

Christian Culture and Japanese Anime

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Abstract: As one of the pillars of the Japanese economy, the anime industry has had a significant impact on Japan both domestically and abroad. As the most westernized country in Asia, Japan's anime works are also influenced by western culture. Christianity spread to the east, bringing Japan advanced technology and education and a new culture. After the bubble economy, Japanese society began to reflect comprehensively and gradually began to explore the conflict between minority and majority groups.

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1. Christian culture in the story setting

EVA anime takes a lot of Christian vocabulary. For example, "apostle". In Christianity, the term "apostles" refers to the 12 disciples who were originally chosen by Jesus Christ and given the missionary mandate. In *EVA*, they are described as mysterious beings, enemies of mankind, and other possible forms of human existence, the last of which is the Apostles. The first apostle Adam and the second apostle Lilith are the origin of life, the apostles are born from Adam, and humans are born from Lilith. For example, Adam was the first human male created by Yahweh in his own image in the Old Testament; "Lilith" is named after the Jewish legend of the Witch of the Night, considered in Jewish folklore to be the wife of Adam; and the seventeenth apostle Tabris is derived from the Jewish legend of the Angel of Freedom. The seventeenth apostle Tabris is derived from the Jewish legend of the angel of freedom "Tabris"; in addition, the eighteenth apostle is man himself. The name of the eighteenth apostle is Lerin, who, in the Bible, is the only apostle who chose the fruit of wisdom, while the other apostles chose the fruit of life. The fruit of wisdom in Genesis is actually the fruit of the tree that separates good from evil. So in the anime, Lilin's AT position is weaker not easy to maintain a single individual, and scattered into many small individuals, which is human. And in the Jewish legend, Lilith and the devil gave birth to offspring Lilin, while the setting in "EVA" for humans by the second apostle Lilith. It is worth mentioning that the English of the apostles in *EVA* is the opposite of Angel, the director seems to want to imply something through this way.

In addition, the anime references a large number of Christian words, such as penetrating Lilith's Longinus gun, in the *New Testament* in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, a man named Longinus stabbed Jesus in the side with a gun, so the lance is called lance of Longinus. Another example is the Seele organization, a word derived from the German word for "soul". The serpent on the icon represents temptation, and in *Genesis*, the serpent tempts Adam and Eve to steal the fruit of good and evil. Seele also has 12 members, which is equal to the number of apostles under Jesus Christ.

The *NEON GENESIS EVANGELION* is a landmark classic. It is side by side with the *Space Battleship Yamato* in the 1970 s and the *GUNDAM* in the 1980 s. It has caused a huge response in the contemporary animation industry and has become an outstanding representative of the third generation of animation. The success of *EVA* lies not only in smooth mechanical fighting, but also in its connotation and its grand world view. *EVA* full body combines biological organs with artificial machines, which Haraway concludes, "works depicting cyborgs are meant to show the power of survival, a survival not based on original purity, but to use tools to fight a world that marks them as the Other." And most of the mechs or cyborgs in Japanese anime maintain a human appearance, and what they metaphorically represent is not the rejection and alienation of humanity by machinery, but the manifestation and extension of a sense of life. It is similar to the "mummy scenario" proposed by Bazan, that is, the aesthetic phenomenon of using the influence of "preservation" to depict human activities and fight against time - the reproduction of life is the same as the preservation of life. The reproduction of life and the preservation of life are the same. Therefore, the humanization tendency of anime images is also in the need of life symbolism.

Before the millennium, Japanese anime directors and authors liked to use some settings from the Bible as the background of the whole story. For example, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* released in 1984 has an apocalyptic background, such as locusts, bottomless pit, seven days of fire, the blowing of the wind and these elements. Another example is the 1986 *Castle in the Sky* Laputa's shape, borrowed from the Tower of Babel in the Old Testament, where mankind created the City in the Sky against the will of nature, but will surely invite extinction. Mr. Miyazaki's anime often uses fairy tales to reflect reality, the purpose of "Valley of the Wind" is environmental protection, "City in the Sky" the main theme is "love". Love gives birth to courage, courage gives birth to love. The question of life and death has been debated by philosophers for thousands of years. Religion emphasizes happiness in the afterlife versus redemption in this life. Plotinus believed that salvation could not be obtained in the present life, and that true salvation could only be obtained by returning to the Great Book after death. Schopenhauer believed that the only way for mankind to escape from the inevitability of history was death. Yamamoto Tsunetomo praised death in many chapters of *Yehin*, and in Yamamoto's view, the key to being a true samurai was to learn to die with dignity. Miyazaki, however, breaks with these views by emphasizing life and exalting it, and the characters are often reborn in the path of growth that leads to saving and being saved.

2. Exploration of the problem of original sin

After the 2000s, the Japanese economy was gradually recovering. Manga artists became more concerned with the issue of "individual and group" and "minority and majority". That is, the issue of "original sin". The result is an aesthetic of death and violence. Take *Elfen Lied* for example, its title song. The lyrics of "LILIUM" are written in Latin and quote *Psalm 37:30* and *James 1:12*, as well as the Renaissance song "Ave mundi spes Maira" and the Greek words of the Mass *kyrie, fons bonitatis*, which is called liliun, the Latin word for lily. According to legend, after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, Eve wept and her tears fell to the ground and turned into lilies.

Elfen does not use a lot of Christian vocabulary in a straightforward manner like *EVA* does. Because the issue is "minority and majority" and "original sin", the tone of the whole anime is very depressing as well as bloody and violent, and its title song is completely opposite to the sense of sanctity. The main character, LUCY, is named after a Latin word meaning "one who brings light and wisdom". As a mutant, she is the mother of the new human species, "mitochondrial Eve". lucid has a total of three personalities, in fact, can also be seen as a kind of "trinity".

Whether being a minority group is born guilty or not. With such thoughts in mind, the Japanese anime industry has entered a new period. Take Araki's *Production.I.G*, Cui Ishida's *Tokyo Bakuro* and Fujimoto Shu's *Chainsaw Man* for example, three anime spanning a period of about ten years. All are about individuals who have gained abilities by chance and become a minority. The difference, however, is that the powers gained by Sakuramanji in *Production.I.G* put him on a mission similar to that of a messiah, while Kaneki Ken in *Tokyo Bakuro* is thus at the borderline between human and non-human, with a painful perception of his identity.

3. The exploration of free will

Tron Isayama's *Attack on Titan* is undoubtedly the most epoch-making work of the last decade in Japanese anime. The anime deals with a variety of issues, such as war, hatred, and politics. Although the background of the giant reveals a strong Nietzschean view of "God is dead", the biggest theme it expresses, "freedom", is from Christianity. Many important terms such as responsibility, morality, and sin and punishment are closely related to free will. Although the definition of free will is not uniform in academic circles, mankind has never stopped paying attention to this issue for two thousand years.

It is only when man has free will that he can choose between good and evil, and it is only when he chooses that he can manifest God's grace, i.e., God's grace manifests itself in the justice of reward and punishment, not in helping man to choose good and abandon evil. It was the abuse of God's free will by Adam and Eve, who were tempted by Satan, that led to the fall of man's free will, and thus to the Christian doctrine of original sin. It is because man carries original sin that he needs to seek God's grace and salvation. Before Augustine, philosophers had also discussed the issue of free will, although the term did not appear.

The most special of the Nine Giants is that it is not only a giant who keeps moving forward in pursuit of freedom and fighting for it, but also in its ability to peer into the memories of all successive successors, including the future ones, which indirectly means being able to foresee the future. In his *Confessiones*, Augustine formulated the doctrine of time. He argues that time does not consist of an objective succession of "past", "present" and "future", but that Augustine refers to the ongoing perceptual present as "the present".

Essentially, the past no longer exists and the future does not yet exist. He therefore believed that what is called time is merely an extension of the mind itself, that the time perceived by humans is one-sided, and that the real time is that perceived by the mind of God. So the Attacking Giant is a being close to "God", and in the strictest sense only God has absolute freedom from any causal necessity. The freedom that the Attacking Giant pursues is precisely the possibility of freedom from causal necessity. Therefore, what the Attacking Giant seeks is not only absolute freedom, but also to become a "god".

In the final chapters of the manga, Alan is on the clouds, shouting for freedom, and under his feet are thousands of giants as he tramples the world. At that moment, Alan is what Nietzsche would call superhuman. He has left behind his humanity, because a god cannot have humanity. In addition to this, the three walls that appear in the anime, as well as the sheltered areas, also have a religious dimension. In Iliad's *Das Heilige und das Profane*, he argues that people are influenced by religion to live in both the sacred and secular worlds. The sacred is also divided into the purely sacred and the impurely sacred. Clearly the internment area falls into the latter category. Furthermore, the congregation partaking of the body of Yumiel is similar to the concept of the Eucharist in Christianity. The Eucharist given by Jesus is considered to have come about as a way of releasing all people from sin, and in the anime the flesh and blood of Yumiel allows future generations to partake of her powers.

4. Summary

In 1986, Japan experienced a brief economic recession. Prior to this, Japan had developed extremely rapidly after the Second World War, becoming the most developed country in Asia. This rapid development brought with it environmental problems and works such as Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* and *Castle in the Sky*. 1989 saw the peak of the Japanese bubble economy, and in just two months countless people lost their once proud assets and entered the Heisei Great Depression. The period from 1993 to 2005 was known as the 'employment glacial period', when Japanese companies hired very few regular employees and most young people faced unemployment upon graduation, leading to the emergence of the Heisei House of Abandonment. However, in the midst of this economic downturn, cultural development did not stop. Manga artists began to think about the individual and the group, and anime was no longer a shallow sub-forum. The Japanese anime industry is also subject to various influences from changing market demands, politics and culture. In recent years Japanese anime has stopped adopting a large number of Christian settings, perhaps because Japan itself is no longer willing to conform to Western society.

References

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