and fictional) worlds encountered in their youth' (Rea, 2000: 642), preserving beautiful landscapes and 'a frugal, non-commercial lifestyle' (Rea, 2000: 656) which can be better appreciated in foreign locations connected to children's books than in contemporary Japan.

Finally, nostalgia towards a lost past is recognised as a key component in heritage tourism, whose connections with film tourism have already been discussed. When dealing with Japanese tourists, this emotional involvement with vestiges of the past should also be understood in relation to the Japanese aesthetic sense of *wabi-sabi*, leading, as an example, to the appreciation of ruins covered by musk, testifying the transience of all things (Yagi and Pearce, 2017; on *wabi-sabi*, see Koren, 1994). In the study cases of Italian locations connected to Miyazaki's animated movies, this nostalgia towards lost worlds (whether real or imaginary ones) is magnified by the peculiar features of the texts, rooted in Miyazaki's poetics, which will be discussed in the following section.

3. Miyazaki and Europe

The interest in the European landscape by Miyazaki and his colleagues is longstanding. It predates the establishment of the Studio Ghibli in 1985, as testified, for example, by many explicit references to European locations in the TV series *Heidi, the Girls from the Alps* (*Arupusu no shōjo Haiji*, 1974) and *3000 Leagues in Search of Mother* (*Haha o Tazunete Sanzenri*, 1976). Together with *Anne of Green Gables* (*Akage no An*, 1979), those works were among the most accomplished titles from the World Masterpiece Theater (1975-2009), a project by the production company Nippon Animation aimed at developing animated transpositions of classics from children's literature (Le Roux, 2009: 189). Miyazaki provided layouts to the aforementioned three series, which were all written and directed by Takahata, who later became the main

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[3] These famous pilgrimages have been effectively described as a form of 'embodied fandom' aimed at entering a 'world', rather than dealing with single 'works'—like the books by Lucy Maud Montgomery or their anime adaptation by Takahata (Bergstrom, 2014).

creative force at Studio Ghibli, together with Miyazaki. Views with a European flavour had also appeared in the first *Lupin III* series (1971), which Takahata and Miyazaki co-directed from episode 9 onwards, after the previously appointed director had been removed (Greenberg, 2018: 53). Episode 15 has quite a telling title, in this respect: *Rupan wo Tsukamaete Yōroppa e Ikō* (*Let's Catch Lupin and Go to Europe*).

Miyazaki and Takahata developed their fascination with Europe through their shared appreciation of foreign books. Takahata graduated in French literature at the Tokyo University, with a dissertation on Jacques Prévert; he later translated some of his poems into Japanese (Bendazzi, 2015: 217). An animated film written by Prévert, *Le roi et l'oiseau* (Paul Grimault, 1980), first released in 1952 as *La bergère et le ramoneur*, became a major reference in Takahata's approach to animation. As for Miyazaki, he had been an avid reader of fiction from Europe since his youth; differently from his peers, he reportedly enjoyed *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Three Musketeers* and *The Prisoner of Zenda* more than *manga* (Napier, 2018: 21). During his studies in political science and economics at the Gakushuin University, he joined a children's literature research society, through which he was exposed to works by writers like Rosemary Sutcliff, Philippa Pearce, Eleanor Farjeon, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (McCarthy, 1999: 30).

The experience that consolidated Miyazaki's preference for the representation of the European landscape[4] was a location scouting trip he took in 1971 with the president of the production company Tokyo Movie Shinsha, Fujioka Yutaka, in order to secure the rights for an animated adaptation of Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* (Greenberg, 2018: 32). It was Miyazaki's first time travelling outside Japan. The journey proved unfruitful, as Lindgren did not agree to meet with Miyazaki, probably because of a bad negotiation strategy executed by the mediators between the author and the Japanese studio, that is to say Ernst Liesenhoff and Olle Nordemar, the producers of the 1969 live-action *Pippi Longstocking* Tv series written by Lindgren herself. That series was shot in the picturesque island town of Visby, which then became one of the

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[4] Miyazaki's specific choice of Europe to picture an idealised and positive Western world might also imply the notorious anti-American stance of the director, as noted by Hernandez-Perez (2016: 305). Some evidence of this attitude can be found in several interviews of Miyazaki, but also in the presentation of a vain and opportunist American character in *Porco Rosso* (Curtis).

destinations of Miyazaki's journey, along with Stockholm. Even though the *Pippi Longstocking* anime never happened, those places left a longstanding impression on Miyazaki, and also convinced him about the importance of location scouting in the process of animation pre-production. He remarked:

> Before I went there, I honestly thought that I could depict Europe without ever having to see it. But once I was there in person, I keenly felt the profundity of the real thing. I realised that although we lumped it all in as 'Europe' everything changes depending on where you are. ... It was the location hunting that made me feel that way. It's when I found myself standing at the gateway to Europe (Miyazaki in Clements, 2017).

Other major non-Japanese destinations visited by Miyazaki and his crew during location scouting trips were Maienfeld in Switzerland (for *Heidi*, in 1973) (Olof-Ors, 2019); Argentina and Italy (for *3000 Leagues in Search of Mother*); Wales (two weeks starting from 18 May 1985), where the crew visited 'coal mines, castles, museums' (Studio Ghibli, 2016: 11) (probably Caernarfon Castle, Powis Castle, the Rhondda Cynon Taff coal mining district and the Big Pit National Coal Museum), during the pre-production of *Castle in the Sky*; Visby and Stockholm again in 1988, to get inspiration for *Kiki's Delivery Service*, whose locations are partly based on the downtown district of Stockholm known as Gamla Stan (Studio Ghibli, 2006: 11); and a 2002 twelve-day trip to Heidelberg, Paris, and Colmar to develop the locations of *Howl's Moving Castle* (*Hauru no ugoku shiro*, 2004) (Studio Ghibli, 2005: 12, 49).

When transplanting European views into his films, Miyazaki has never been literal. On the contrary, he preferred to mix together the subjective impressions he got from different places, to create an imaginary landscape rooted in reality. The scenery can still contain hints of physical places, but there are never exact correspondences. This arguably leaves the viewers free to come up with their own associations between reality and animation, widening thus the spectrum of real-life places that can be associated with Ghibli films. This attitude of Miyazaki is actually in tune with the idealised, picturesque, and exotic representation of Europe rooted in Japanese popular culture. Helen McCarthy talked of the

> never-never land that is the Japanese dream of Europe, a rustic paradise of crumbling yet infinitely sophisticated cities and castles; ancient titles and even older secrets; lakes, mountains, and high flower-strewn meadows; and mystery and

romance. There is a Japanese phrase that sums up this yearning for the beautiful, mysterious fantasy otherwise—*akogare no Paris*, the Paris of our dreams (McCarthy, 1999: 65).

Yagi and Pearce bring up the term *akogare* in their discussion of the Japanese appreciation of Western locations seen in animated films: it expresses a form of admiration for Europe, kindred in emotional value to *wabi-sabi* (the quiet contemplation of the transience of things, already mentioned in the previous section and connected with the aesthetics of ruins mentioned by McCarthy) and *natsukashii*, a Japanese word which roughly translates as 'nostalgia' (Yagi and Pearce, 2018).

The concept of nostalgia has always been an important part of the *anime* experience, as argued by Marco Pellitteri (Pellitteri, 2018: 18) but it is especially pertinent to the Studio Ghibli films. Susan Napier used the word *natsukashii* to define 'the elegiac', one of the three dominant modes of expression she identifies in *anime* (together with 'the apocalyptic' and 'the carnivalesque'): it is 'a lyrical sense of mourning often connected with an acute consciousness of a waning traditional culture' (Napier, 2005: 13). Napier notices how this emotional range especially stands out in Ghibli films such as *Omohide Poroporo* (*Only Yesterday*, Takahata Isao, 1991), noting that Taeko, the protagonist, explicitly uses the word *natsukashii* when reacting to a view of the countryside; she also says *furusato*, which, as noted in the previous section, is a sentiment of 'homeland' that may arise in the Japanese sensibility also when finding signs of a domestic familiarity in a faraway place. The *natsukashii*, and Napier's 'elegiac' tone, make the mourning an aesthetic pleasure in itself. It could be compared with Svetlana Boym's 'reflective nostalgia', a concept which focuses on 'the imperfect process of remembrance' (Boym, 2001: 41), as opposed to 'restorative nostalgia', propelled by the desire to take action and fight the loss by rebuilding a lost past in the present.

Alistair Swale, though, argues that Miyazaki's declination of *natsukashii* is not mainly about mourning a loss: 'this is arguably not Miyazaki's dominant mode of engagement with the past, and he shows himself just as happy to depict an idealised and highly stylised Europe or a quasi-feudal Japan' (Swale, 2015: 416). So, by going back to Yagi and Pearce, it could be argued that, especially when setting his stories in Europe, Miyazaki underplays the *natsukashii* feeling in favour of the *akogare* (and perhaps in conjunction with the *wabi-sabi*).

In fact, as the director himself has often remarked, Miyazaki's films mainly deal with a feeling of 'yearning for a lost world' (Miyazaki, 2009[1]: 18), which, however, could also be an imaginary one. Such an imagined and aesthetic experience of loss might be likened to the 'ersatz nostalgia' discussed by Arjun Appadurai, 'a nostalgia without lived experience or collective historical memory' (Appadurai, 1996: 78). Miyazaki consciously distinguishes the nostalgia based on memories from the one based on imagination: on the one hand, he concedes that 'adults fondly [recall] something from their childhood […]. As we get older, the breadth—or depth—of our nostalgia definitely increases' (Miyazaki, 2009[1]: 18); on the other hand, he posits that 'the moment someone is born into this present instant, […] he or she has already lost […] the chance to be born in other ages […] This yearning for other, lost possibilities may also be a major motivator' (Miyazaki, 2009[1]: 18).

Many films by Miyazaki play with the nostalgic desires in the audience, by using imaginary settings and scenery that retain only a vague imprint of real places: two outstanding cases are *Castle in the Sky* and *Porco Rosso* (*Kurenai no Buta*, Miyazaki Hayao, 1992). In the latter, this 'ersatz nostalgia' was also fueled by an appeal to the desire to travel. Miyazaki's 'Directorial memoranda' reads: 'A town that people would like to visit. A sky through which people would like to fly. A secret hideaway we ourselves would want. And a worry-free, stirring, uplifting world. Once upon a time, earth was a beautiful place' (Miyazaki, 2009[3]: 268).

In *Porco Rosso*, the backdrop of the action is the Adriatic Sea and the seashore of Croatia, but there is an extended sequence that takes place in Milan, in the area of the Navigli channels. However, no famous landmark is pictured in the film; the production materials even mention that the Hotel Adriano, one of the main sea locations, was initially supposed to be in a certain Moonshine City (*Doburoku-shi*) (Studio Ghibli, 2011: 18), which obviously does not exist. On the other hand, the time of the story seems to be the late twenties, because of the references to fascism and the looks of the vehicles, the phones, and the clothes; however, the opening titles set the film in the 'age of the flying boats', a fairytale-sounding epoch name that has never been used in reality. There is a good reason for this emphasis on the desire to travel in the *Porco Rosso* film plans: the film was initially conceived as a medium-length, in-flight feature film, for passengers on Japan Airlines international flights (Studio Ghibli, 2011: 12).

Castle in the Sky, instead, never tries to provide any reference to real locations; however, the look of the backgrounds is a direct result of a location scouting trip that Miyazaki took to Wales and Sussex, along the coast south of London (Miyazaki, 2009[4]: 339). The director, though, embellished the valleys he actually saw with 'lots of mine holes' (Miyazaki, 2009[4]: 339), in order to achieve the feeling of place he was aiming for since the film proposal he penned in 1984: 'the setting is vaguely European, but we can't tell exactly what race or nationality its people are' (Miyazaki, 2009[2]: 253). The look of the floating city, on the other hand, might have been based on illustrations of Jonathan Swift's satirical novel from which the name Laputa comes, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). Raz Greenberg advanced that Miyazaki could have taken inspiration from 'the classic nineteenth-century illustrations of the novel by French artist Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard that portrayed Swift's flying island as a fortress on a round flying platform' (Greenberg, 2018: 116). Apart from that, tall architectonic conglomerates with a pyramidal shape had already appeared several times in Miyazaki's works; one of them is the main location of the 1979 feature *Lupin III – The Castle of Cagliostro* (*Rupan Sansei – Kariosutoro no Shiro*). The origin of this visual trope was Miyazaki's admiration (Greenberg, 2018: 65) for the French animated feature *Le roi et l'oiseau*, set in a castle that looked almost like a towering mountain. Floating fortresses that may have influenced Miyazaki can also be found in a 1984 artbook by the French comic artist Moebius (*Venise celeste*), as well as in René Magritte's painting *Le Château des Pyrénées* (1959). A real location in France, Mont Saint-Michel, has been pointed out by fans as a reference, too. This, however, was never confirmed by Miyazaki; instead, it might be reasonable to see this as a consequence of spontaneous touristic practices that paired the appearance of Miyazaki's Laputa with those of numerous places all over the world (Yagi and Pearce 2017). Among them there is Civita di Bagnoregio, an Italian historical town perched on top of a hill, which we selected as a study case in respect to our research hypothesis.

4. Research Method

The sources of the following two sections have been selected in accordance with research models already tested in relation to anime tourism by Yagi and Pearce (2017). They are digital word-of-mouth, that is to say short messages pertinent to tourist

experiences spontaneously posted by Japanese-speaking people in social media. [5] While Yagi and Pearce focused on digital word-of-mouth gathered from a Japanese version of TripAdvisor, we decided to focus on Twitter. The choice of Twitter is due to its extensive use in Japan, its effective search functionalities, and the identification of a suitable number of relevant results acknowledged during preliminary research.

We searched for tweets related to two Studio Ghibli films that feature a European setting and some sort of connection with Italy: *Castle in the Sky* and *Porco Rosso*. The search was carried out between 18 September 2020 and 3 February 2021. We used keywords written in Japanese. For *Castle in the Sky*, we resorted to the word 'Laputa' or 'Miyazaki', together with 'Italy' or 'Civita', which refers to the city of Civita di Bagnoregio, in the Lazio region. A sample of 215 pertinent tweets has been identified in the time interval between the launch of Twitter in 2006 and 1 October 1 2020. Then, we used the Japanese title of *Porco Rosso* together with 'Italy' or 'Milan'. The final count about *Porco Rosso* is 873 pertinent tweets.

We have done a deductive qualitative analysis of textual[6] and visual content of the data set issued from the Twitter search. The choice of manual analysis, facilitated by the limited dimensions of the identified corpus, was preferred because of two factors. First, the intention to strongly focus our analysis on the interaction between visual and textual content in each tweet. Second, the intention to distinguish, whenever possible, the tweets testifying actual tourist experiences from the extremely numerous ones describing other forms of virtual tourism and/or expressing a mere desire of travelling.

In order to organise and interpret our data, we have used theoretical frameworks conceived within previous research on film-induced tourism and anime tourism described in the second section, in particular the classification of anime tourists proposed by Hernández-Pérez (2019) and the identification of the three dimensions of the film tourist experience elaborated by Kim (2012) and adapted to anime tourism by Ono *et al.* (2020). In approaching the corpus, we have thus looked for visual and textual clues allowing us to hypothesise a distinction between the experiences more easily

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[5] The corpus is composed of tweets in the Japanese language, including those written by non-Japanese users and excluding tweets written by Japanese users in other languages. Like Yagi and Pearce (2017), we have preferred this solution to a manual search aimed at distinguishing the tweets based on the declared origin of the author (where present), as this would have led to extremely uncertain results.

[6] We thank Manuel Majoli for helping us with the translations of the texts.

identifiable as 'contents tourism' and those of 'fan tourism', also drawing on the classification of film tourists provided by Macionis (2004) and research on fan tourism (e.g., Williams, 2018). As our main focus, anyway, was less on tourists' motivations than on their emotional engagement with the place, we have mostly looked for visual or textual references to practices typical of film and anime tourists, like 'scene hunting' or re-enactments (e.g., Kim, 2012; Hernández-Pérez, 2019), and, more generally, to visual and textual hints suggesting one or more of the three dimensions of the film (and anime) tourist experience identified by Kim (2012) and Ono *et al.* (2020). Particular attention has been paid to the notion of nostalgia, understood as a multifaceted concept whose relevance has been acknowledged in previous studies in relation to the anime experience (Pellitteri, 2018), to film tourism (Grenier, 2011; Kim, 2017; also in its understanding as a form of heritage tourism: Schofield, 1996) and specifically to anime tourism (Norris, 2013; Yagi and Pearce, 2017; Geraghty, 2019; Hernández-Pérez, 2019), as well as to Miyazaki's work (McCarthy, 1999; Miyazaki, 2009[1-4]; Swale, 2015).

We have also examined the texts and the images to look for what they suggest about the readings of the two locations (Civita and Milan) made by anime tourists, including the latter's potential interest towards their history (Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2017). We have enquired whether and in which ways these readings were mediated by the specific movie text and, also, if a 'narrative quality' or 'theme' appeared to be added to the place, bearing in mind the very definition of 'content tourism' provided by the Japanese government in 2005 (Beeton *et al.*, 2013: 179).

In respect to this last point, we have also identified and studied a subset of tweets (116) which mention other Italy-based anime works alongside *Porco Rosso*, in order to voice admiration for the country or a desire to travel. The wide diversity of the works grouped together in these tweets seem to imply that for some tourists (or prospective tourists) Italy as a whole might be endowed with a 'narrative quality' derived from anime as an expressive field, not from a specific storyline.

5. Anime Tourism in Italy: The case studies of Civita and Milan

The Civita di Bagnoregio is only accessible via a 300-metre long bridge, panoramically suspended over the valley; when the bridge disappears because of fog or clouds, it seems to float in the sky. It was founded by the ancient Etruscan people, while its present aspect mainly derives from the Middle Ages. It is known as 'the dying city', because landslides

and erosion have been causing over the centuries an uninterrupted, severe loss of territory, 'creating an ever-changing landscape that looks different year after year' (Margottini and Di Buduo, 2017). Moreover, the town has lost most of its population, now only having eight inhabitants (Di Veroli *et al.*, 2018).

The tourist website of the Lazio Region defines it as 'the first European locality for growth in tourist population' (https://www.visitlazio.com/web/en/luoghi/civita-di-bagnoregio/). According to the town management, tourists increased from around 40,000 in 2007 to 400,000 in 2014 (Ballario, 2015) and 600,000 in 2016 (Di Veroli *et al.*, 2018). They are reported to have exceeded one million in 2019 (Combs, 2020). A boom of Asian tourists has been observed, especially Japanese, reported to account for 20 per cent of total tourists in 2015 (Cambiaso, 2016). This growth is often related to the connection with Miyazaki's *Castle in the sky* (Angeloni, 2019). There is no evidence that Civita actually inspired Miyazaki and, in 2018, the town offices asked Marco Müller, former director of the Venice Film Festival, to send a letter to Miyazaki asking him for more information.[7] In spite of that, the reference to *Castle in the Sky* is regularly present in tourist marketing made by regional and national tourist bodies (for just one example, there is a tweet published in Japanese by the Italian National Tourist Board, showing a picture of Civita, accompanied by the statement whose English translation reads: 'It looks like *Castle in the Sky*').[8]

Civita can be defined as a 'place of imagination' (Reijnders, 2011), whose connection with *Castle in the Sky* has been authenticated by media tourists themselves and eventually institutionalised and promoted by official tourist bodies. The connection between Civita and Laputa is assumed without question in most of the tweets in our data set, which use the recurring expression identifying the town as the 'model' (102 tweets) or 'stage' (11 tweets) of Laputa. We have found only four examples of protective fandom, questioning the authenticity of this connection, but none of them appears to be written by a user who has actually visited Civita. Another user, who has

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[7] For this information, we would like to thank Gaia Basso, graduate student at the University of Padua, and Roberto Pomi, communication consultant for the municipality of Bagnoregio.

[8] https://twitter.com/Italia_jpn/status/1102328421915406336 (accessed 10 December 2021). The Italian press, and sometimes even official sources, often confuse *Castle in the Sky* with *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, Miyazaki Hayao, 2001), as Civita hosts an international festival of illustration named *La città incantata*, the Italian title for *Spirited Away*.

been to Civita, comments on its tourist exploitation, remarking the strong presence of Japanese, but there is no other evidence of typical fan tourists' concerns about the commercial abuse of the movie (Williams, 2018).

We can hypothesise, in relation to the classification of otaku tourists proposed by Hernández-Pérez (2019), that our data set mainly refers to 'content tourists', including both 'casual otaku tourists/anime tourists' and wider forms of 'cultural tourism', than proper 'otaku/fan tourists'. No practices like 'scene hunting' are expressly recorded—obviously, because there are no specific spots having been portrayed in the movie—and the organisation of a trip with the explicit purpose to visit Civita is expressly mentioned only twice. In most cases, it is unclear if tourists have personally chosen to visit Civita, as it appears to be often inserted in organised tours as a halfway stop between Florence and Rome.

Among the tweets undoubtedly written by people who have personally visited Civita (78 tweets), around half do not express the search for an emotional connection with the movie on-site. The formula 'a model of Laputa' pairs with the typical photo of an overall view of the town, hinting at the status acquired by the destination through its relation to the movie, thus highlighting the dimension of 'prestige and privilege' of the film tourist experience (Kim, 2012; Ono *et al.*, 2020). Sometimes there is more commentary, and more photos are taken inside the town centre, but they are not apparently selected with the aim of recreating Laputa's atmosphere. They focus on different aspects such as the main square, the alleys, food, and the omnipresent cats (featuring in 20 out of 78 tweets)[9], suggesting the blurring of anime tourism with wider cultural tourism and, sometimes, an accent on the 'sensory' dimensions of the experience (Kim, 2012).

The other half (almost 40 tweets) suggest, instead, the activation of different kinds of emotional connection with the film or display a reading of the place and its history highly influenced by the mediation of the movie.

There is only one case of (imagined) re-enactment (Kim, 2012), with a tourist verbally expressing the desire of imitating the character of Muska. Most of the other tweets,

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[9] In three cases, cats are defined in the tweets as almost the only living beings in Civita, a reading probably mediated by the image of the deserted Laputa. These tweets thus reveal a sort of emotional connection with the movie during the tourist experience on-site, as discussed later.

instead, highlight the dimension of 'intimacy and memory' of the film tourist experience (Kim, 2012)—or, we could say, describe a 'nostalgic' experience (Ono *et al.*, 2020). The latter is based on the recognition of a familiar place that entered personal memories when the movie was watched, often during childhood, and on the recollection on-site of memories of the anime. While visiting this foreign place, Japanese anime tourists recognise 'wondrous premodern (and fictional) worlds encountered in their youth', somehow finding 'homeland overseas' (Rea, 2000: 642; Yagi and Pearce, 2017; Yagi and Pearce, 2018). In 21 tweets out of 78, namely around a quarter of the total, the recognition of a familiar place is stated with formulas like 'Laputa was really there', 'Civita was exactly Laputa', 'the feeling of Laputa was amazing' and so on. The authenticity of the tourist experience is not measured in relation to historical accuracy, as it does not involve the search for a proven connection between the town and Miyazaki's movie. In this sense, the case of Civita is similar to that of the Tasmanian bakery put in relation to *Kiki's Delivery Service* (Norris, 2013) and to the numerous Laputa-related attractions mentioned by Yagi and Pearce (2017). Authenticity is rather evaluated in terms of the existential meaning of the experience (Wang, 1999) and is based on tourists' 'imaginative capacity to generate key emotions and value' (Yagi and Pearce, 2018: 20). Tourists are highly involved in the co-creation of the experience and the attribution of meaning to the place (Agarwal and Shaw, 2018).

The 'addition of a narrative quality' to Civita 'and the use of that narrative quality as a tourism resource' perfectly fits the definition of 'content(s) tourism' already provided (Beeton *et al.*, 2013). The narrative of the 'castle in the sky' is embedded into the place, whose reading is thus highly influenced by the mediation of the movie. First of all, Civita is read, and often photographed, as a town floating in the sky, and the tourist experience is sometimes considered satisfying in the presence of fog and clouds, while a sunny day is accused of effacing the similarities with Laputa:

> It was fine that day and there were no clouds. You can't see it floating anymore. Because it was connected to the road normally.

It is acknowledged in film tourism literature that seasonal and weather conditions highly influence tourists' satisfaction, depending on their similarity with those

portrayed in the movie (e.g., Roesch, 2009). Secondly, Civita is read as an abandoned, dying city, built by an ancient civilisation (the Etruscans), exactly like Laputa:

> […] the atmosphere of the decaying Civita is overwhelming, and it is exactly Laputa after Balus.
>
> The combination of stone buildings and greenery in the upper part, the collapsed part on the back side, and the passage of ancient people in the underground. *Laputa, the Castle in the Sky*. It's like after the crash and I'm thrilled […]

References to the real history of Civita do not vanish from anime tourists' reports, even if their 'historical imagination' is mediated by the film text (Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2017). The feeling of nostalgia, typical of heritage tourism in destinations like Civita, is amplified by the narrative of the film, set in an imaginary past and referring to another, fictional lost past, that of ancient Laputa. This is also confirmed in the tweets at a visual level, with most of the photos focusing on desert streets, and on buildings partly damaged or covered by greenery. This nostalgic attitude, implied in textual and visual references to a lost past, conflates with the present pleasure of being in such a place. Civita is often described as a silent and peaceful place like Laputa, full of green spots and flowers which are often portrayed in the pictures, and in 4 tweets even compared to heaven (occasionally, this is also conveyed by images focusing on Christian symbols of spirituality, like a statue of the Virgin Mary):

> A beautiful place like heaven surrounded by tranquillity […] The sound of many cats and church bells. There are only 7 inhabitants, and the soft bedrock gradually collapses and disappears someday. I miss the memories of my trip.

11 tweets out of the total 78 emphasise the dramatic account of Civita's possible disappearance, a scientifically grounded concern that is imaginatively transfigured through the overlapping with Laputa. Anime tourists' nostalgic attitude does not prevent them from the possibility of an active engagement with the place, for example when—in 3 occurrences—they fervently solicit their contacts to visit Civita before its disappearance.

The esteem for Civita's ruins, nature and a peaceful atmosphere can also be traced back, as Yagi and Pearce (2017) do for other Laputa-connected attractions, to the Japanese aesthetic sense of *wabi-sabi*, bringing an appreciation of places or objects

whose aspect is unfinished, flawed, or uneven, showing the action of nature on human artefacts, which reveals that all things are transitory (Koren, 1994). This typical Japanese taste interacts with the consolidated image of Italy as a tourist destination issued by the Grand Tour tradition, that of a '*pre*-modern (…) place fixed into the realm of the ruin and the picturesque' (Hom, 2015: 215), conveyed in Japan through the mediation of the gaze cast on Italy by North- and Middle-European countries (Miyake, 2010), and also with the wider, idealised vision of Europe discussed in the third section, effectively summed up by the expression *akogare no Paris*.

The pivotal importance of ruins is testified by the numerous tweets, found during our search yet excluded from the sample, that mention Laputa in relation to other Italian locations like Rome or Pompei, confirming Yagi and Pearce's (2017: 279) identification of the 'remains of a temple or the ruins of castle' as a common feature of the attractions that Japanese tourists abroad relate to Laputa. This apparently confirms that multiple locations can be linked to the movie by tourists themselves, showing how the atmosphere of the place, deriving from a combination of narrative and visual values, and the stimulation of an emotional contact with the film are given much higher value than strictly visual correspondences. Actually, in our data set there is no occurrence of visual confrontations between movie images and photos taken in Civita.

Turning to *Porco Rosso* and Milan, the identified data set, compared to that of Civita, includes a smaller proportion of tweets undoubtedly testifying actual tourist experiences (153 out of 873), while many others express the desire of travelling (470), strongly conveyed by the narrative of *Porco Rosso*, or fuel an idealised anime-inspired view of Italy, as the next section will discuss. In order to circumscribe the study case to a single tourist destination, in this section we will focus on tourist experiences in Milan (described in 42 tweets), which is the only Italian locality expressly mentioned in the movie, even if this is not the only Italian tourist destination associated with the film in the selected tweets. Other destinations include the entire Italian coast on the Adriatic Sea, aviation museums that exhibit Italian aircrafts, and the overall Italian skies (often photographed from the window of an airplane, the place where *Porco Rosso* was initially conceived to be watched). In Milan, the specific location of Navigli provides the only recognisable inspiration for the scene when Porco and Fio take off from the canals, even if there is no intention of providing an accurate portrayal in the movie. Differently from Civita, the connection with *Porco Rosso* is not used for official tourist promotion, but the fact that Milan is expressly mentioned in

the movie induces veritable pilgrimages to the city (sometimes within wider itineraries including Croatian locations that have inspired some of *Porco Rosso* scenes, referred to in 4 tweets out of 42), or to the specific spot of Navigli. The words 'pilgrimage' and 'sanctuary' explicitly appear in 3 tweets out of 42. Visiting Italy, Milan, or specifically Navigli represents for some the fulfilment of a childhood desire (explicitly expressed in 2 tweets), and Navigli is sometimes put first as the famous attractions of Milan's city centre (also by people not drawn to the city of Milan by the film):

> The Naviglio district I wanted to go most in Milan! Porco asked Piccolo to repair the flying boat [...] and this river was the model that flew with Fio [...]. This is my favourite work in Studio Ghibli, and thanks to this work I've been longing to go to Italy since I was little, so I'm very satisfied this time.

Like for Civita, there are no tweets proposing visual confrontations between film images and photos taken on-site, even if one tourist reports of having spent a lot of time futilely searching for the exact canal where the seaplane could have taken off ('scene hunting'). The dimension of 'prestige' of the film tourist experience (Kim, 2012) is emphasised in tweets highlighting that the city has been used as a 'model' or a 'stage' for *Porco Rosso.* These statements are sometimes combined, like in Civita, with texts and photos that suggest a blurring with wider forms of cultural tourism, portraying Navigli's typical aperitif (6 tweets out of 42) or other places in Milan like churches (4), tramways, and trains (4), or the football stadium (2). The 'nostalgic' dimension of the film tourist experience, implying the recognition of familiar places seen in the movie (Kim, 2012; Ono *et al.*, 2020), is explicitly described only in a pair of tweets (e.g. 'Waterside in Milan, Italy. I just fixed the plane of Porco Rosso'), and is thus paradoxically less apparent than in the Civita data set, despite the latter location not having been an actual inspiration for Laputa. This nostalgic attitude towards *Porco Rosso* is much more evident in tourists' tweets inspired by generic and less identifiable locations, such as the aforementioned Italian skies or the Adriatic Sea.

The 'nostalgic' dimension of the tweets concerning Milan mostly lies in another understanding of the concept, similar to the meaning it acquires in relation to wider heritage tourism, i.e., the yearning for the lost past of the place. Milan is mostly a business tourist destination and, to a lesser extent, a heritage and leisure tourist destination. The Navigli quarter, with its ancient canals, is considered to have a

peculiar, romantic atmosphere. The reading of Milan mediated by *Porco Rosso* is very different from its usual image as a business city, and the discovery of the latter side sometimes surprises *Porco Rosso* tourists:

> Did you know that Milan is a business district like Tokyo or Yokohama in Japan?
> There is a metro, there is a tram, and you can see skyscrapers here and there.

Milano is read as a former city of canals that do not exist anymore, except for those remaining at Navigli which have lost, anyway, their original use:

> Milan used to have many canals, and Porco flew away with red pigs.
>
> Stroll along the canals that remain in Milan.
>
> [...] Now it only remains as a tourist destination.

As already mentioned, nevertheless, sometimes this portrait of a dead city is contrasted—like in Civita—by visual or textual depictions of Navigli as a living place, because of its nightlife, shops and markets (the latter mentioned or portrayed in 3 tweets out of 42).

6. Anime and Italy: The construction of an imaginary travel destination

In the search results pertinent to the occurrences of the Japanese title of *Porco Rosso* together with 'Italy' or 'Milan' in the 2006-2020 interval, a peculiar subset of tweets (116) reveals how Miyazaki's film participates in a wider anime representation of the European country, mostly based on Tv series. Even though *Porco Rosso* is a full-length feature, and Studio Ghibli films do not use the same communicative and marketing strategies of mainstream anime works,[10] audience perception seems to group together

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[10] For the purpose of the present article, it is not necessary to treat anime and Studio Ghibli films as different objects; our target audience freely compares travel desires and activities coming from Studio Ghibli films with those that originated from popular TV anime. To be aware of the issue, and to suggest further readings, it might suffice to recall here Jacqueline Berndt's remarks about the wrong attitude of non-Japanese scholars, who often consider Studio Ghibli films as typical of *anime* (Berndt 2008: 296-297) and historian Tsugata Nobuyuki's definition of *anime* 'as a particular kind of Japanese animation, that diverges in the 1970s by fastening itself to other objects and processes, including but not

popular Japanese animations that contain references to Italy. The titles that get more often quoted with *Porco Rosso*, with no significant variations in frequency over the years, are *Gunslinger Girl* (two seasons, 2003-2008), *Aria the Animation* (three seasons and one OVA,[11] 2005-2008),[12] and *Hetalia: Axis Power* (five ONA[13] series, 2009-2021, and a feature film, 2010). They are all based on previous manga series. *Gunslinger Girl* tells about the Social Welfare Agency, an undercover Italian military organisation which, in an undefined future time, employs traumatised young girls as agents to fight against the separatist faction of the Padanians, who are associated with the terrorists of the Five Republics Faction. Each girl has been given cybernetic implants and assigned to a human tutor, called *fratello* (Italian for 'brother'). *Aria* is set in the early 24th century on the planet Mars, which has been rendered habitable and renamed Aqua; the main location of the story is Neo-Venezia, obviously based on the appearance and atmosphere of Venice. The plot follows Akari, a young woman who trains as a gondolier for the Aria Company. *Hetalia: Axis Power* is instead a comedy series of 5-minute episodes, whose characters are personifications of countries or regions. The stories usually satirise recent or historical events (mostly from the Second World War); the protagonist is Italia Veneziano, a young man who embodies Northern Italy (his older brother, Italia Romano, is Southern Italy). The series name itself, *Hetalia*, is a pun on 'Italia' and 'hetare', which in Japanese means 'useless' or 'pathetic', but in an endearing way.

Another work which is often paired with *Porco Rosso* (even though not as much as the three aforementioned shows) is *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* (*JoJo no Kimyō na Bōken*), an ongoing manga started by Araki Hirohiko in 1987, which was adapted several times into animation. It is about the surreal battles and mysterious events that unfold in the story of the Joestar family, from the 19th century to the present day. A whole story arc, *Golden Wind* (*Ōgon no Kaze*, 1995-1999) is set in Italy; it was recently animated as the fourth season (2018) of the anime version of *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* started by David Production in 2012.

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restricted to: foreign interest, transgression, visual cues, merchandising and integration into a media mix' (in Clements 2013: 1). Studio Ghibli films are not part of this kind of Japanese animation.

[11] OVA stands for Original Video Animation; this refers to direct-to-video *anime* works.

[12] The series was revived by a 2015 set of three OVAs (*Aria the Avvenire*) and by two 2021 theatrical features: *Aria the Crepuscolo* and *Aria the Benedizione*.

[13] ONA stands for Original Net Animation; this is used for anime series exclusively released through streaming services.

A smaller number of references brings up series such as *3000 Leagues in Search of Mother*, which is based on the Italian novel *Cuore* by Edmondo de Amicis and partly set in Genova; *Romeo's Blue Skies* (*Romio no aoi sora*, Kusuba Kōzō, 1995), a World Masterpiece Theater series with a major storyline that takes place in Milan; *Ristorante Paradiso*, a 2009 adaptation of a manga (2005-2006) by Ono Natsume which chronicles the daily lives of the staff of a restaurant in Rome; and *Girls und Panzer*, an anime franchise started in 2012, which imagines that real tanks from the Second World War are being used in sports activities by Japanese high school girls. One of the sports teams comes from Anzio High School, which is supposedly promoting Italian culture in Japan; this includes using replicas of Roman monuments as school buildings.

The Twitter users who bring up those references when talking about *Porco Rosso* usually declare that their idea of Italy is majorly defined by those anime. The typical statement, here exemplified by a 2019 tweet, is: 'The image of Italy inside me is made of *Gunslinger Girl*, *Aria* and *Porco Rosso*'; a 2020 tweet from a different user reiterated this as: 'My view of Italy consists only of *Romeo's Blue Skies* and *Porco Rosso*'. A 2012 message reads: 'When looking at *Aria* and *Porco Rosso*, it seems that Italy has many small and beautiful islands'. Such representation of Italy is often charged with a positive mix of nostalgia and desire, arguably close to the *akogare* attitude (Yagi and Pearce, 2018) that Japanese have towards the Western world. This admiration appears so deeply rooted in the selected Twitter users that it invites the few who actually visited Italy to be moved not so much by the real landscape, but by the memories of their favourite anime. A tweet from 2009 says: 'When I look at the scenery of Italy, I remember *Aria* and *Porco Rosso* at once and tears come out'; in 2018, another user mentioned that '… At the age of 19, I went to Italy for the first time by boat from the Adriatic Sea, and in the morning I was impressed by the port of Bari approaching the Italian sea while listening to the *Porco Rosso* soundtrack'. In those cases, people project onto Italy the emotions they got from the animations. The same happens in the tweets which express a desire to go to Italy, already fulfilled or yet to come true: 'I went to Italy due to the influence of *Aria*, *Hetalia* and *Porco Rosso'* (2011); 'I want to go, I want to go around the Adriatic coast and Italy to see the place where *Aria*, *Porco Rosso*, *Gunslinger Girl*, *Romeo's blue sky* came from' (2012). The fact that those tweets point to generic emotional experiences, and not to the enjoyment of real places, is also evidenced by the absence of any attempt at describing or providing pictures of real

locations, or of settings from those anime. The titles are usually enough to justify the mention of Italy.

The Italian setting is actually the only common trait between the referenced anime. As it is evident from the summaries provided above, they differ a lot in terms of narrative and target audience; even from the point of view of the visual style, they mostly take separate approaches. The users who connect *Porco Rosso* with other Italy-related anime are thus automatically leaving out all the specificities of Miyazaki's style (including his typical construction of nostalgia) in order to focus on just the Italian setting, which, for example, is the only way *Porco Rosso* can be kindred with a quirky and violent series like *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*. The users even disregard the fact that *Porco Rosso* features Milan, while the Italian arc of *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* focuses on Naples.

This subset of tweets seems to represent a population of expert Japanese anime fans who just desire to feel closer to some of their favourite shows. They look at Italy as a generic exotic elsewhere, and a visit to the country becomes, first of all, a chance to enter the world of anime. The fact that they are understanding Italy through the category of the exotic is apparently confirmed by the remarks of some users, who say that, apart from anime, they are curious about Italy because of Saizeriya, a chain of family-style Italian restaurants; of the books of Shiono Nanami, a best-selling novelist and author who extensively wrote about the Italian history; and of *Bura Tamori*, a Japanese weekly geographical TV series broadcasted by NHK. The Italy they desire is arguably a narrative construction; the country is an element in a storytelling process. This seems to imply that the concept of 'contents tourism' (Beeton *et al.*, 2013) might be applied in a wider and more abstract way. It is not only possible to find an anime narrative attached to an actual place like Civita (or like the port of Bari mentioned in one of the tweets quoted before, which was deemed fit to be enjoyed while listening to music from *Porco Rosso*), but a whole country can be positioned inside an imaginary elsewhere; for those who embrace this perspective, to go to Italy is like entering the domain of anime, and not just of *Porco Rosso* or *Gunslinger Girl*.

7. Conclusion

This essay has explored the relationship between animation, landscape, and tourism, focusing on European, and especially Italian, places connected to Miyazaki Hayao's works.

First, the representation/reconstruction of European landscapes in Miyazaki's films has been thoroughly analysed, highlighting the director's tendency to create imaginary landscapes only partly rooted in reality, as a result of mixed suggestions issued from his location scouting trips in Europe. The peculiar meaning that the word 'nostalgia' may assume in relation to European settings in his works has been identified in a 'yearning for a lost world' (Miyazaki, 2009[1]) which is most likely an imaginary one, rather than in the mourning for a historical, actually remembered past.

Attention has been subsequently oriented towards virtual and actual tourism, through the qualitative analysis of a data set made of texts and images published on Twitter by actual, or prospective, Japanese anime tourists. For this part of the research, the focus has been narrowed to Italy and two films, namely *Porco Rosso* and *Castle in the Sky*, that present a connection with the whole country or single Italian locations. As regards *Porco Rosso*, a specific survey has been led on the other Japanese animation titles that are repeatedly mentioned together with Miyazaki's film in relation to Italy, and thus contribute to building the image of the country as a whole fascinating anime tourist destination.

As regards actual tourism, the selected study cases of Civita and Milan have presented two different viewpoints on Japanese tourist experiences in Italian locations connected to Miyazaki's works. In the case of Civita, the connection between the place and *Castle in the Sky* has been created by tourists themselves and promoted by official tourist bodies, 'add[ing] a narrative quality' to Civita 'and us[ing] that narrative quality as a tourism resource', thus providing a convincing example of 'contents tourism' (Beeton *et al.*, 2013). Milan, instead, is expressly mentioned in *Porco Rosso*, but the link with the movie is not used by official destination marketing. Even if our main focus is not on tourists' motivation, our Civita data set suggests a clear prevalence of 'contents tourists' rather than 'fan tourists' (Hernández-Pérez, 2019), blurring with wider forms of cultural tourism, as shown by the textual and visual focus on varied spots and objects—while there is no trace of typical fan practices like *butaitanbou*. Moreover, *Castle in the Sky* is almost never explicitly mentioned (2 tweets out of 78) as the motivation of tourists' visits to Civita, which is often inserted within wider sightseeing tours. Some of the 42 tweets testifying actual tourist experiences in the Milan data set, instead, explicitly suggest the intention of visiting Italy, Milan or the specific spot of Navigli spot because of the link with *Porco Rosso*, fulfilling childhood desires (expressed in 2 tweets) or, in any case,

doing veritable 'pilgrimages' to 'sanctuaries' (3 tweets), within trips which sometimes also includes Croatian locations (4 tweets).

Our main focus has been on the quality of the film tourist experience as described in the tweets, especially dealing with the three dimensions highlighted by Kim (2012) and adapted to anime tourism by Ono *et al.* (2020). The role of nostalgia has been particularly emphasised. Nostalgia, understood as a multifaceted concept, is a key component both in the anime experience (Pellitteri, 2018) and in the film tourism experience (Kim, 2017), as well as in the practice of referencing pop culture national products recently identified among Japanese tourists overseas (Yagi and Pearce, 2018). Nostalgia is also a key component in heritage tourism, identifying the fascination for a lost past.

In both cases of Civita and Milan's Navigli, the mediation of the movie text typically influences the reading of the two places and film tourists' 'historical imagination' (Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2017), so that both places are often interpreted as remains of a lost world. This nostalgic attitude is enhanced by the specific features of Miyazaki's texts, rooted in his poetics. The 'yearning for a lost world' (Miyazaki, 2009[1]) felt while watching Miyazaki's movies can be somehow re-lived during the tourist experience, when tourists yearn altogether for memories of the film (sometimes belonging to childhood, and somehow reminding them of 'home'), for the imaginary past of Laputa and that of Porco, for the lost heritage of Civita and Milan.

In respect to nostalgia as a recognition of 'familiar' places and a recollection of film memories (Kim, 2012; Kim, 2017; Ono *et al.*, 2020), this experience is more clearly testified in a higher percentage of Civita's tweets (with around a half of them expressing an emotional connection with the movie while on-site, and a quarter of the total explicitly mentioning a veritable 'recognition' of Laputa) than in the Milan data set (only 2 tweets out of 42), despite the potentially higher recognition values in the second location. This raises observations on the understanding of the concept of 'authenticity' in relation to film tourism in general, to be integrated with a consideration, on the one hand, of the specificities of animated films, leaving free course to imagination more than live-action ones (Yagi and Pearce, 2017), and, on the other hand, of the cultural features of Japanese tourism. When it comes to the latter, 'authenticity' is to be found more in 'tourists' imaginative capacity to generate key emotions and values' than in 'the search for truth, accuracy, and credibility' (Yagi and Pearce, 2018). Doubts on the actual connection between Civita and Miyazaki's work are overcome, like for other tourist attractions related

to *Castle in the Sky* by Japanese tourists (Yagi and Pearce, 2017). The 'authenticity' anime tourists look for is not related to the toured objects—in fact, the two data sets do not present any precise visual confrontations between film images and actual locations. It is rather found in the existential value of the experience (Wang, 1999) and in the aforementioned 'imaginative capacity to generate key emotions and values' (Yagi and Pearce, 2018). Our data sets seem to suggest that nostalgic recognition of a familiar place is stimulated in stronger forms by the 'dubious' Civita than by the 'proved' Milan. This might be explained by several factors, pertaining to the inherent qualities both of the fictional place and of the actual location. As regards the fictional place, the vagueness of the Laputa image (associated, in fact, with countless attractions in the world), less culturally connoted as Italian than *Porco Rosso*'s Milan, may more easily assume universal values and be transfigured by Japanese anime tourists into a familiar place. As regards the actual place, Navigli's vibrant vitality more evidently brings back to the present 'reality' of the place, requiring a more difficult negotiation with its fictional identity and the narrative of a lost world. Nostalgic imagination of a fictional world is more easily stimulated by 'empty' locations, like the vague images of the (Italian) sky and the (Adriatic) sea for tourists who mention *Porco Rosso*. Or like the isolated and nearly abandoned Civita, which in addition perfectly fits the typical Japanese aesthetic taste of *wabi-sabi*.

Compared to the lively Milanese spot of Navigli, crossing Civita's bridge apparently allows a more convincing and 'authentic' immersion in a familiar world met during childhood, putting in contact with the vestiges of a historical—but, also, of a personal—past irremediably lost.

CAPTIONS

Fig. 1. Civita di Bagnoregio, Italy. **Source:** Dreamstime.com/Freesurf69

Fig. 2. Flea Market on the Naviglio Grande in Milan, Italy.
Source: iStock.com/claudio-arnese

Fig. 3. Still from *Porco Rosso*. © ***Kurenai no buta*, Miyazaki Hayao, 1992.**

Fig. 4. Still from *Porco Rosso*. © ***Kurenai no buta*, Miyazaki Hayao, 1992.**
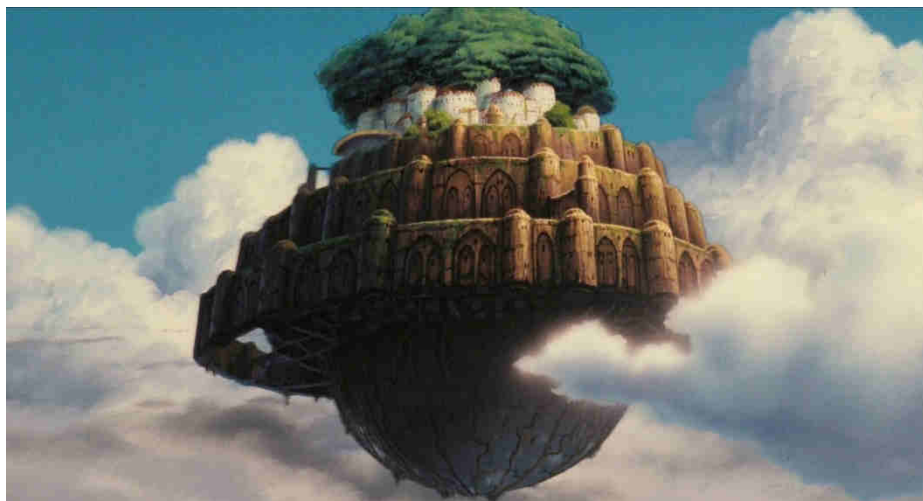

Fig. 5. Still from *Castle in the Sky*. © ***Tenkū no shiro Rapyuta*, Miyazaki Hayao, 1986.**

Fig. 6. Still from *Aria the Crepuscolo*. **© Satō Jun'ichi, 2021.**

Fig. 7. Composition of stills from a panoramic shot from *Romeo's Blue Skies*. **©** ***Romio no aoi sora*, Kusuba Kōzō, 1995.**

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