

# **Miyazaki's Moving Cities**

Examining Place, Paradox, and Fantasy in the European Architecture of  
*Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle*

*A Senior Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Vassar College in Partial Satisfaction of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Art History*

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Figure 1. Opening Scene of *Howl's Moving Castle*



Figure 2. Opening Scene of *Kiki's Delivery Service*

## INTRODUCTION

*“Painting and magical powers seem very much the same.”*

Ursula, *Kiki’s Delivery Service*

†

From the beginning moments of *Kiki’s Delivery Service* (1989) and *Howl’s Moving Castle* (2004), director Hayao Miyazaki privileges the visual experience. Rather than begin in the midst of action or dialogue, the two films open in near silence. In *Kiki’s Delivery Service*, Miyazaki depicts Kiki lounging amongst wildflowers on a lakeside hill (figure 1). In *Howl’s Moving Castle*, the castle emerges from thick fog onto a pastoral alpine slope (figure 2). The only sounds are soft rustling grass, radio chatter, clanking metal, and Joe Hishiashi’s musical overtures. Kiki and the castle, protagonists of the films, are neither narratively nor visually the focus of these opening scenes. In fact, they are not even visible in the opening frames, nor foregrounded once visible. Instead, cloud-filled cerulean skies, lush green fields, and small stone houses dominate the screen. In encouraging us to luxuriate in these landscapes, Miyazaki not only foregrounds their roles in the films, but also introduces us to an especially picturesque and nostalgic aesthetic.

*Kiki’s Delivery Service* and *Howl’s Moving Castle* were released by Studio Ghibli, a Japanese animation studio founded in 1985 by Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata. Perhaps best known for Miyazaki’s 2001 film *Spirited Away*, Studio Ghibli creates visually rich films that blend fantasy and realism. Since establishing Studio Ghibli, Miyazaki has served as both writer and director of ten feature films; he has also written, produced, animated, or co-directed a number of films, TV series, short films, and mangas. The studio is largely guided by Miyazaki’s own artistic and storytelling style. Accordingly, Studio Ghibli films employ a painterly visual

approach and explore a set of core themes including family, youth, magic, and war. These topics are at the center of *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle*.

*Kiki's Delivery Service* tells the story of the young witch Kiki who leaves home to fulfill a year of independent witch's training. The film begins with Kiki's departure from her countryside home and arrival in the seaside city of Koriko. Kiki's training is not overtly magical. Rather, she establishes a delivery service and struggles through trials both quotidian - friendship and earning money - and fantastical - losing her ability to fly. *Howl's Moving Castle* begins with a similar displacement, when the young Sophie is cursed and turned into an old woman. She flees home and stumbles upon the moving castle of the selfish wizard Howl. Sophie learns that the castle not only wanders through the countryside, but also acts as a portal to numerous cities. Like Kiki, Sophie forms new relationships - including a romance with Howl - that help her navigate the challenges of experiencing a new place. While the films contain happy endings, Miyazaki does not hesitate to show Kiki's and Sophie's difficulties, self-doubt, and stop-start processes of regaining what they have lost. Ultimately, Kiki and Sophie work through their struggles: Kiki regains her ability to fly and Sophie breaks her curse. However, they cannot do so alone. It is only through engagement with their own powers, chosen families, and new environments that they are able to overcome personal obstacles.

*Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* are by no means the only films in Miyazaki's oeuvre to contain such narratives. Miyazaki's work - including *Castle in the Sky*, *Spirited Away*, and *My Neighbor Totoro* - is well known for its strong, young female protagonists. Further, many of his films - *Princess Mononoke*, *Porco Rosso*, and *The Wind Rises* - directly address the effects of technology and war. While films like *Spirited Away*, *The Wind Rises*, and *My Neighbor Totoro* are set in Japan, Miyazaki's films often feature markedly whimsical European motifs. Miyazaki sets *Porco Rosso* on the east coast of the Adriatic Sea after

World War I. *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* differ from Miyazaki's other films in that they depict European architecture without explicitly stating a specific time period or location.

As evidenced by the opening sequences of both films, *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* can be read both narratively and visually. Jonathan Ellis asserts that Miyazaki can be understood not only as a master storyteller, but also as a “cinematic painter.”<sup>[1]</sup> While *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* have been extensively studied through narrative, environmental, and psychological lenses, little scholarship directly addresses the visual landscapes of the films.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the visual nature of the films is central in rendering such evocative and tangible stories. Though Miyazaki does not outright state the locations portrayed in the films, they are not unfounded. Miyazaki selects motifs from historic European architecture to create urban landscapes that are simultaneously recognizable and fictional. In this essay, I examine how and why Miyazaki chose to evoke specific European cities - namely Stockholm and Visby in Sweden, Colmar in the Alsace region of France, and Amsterdam, Netherlands - in *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle*. Miyazaki constructs cities

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<sup>1</sup> For further reading on these topics see:

Narrative: Susan Napier, “The Enchantment of Estrangement: The *Shōjo* in the World of Miyazaki Hayao,” *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2005).  
Cheng-Ing Wu, “Hayao Miyazaki's Mythic Poetics: Experiencing the Narrative Persuasions in *Spirited Away*, *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Ponyo*,” *animation: an interdisciplinary journal*, Vol. 11(2) (2016): 189-203.

Environmental: Sema Mumcu and Serap Yilmaz, “Anime Landscapes as a Tool for Analyzing the Human–Environment Relationship: Hayao Miyazaki Films,” *ARTS*, Vol. 7, No. 16 (2018).

Psychological: Craig Norris, “A Japanese media pilgrimage to a Tasmanian bakery,” *Transformative Works and Cultures*, Vol. 14 (2013).

Montserrat Rifa-Valls, “Postwar Princesses, Young Apprentices, and a Little Fish-Girl: Reading Subjectivities in Hayao Miyazaki's Tales of Fantasy,” *Visual Arts Research*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Winter 2011): 88-100.

Emmanuel Trouillard does address issues of space broadly in two articles:

“Géographie animée: l'expérience de l'ailleurs dans l'œuvre de Hayao Miyazaki.” *Annales de Géographie*, 123e Année, No. 695/696. (janvier-avril 2014): 626-645.

“Le poids de l'espace dans l'œuvre de Hayao Miyazaki.” *Géographie et cultures*, 88 (2015).

that are paradoxically picturesque and tactile, familiar and unreal. In doing so, he constructs fantasy sites that embody the intangible loss and change caused by modernization and World War II. Thus, the imaginary landscapes of *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* allow the viewer to explore memory, nostalgia, and the loss of actual landscapes.

## I. PAINTING THE SCENE

*“Jiji, if nobody comes in, I’m gonna have to eat pancakes forever and be fat, fat, fat! And what am I supposed to do about that?”*

*Well I like pancakes, provided they’re not burned.”*

*Kiki & Jiji, Kiki’s Delivery Service*

†

The cities in *Kiki’s Delivery Service* and *Howl’s Moving Castle* originate from real-world inspirations. In an interview about *Kiki’s Delivery Service*, Miyazaki explained that he consciously modeled the setting on a number of different cities, including Stockholm, Visby, San Francisco, Paris, and towns in Italy.<sup>[2]</sup> Sweden was the first foreign country Miyazaki ever visited; this formative trip deeply influenced his own vision of Europe.<sup>2</sup> He also visited many of these cities while storyboarding two animated TV series based on Astrid Lindgren’s *Pippi Longstocking* and Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi*, and during a press tour for *Spirited Away*’s European release. However, he did not revisit these locations while creating *Kiki* or *Howl*. Elaborating on his creative process for these films, Miyazaki stated:

“I had my staff members who’d never been there go. I told them to check out several cities, including the city Kiki’s town is modeled after. It’s a charming old town called Visby in Sweden. I went there once. I wanted them to see it, too. And so I didn’t go. I thought I had enough memories to keep me going.”<sup>[3]</sup>

For both films, Miyazaki sent the main staff on research trips. The *Kiki’s Delivery Service* staff mainly spent time in Gotland, Sweden. They photographed 80 rolls of film and made hundreds

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<sup>2</sup> Despite the extensive number of interviews and lectures available, it is unclear exactly what Miyazaki’s research process is. For example, Miyazaki does not mention taking field notes or making drawings during his travels in Europe. Rather, his descriptions of his animation process emphasize the primacy of collecting mental images and memories. It is possible that concrete research only happens once Miyazaki begins to storyboard and animate a film with his staff.

of preliminary sketches.<sup>[4]</sup> The *Howl's Moving Castle* staff conducted similar research in the Alsace province, Paris, and Heidelberg, Germany.<sup>[5]</sup>

From the beginning, the artwork for *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* reflected the direct experiences of Miyazaki and his animation staff during their travels in Western Europe. However, the stories themselves are not original Studio Ghibli creations. Miyazaki adapted two children's novels for the films - *Kiki's Delivery Service* by Eiko Kadono and *Howl's Moving Castle* by Diane Wynne Jones. Both Kadono's and Jones's novels are the first in a multipart series. While the books outline the same basic premises and characters, Miyazaki diverged quite heavily from the original plotline of the novels. In the novel *Kiki's Delivery Service*, Kiki never loses her ability to fly, nor does she save her friend Tombo from falling from a crashed blimp. In *Howl's Moving Castle*, Miyazaki changed the main antagonist from the Witch of the Waste to the war only mentioned in passing in Jones's novel. Both Kadono and Jones delineate the basic settings, including Kiki's relocation to a big city by the ocean and Sophie's escape to a magic castle with a portal. Like Miyazaki, Jones blends fictional and real locations in her novel; Jones's version of the story is partially set in Wales. However, Kadono and Jones only suggest vague architectural settings. Kadono, a Japanese author, broadly states that the city of Koriko features a "tall clock tower," cobblestones, "tall buildings" and "small houses nestled together along winding streets."<sup>[6]</sup> Jones describes similarly ambiguous settings, hallmarked by towers, spires, and gilded roofs. In fact, Miyazaki modifies the original towerlike shape of the castle; Jones describes it as "a tall black castle," whereas Miyazaki depicts it as a complex cobbled together, droid-like form.<sup>[7]</sup> Miyazaki not only shifts the narratives from sweeping fairytales to personal, psychological coming-of-age stories, but also shapes the settings into different, more specific forms.

Like Kadono's and Jones's books, the narratives and dialogues in the films do not specify particular time periods or landscapes. Miyazaki stated, "one thing I enjoyed was making the time period vague with the artwork of [*Kiki's Delivery Service*]."<sup>[8]</sup> Studio Ghibli primarily uses analog animation practices that result in particularly lush final products. Though animators occasionally employ CGI or computer-aided drawings, the majority of frames are created through a combination of cel animation and painted backgrounds.<sup>3</sup> Once a storyboard is complete, each scene is sketched out frame by frame and transferred to transparent plastic sheets. These sheets, known as cels, are then hand-painted with watercolors. Miyazaki consciously rejects "the color of animation" characterized by the bright, garish primary colors common in animated films around the world.<sup>[9]</sup> Instead, he restricts his color palettes to muted tones and pastels. While these colors are atypical in animated films, they recall the diverse palettes employed in oil painting. Further, the different types of spaces in *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* are largely defined through opposition. Accordingly, these intentional color palettes become tools to distinguish different kinds of spaces; natural landscapes contain more vibrant colors, while interiors feature muted earth tones.

The relationship between color and place is most succinctly expressed in Howl's magical portal. Though the castle itself hides in the mountainous terrain of the Wastes, its main entryway functions as an instant portal to cities throughout the kingdom. Both the doorknob and a large dial to the right of the door feature a wheel with four colors, each corresponding to a different location (figure 3). Originally, the dial features blue, green, red, and black quadrants. Blue connotes the water of Port Haven; the green evokes the hills of the Wastes; and red implies the luxury of the royal city. As the story approaches its climax and Howl attempts to further

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<sup>3</sup> The documentary film *Kingdom of Dreams and Madness* (2013) follows the daily operations of Studio Ghibli. It shows Miyazaki and his staff's cel animation process of sketching, storyboarding, and painting frames for Miyazaki's films.



disguise his location, the red is rerouted, leading to a field of flowers; blue is replaced with yellow, for the hat shop. The black dial remains mysterious and placeless; only Howl can access it, and it reflects his own dark, war-obsessed psyche. The dial is one of the few places we see pure, primary colors in either film. It stands out against the earth tones of the castle's main space. Through both magic and color, the dial provides access to foreign, detached locations. Further, the primacy of the colors implies potential for mixing; through the liminal portal, and through color, the residents of the castle can forge connections across disparate locations. Miyazaki gives color narrative power in *Howl's Moving Castle* and consequently makes visible the centrality of artistic handling in his films.



Figure 3. Magic Portal and Dial in Howl's castle

Cels are primarily used for individual figures and foreground action. The backgrounds of the films - often cityscapes and individual buildings - are drawn on opaque sheets separate from the cels. Multiple cels are placed upon and “move” across a single, static background. Thus, the backgrounds function as foundations for all other action in the films. For example, Noriko

Takaya, Harmony Process Supervisor for *Howl's Moving Castle*, described matching his drawings of the castle “to the time of day, whether it was morning or sunset, depicted in the background art. We never used the same harmony for another scene.”<sup>[10]</sup> The background settings dictate the appearance of the characters, including the castle itself.

Miyazaki further prioritizes the background in his use of perspective. In conventional animation films, dialogue scenes mainly consist of close-ups of the characters speaking. These close-ups are largely absent in *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle*, particularly in scenes that introduce viewers to a new location or are outdoors (figure 4). Instead, Miyazaki maintains a normal eye-level perspective. He refuses to keep his characters, especially young women, under perpetual gaze and instead allows them to get lost in the landscape.<sup>[11]</sup> This more expansive perspective alerts viewers to the background art and contextualizes the characters within their environments. Miyazaki admits that this approach leads to inconsistencies: the rooms and buildings behind the figures change size and proportions to maintain continuity.<sup>[12]</sup> Thus, while Miyazaki's worlds are immersive and believable, they are also inconsistent, physically impossible spaces.



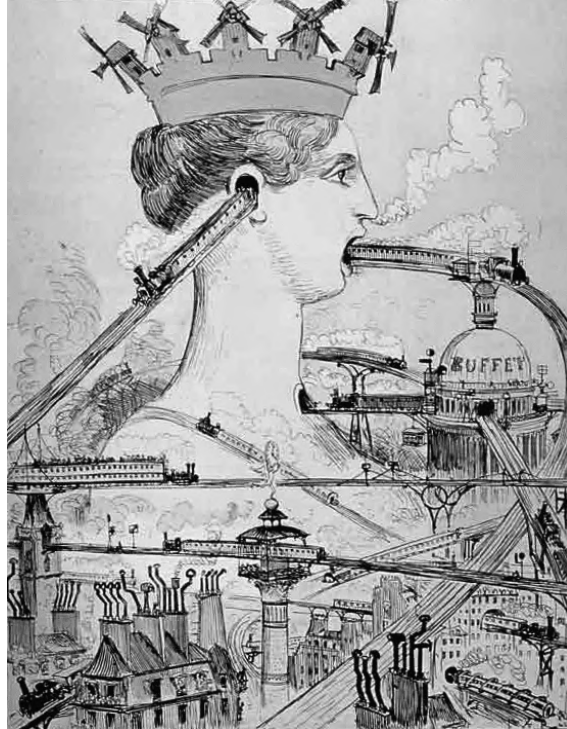
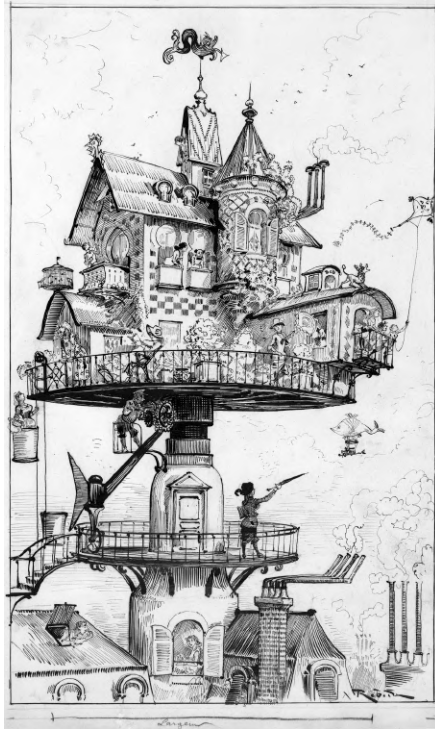
Figure 4. Initial interior eye-level views (top) and subsequent close-ups (bottom)

Cel animation is a precise, laborious, and time consuming process. However, Studio Ghibli's use of cel animation reflects an artistic choice, rather than a necessary technical process. Miyazaki, who works alongside his animators in executing sketches, cels, and background art, initially conceives of his films in individual images. He believes that filmmakers and animators "draw pictures...[and] eventually a world is created."<sup>[13]</sup> Thus, Miyazaki is not driven simply by broad visuals, but by the potential of individual, static images. This is not to say that Miyazaki sees his films as just a series of beautiful images. The act of imagemaking is inherently tied to the spaces and narratives evoked in the film, and to filmmaking itself. For example, Miyazaki draws a parallel between Kiki's own aspirations and those of young female animators who move from the countryside to Tokyo. He acknowledges the uncertainty of this kind of move, and the struggle to gain spiritual and economic independence.<sup>[14]</sup> Accordingly, Miyazaki includes the character of Ursula, an artist herself, to establish a literal connection between Kiki's powers and the practice of artmaking. This parallel not only provides narrative realism, but also establishes

a connection between the film, the process of creating, and the forging of communities.<sup>[15]</sup> Kiki establishes friendships that provide stability and ultimately materialize in art and in physical networks across the city.

In *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle*, cel animation not only suits Miyazaki's previously established workflow, but also dovetails with major seventeenth- and nineteenth-century European art movements. Miyazaki and his staff acknowledge the influence of Western artists on the aesthetic of both films. For example, Yoji Takeshige, Art Director for *Howl's Moving Castle*, explained that illustrator Albert Robida, painter Johannes Vermeer, and the Impressionists informed his approach to objects, space, and light.<sup>[16]</sup> Robida's style of illustration is most visible in the industrial, toppled forms of Howl's castle. The castle's top-heavy collage of metal, cottages, and impossibly skinny "chicken" legs recalls Robida's futuristic illustrations such as *Maison tournante aérienne* (c. 1883) and *L'Embellissement de Paris par le métropolitain* (1886) (figures 5, 6, and 7). However, Takeshige did not merely quote Robida and Vermeer. Rather, the similarities between Robida, Vermeer, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, and *Howl's Moving Castle* point to a broader sympathy with earlier artistic movements in Europe.





Figures 5 & 6. Albert Robida, *Maison tournante aérienne* (c. 1883) and *L'Embellissement de Paris par le métropolitain* (1886)



Figure 7. Howl's castle

*Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* feature idealized urban environments where built structures and nature coexist. While the relationship between nature and human life is a central theme in Miyazaki's work as a whole, in these films nature specifically functions to provide leisure spaces within the built environment. Both films depict sweeping natural landscapes as sites of childhood refuge. For Kiki, this landscape is her hometown; for Sophie and Howl, it is the portal to Howl's cottage in the mountains. The two landscapes have similarly picturesque content and form (figure 8). Both feature large bodies of water surrounded by vivid green fields filled with flowers. Puffy white clouds float through otherwise blue skies. Tall mountains rise in the backgrounds, implying these fields exist in secluded valleys. The landscapes are vast and the structures dotting them are small. The buildings are detailed cream stone cottages, with terracotta roofs. However, in these natural landscapes, Kiki's radio broadcasts news about the massive Spirit of Freedom blimp, and Howl must crash an invading warship. Though the figures and structures are swallowed by the landscapes, technology ultimately disrupts the peaceful seclusion of the landscapes and reconnects them to the central cities.



Figure 8. Landscapes of childhood refuge in *Kiki's Delivery Service* (top) and *Howl's Moving Castle* (bottom)

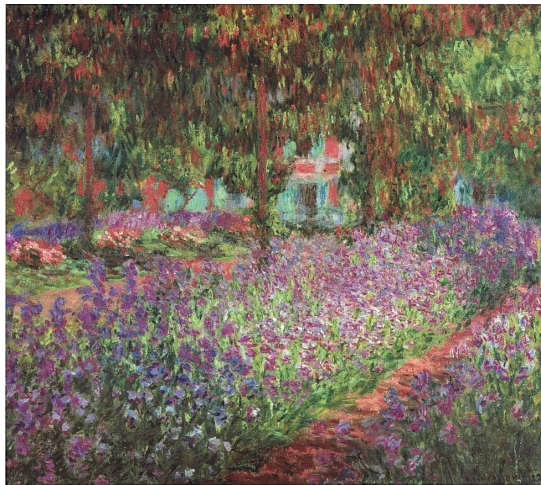
In these scenes, there is such subtle movement that the majority of animation occurs in the background art. The painterly qualities of watercolor animation are applied in an Impressionist manner. The animators employ tonal gradients and shorthand sketches to imply thousands of individual blades of grass and flowers. As evidenced by forest green shadows, there are very few true blacks within the films. When the battleship encroaches on Sophie and Howl, though an enemy presence, it blends beautifully into the landscape (figure 9). The ship's metallic underbelly reflects the field of flowers as abstract, glowing blobs. Similarly, the water's still surface mirrors soft cloud formations. There is a sense of slow, constant movement in these scenes. This sense of transience and loose handling parallels Impressionist works like Claude Monet's *Woman with a Parasol* (1875) and *The Artist's Garden at Giverny* (1900) (figures 10 and 11). Both works revel in the beauty of the natural world and recognize its human occupation. A woman surveys the field, and the garden would not exist without human cultivation. Like Monet, Miyazaki focuses on the interplay between individuals, particularly young women, and

their impact on the landscape (figure 12). Beyond the visual similarities to Monet's paintings of Giverny, Miyazaki references the actual gardens at Giverny. Monet's home in Giverny, with its pond and Japanese bridge, demonstrates how gardens are sites of interplay between European and Japanese forms. Despite their apparent seclusion, Monet's and Miyazaki's landscapes are defined by their physical and technological proximity to the city.





Figure 9. Warship flying over Howl's garden



Figures 10 & 11. Claude Monet, *Woman with a Parasol* (1875) and *The Artist's Garden at Giverny* (1900)



Figure 12. Sophie marveling at Howl's garden

Miyazaki not only participates in the Impressionist's explorations of picturesque landscapes, but shares their interest in public spaces as well. The nineteenth century marked a turning point in urban leisure culture. In cities like Paris, the rising middle class patronized bars, theaters, and parks en masse. New kinds of natural landscapes emerged just on the peripheries of city centers; these spaces marked the hybridization of nature and the city into a single leisure landscape. Impressionist painters applied the same dappled light and colorful approach to these social spaces as landscape paintings. Works such as Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Bal du Moulin de la Galette* (1876) and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec's *At the Moulin Rouge* (1895) depict crowds of people gathering and dancing (figures 13 and 14). Miyazaki took a similar interest in these quasi-indoor-outdoor entertainment spaces, particularly in his depictions of crowded public squares and cafes. In fact, Miyazaki orients us to the world of *Howl's Moving Castle* through these social spaces. In the film's opening scenes, Sophie goes to visit her sister Lettie, who works as a waitress in an opulent restaurant. Couples dance in the outdoor square and feast in a dining hall decorated with fountains and stained glass. As Lettie takes orders and courts flirtatious soldiers, she resembles Édouard Manet's barmaid in *Bar at the Folies Bergère* (1882) (figures 15 and 16). Divided from the customers by a counter, Lettie is surrounded by stacks of goods and under the perpetual gaze of the clientele. Miyazaki often rejects this objectifying gaze, but utilizes it here to emphasize the city's culture. As a result, he places his imagery in the context of nineteenth-century urban Europe.





Figures 13 & 14. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Bal du Moulin de la Galette* (1876) and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, *At the Moulin Rouge* (1895)



Figure 15. Édouard Manet's barmaid in *Bar at the Folies Bergère* (1882)



Figure 16. Lettie serving customers

While the public spaces in both films recall Impressionist art and nineteenth-century social practices, the domestic interiors and more intimate streetscapes engage with the visual rhetoric of seventeenth-century Dutch art. As Miyazaki shifts the scale from sweeping vistas to small, nearly claustrophobic interiors, the delineation of objects in space becomes sharper. This is particularly evident in the ways Kiki and Sophie first take in and adjust to their newfound homes. Miyazaki is attentive to the individual objects and structures that fill the space, especially mundane domestic objects like food and dishware. Food is explicitly on display in *Kiki's Delivery Service*, as Kiki works at and lives above a bakery. Food is shown in moments of disarray and brings an order to the chaos. For example, on a delivery call, Kiki befriends an old woman and helps her make a herring pie after her oven has broken. Miyazaki demonstrates the process of stoking an old fire stove and baking the pie from start to finish. Similarly, as Sophie connives her way into staying in Howl's castle, she attempts to make breakfast. As she cooks, Miyazaki depicts a pile of cheese, eggs, bacon, silverware, and chipped china (figure 17). The objects in the foreground are crisply outlined, and each object is identifiable; thick, heavier brushstrokes imply more objects in the left background.

For both Kiki and Sophie, cooking represents the mastery of their spaces. However, Miyazaki does not include lavish foods or dishware. Rather, he celebrates the simplicity of basic ingredients and plays with the ways they can occupy space. Seventeenth-century Dutch artists applied similar precision in depicting still lifes and domestic architectural spaces. Painters like Pieter Claesz and Jan Davidsz de Heem specialized in exploring light and space through rich displays of objects (figures 18 and 19). Claesz's and de Heem's paintings usually consist of a subject matter such as food, silver, glassware, and paper on a table. Claesz and de Heem depict these objects in exacting, thin brush strokes. Furthermore, they differentiate between the still life subject matter and the background in their use of atmospheric perspective. Contrasted

against dark, neutral backgrounds made of thicker brushstrokes, the still lifes seem to leap off the canvas and into the viewer's space. The crowded tables appear at eye level and often against the very edge of the frame. Miyazaki depicts food in a similarly interactive way, as evidenced by his visceral depiction of Markl slurping up his breakfast. For Miyazaki and 17th-century Dutch painters, still lifes provided an opportunity to express the poetic effects of light and shadow on various objects - a china dish, metal surface, or pitcher - using precise brushwork. Particularly in the genres of vanitas and genre paintings, these appealing objects of daily life symbolized life and death; in Claesz's paintings, skulls remind viewers of their own ephemerality. While the two Miyazaki films do not explicitly evoke mortality, they speak to the same processes of life and change that manifest in daily objects.



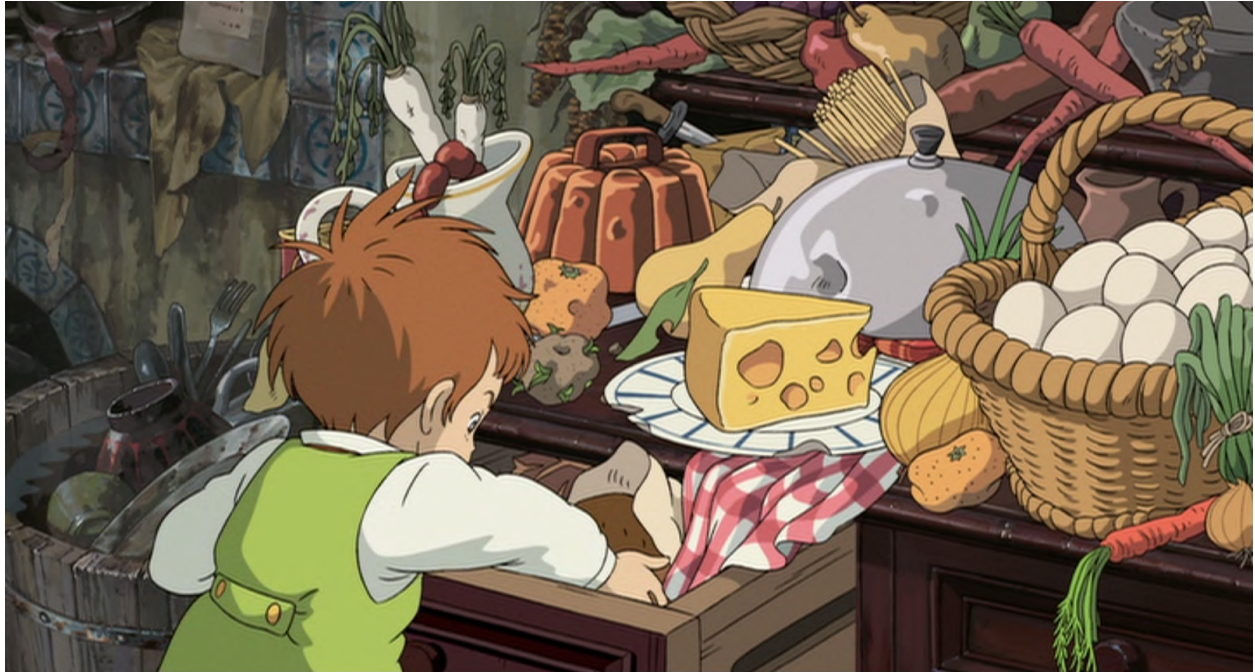


Figure 17. Markl getting breakfast in the castle's kitchen



Figures 18 & 19. Jan Davidsz de Heem, *Still Life, Breakfast with Champagne Glass and Pipe* (1642) and Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with a Skull and a Writing Quill* (1628)

While Claesz and de Heem mainly painted still lifes, similar studies can be found in other types of 17th-century Dutch paintings. For example, works like Vermeer's *The Milkmaid* (c. 1657) and *The Astronomer* (1668) incorporate object studies into larger genre paintings (figures 20 and 21). Like Vermeer's paintings, Miyazaki's still lifes serve to better identify the people and actions that occupy the space (figure 22). Moreover, they alert viewers to a sense of layered space. While figures and still lifes tend to be the foci of Vermeer's and Miyazaki's images, they do not exist in a two-dimensional space. Miyazaki borrows from the 17th-century Dutch approach in creating illusory depth through shadowy windows, partially pulled back curtains, and dark wooden beams (figure 23). In Miyazaki's films, this depth of space creates mystery. Behind the curtain to her bedroom, Sophie returns to her youthful state of sleep; a door frame becomes a portal to Howl's childhood. However, it also realistically populates settings. Miyazaki hints at signs of life through alleyways and in lamplit windows. These inhabited structures recall the inviting depth of space in Vermeer's *The Little Street* (c. 1657) and Pieter de Hooch's *The Courtyard of a House in Delft* (1658) (figures 24 and 25). These paintings are executed with exacting detail; individual bricks form clearly legible architectural space, even through doors and in the background. Vermeer and de Hooch engaged space and enclosed figures within rigorously composed environments. Like these painters, Miyazaki uses the geometric shapes of architecture to frame spaces where viewers engage with a sense of familiar otherworldliness.





Figures 20 & 21. Johannes Vermeer, *The Milkmaid* (1657-58) and *The Astronomer* (1668)



Figure 22. Detail of Sophie's bedroom





Figures 24 & 25. Johannes Vermeer, *The Little Street* (1657-58) and Pieter de Hooch, *The Courtyard of a House in Delft* (1658)



Figure 23. Sophie and Lettie talking inside, with view of their hometown through windows

Though witchcraft and wizardry are central to the plots of both *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle*, they exist as parts of broader networks of commerce and exchange. Kiki leverages her ability to fly to start a delivery business. Sophie initially works as a milliner, and Howl disguises himself as a magical apothecary. Miyazaki further represents the centrality of money through material objects, such as Kiki's shock at an expensive grocery receipt or pining after an expensive pair of red shoes. In addition, both films place an emphasis on water. Kiki and Sophie both marvel at the novelty of water and cities by the sea. However, more than a landscape to wonder at, these cities function practically as ports. Miyazaki pictures the fishing and shipping activities of these ports. Miyazaki's boats are markedly more antique than his nineteenth and twentieth century cars, trains, and military vehicles (figure 26). They recall the explosion of Dutch sea trade in the seventeenth century. As the Dutch trade routes and colonial military operations exploded, their ships became a source of national pride.<sup>[17]</sup> Dutch painters often included ships in their paintings as a way of imaging trade and national identity. Like Miyazaki's ships, they feature wooden bodies, tall masts, and billowing sails. These boats are often shown from a distance, across the water and against the backdrop of a town (figure 27). Miyazaki adopts this visual schema and depicts his ports on the edge of the city and in profile from across the water.<sup>[18]</sup> In evoking the iconography of Dutch sea trade, Miyazaki also implies its cultural connections. The concrete trade economy allows Miyazaki to insinuate issues of territory, mapping, and war in his largely fantastical settings.





Figure 26. Boats and Koriko port, *Kiki's Delivery Service*



Figure 27. Johannes Vermeer, *View of Delft* (c. 1660-1661)

Studio Ghibli's analogue animation technique allows Miyazaki to effectively co-opt the content and visual rhetorics of Impressionist and Dutch Golden Age oil paintings. However, as background artist Kazuo Oga explained, "I didn't make a conscious effort to choose foreign-looking colors."<sup>[19]</sup> While Miyazaki and his staff cite specific inspirations from real cities and from specific artists, they also unconsciously drew more broadly on the history of art. Miyazaki avoids the traditional, cartoonish colors of animation and chooses a more reserved color palette. In doing so, he engages the soft pastels of Impressionism and the earthy, muted palettes of Dutch art. Alternation between sketchy brushstrokes and exacting details produces various architectural spaces, from the expansive fields to public leisure spectacles to the intimate urban interiors. These spaces correspond to the Dutch and the Impressionists' interests in depicting light, color, and space. Though Impressionist and 17th-century Dutch painters shared interests in the transience of natural forms and the way humans inhabit the built environment, references to these two movements almost never occur in the same space in Miyazaki's films. Rather, Miyazaki distinguishes between the two styles in order to differentiate types of spaces. Picturesque transience and ephemerality coexist with concrete commerce in the various landscapes of *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle*. In mediating his own visions of Europe through past art movements, Miyazaki contextualizes his imaginary European architectural settings in a broader visual and cultural landscape.

## II. ANIMATING ARCHITECTURE

*“It all seems so familiar, although I know I’ve never been here before.”*

Sophie, *Howl’s Moving Castle*

†

Both *Kiki’s Delivery Service* and *Howl’s Moving Castle* feature distinct, identifiable settings.<sup>4</sup> In *Kiki*, they are her unnamed hometown and Koriko, a big city by the sea. Koriko consists of two main sections - the city center and a more residential district. In *Howl*, there is a larger but clearly outlined set of locations. They include Sophie’s hometown, Howl’s castle, the periphery known as the Wastes, a port town called Port Haven, the royal city of Kingsbury, and Howl’s childhood cottage. These locations retain individual identities, but also have defined - and often mappable - relationships to one another.

Across architectural styles, the cities in *Kiki’s Delivery Service* and *Howl’s Moving Castle* share common characteristics. As previously established, the cities’ relationships to water is key. Koriko, Port Haven, and Kiki and Sophie’s hometowns are all coastal cities. Accordingly, they are often introduced in profile from across the water. They are connected to the mainland by multiple, arched stone bridges. Before they are understood as individual structures, Miyazaki pans over the cities. In these panoramas, the cities resemble Howl’s moving castle - dense grids of buildings piled on top of each other (figure 28). Even in the characters’ later, more intimate perspectives, the cities retain their dense nature. Particularly in Port Haven, Koriko, and Sophie’s hometown, the majority of structures pictured are row buildings. On the main streets, the buildings are structured on either side of central, cobblestone roads. The buildings seem to

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<sup>4</sup> Though I was unable to physically travel to these locations, I “visited” them using Google Maps Street View. I gathered broad locations from Miyazaki and his staff’s comments, as well as amateur travel articles. I then entered them in Google Maps and identified individual streets and views that were particularly resonant. The ensuing images are a combination of Google Maps screenshots and images uploaded to the Google Maps “Photos” platform.

press inward and form a continuous stream of architecture. While individual facades are distinguished by shifting colors and ornamentation, the buildings are entirely attached to one another. The row structures house three main functions: stores, apartments, and individual houses. These building types correspond to Miyazaki's attention to commercial and domestic themes in the films.



Figure 28. Panning view of Koriko, *Kiki's Delivery Service*

Streets of seemingly endless row houses make up the majority of the cityscape in the two films. Miyazaki connects wide boulevards with narrow alleyways and tunneled passages. Throughout both films, main streets are home to large spectacles, including daily traffic, military parades, and a crashing blimp. The side streets not only provide refuge from the cacophony of public gatherings, but also function as sites of encounter and conflict. Kiki and Tombo's first conversation occurs on a narrow backstreet, as does Sophie's initial encounter with Howl (figures 29 and 30). However, both encounters are contentious and moments of escape; Kiki evades a police officer and blows off Tombo, while Sophie flees from two harassing soldiers and the Witch of the Waste's henchmen. Miyazaki furnishes each side street with individual, small



details of urban life. In addition to showing various features like arched portals and shadowed corners, Miyazaki includes abandoned bicycles, trash cans, and peeling advertisements. The inclusion of these mundane and imperfect details make the cities feel lived-in, worn, and historical.



Figure 29. Kiki walking away from police officer



Figure 30. Sophie and Howl fleeing from the Witch of the Waste's henchmen

Though the characters of the films never directly engage with them, Miyazaki depicts churches and steeples throughout his landscapes as signifiers of old European cities. Beginning in the Middle Ages, public life and urban planning centered around the activities of the church; the construction of local basilicas in nearly every major town reflects this centrality. While the size and styles of these structures continually evolved, they engaged a core set of architectural forms, including bell towers, steeples, and a cruciform plan. Though these structures no longer dictate daily life, they are important parts of cityscapes and markers of historic portions of cities. Churches in both *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving* are only depicted in their entirety from distanced perspectives. Often, Miyazaki zeroes in on single forms, showing glimpses of ornamented Gothic steeples and lacy crosses. He includes a church spire in the opening credits of *Kiki's Delivery Service*, as Kiki flies by a church steeple (figure 31). As Sophie ascends the stairs of the royal palace, Miyazaki indicates the presence of churches throughout Kingsbury by dotting the background with many westworks with double bell towers (figure 32). Miyazaki is not interested in imbuing his landscapes with Christianity; rather, he engages the tropes of romantic, though generalized, visions of the “old towns” of European cities.





Figure 31. Kiki flying past a church steeple in opening credits

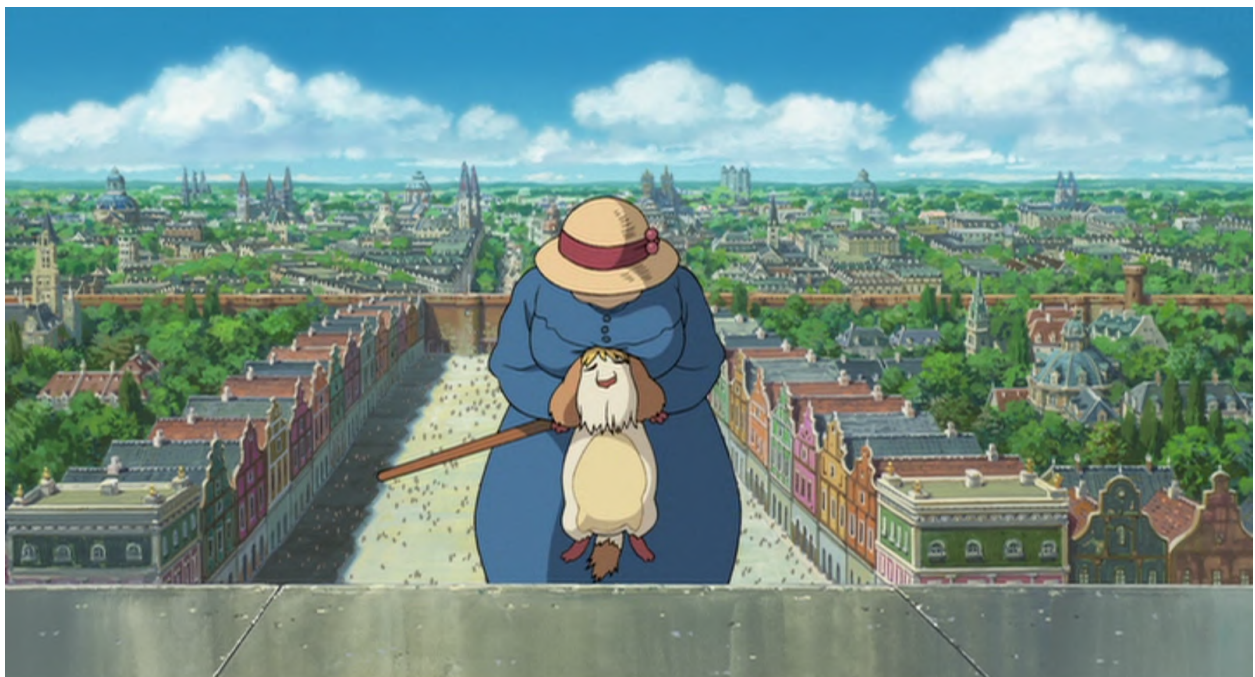


Figure 32. Steeples and westworks in the background of Kingsbury

As Miyazaki himself admits, the cities in *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* do not truly exist anywhere in their entirety. Rather, each city features an intentional patchwork of different tropes, architectural motifs, and structures from various European sources. Though the cities as a whole cannot be collectively located, individual urban plans, architectural styles, and building types can be clearly identified. Like the broader handling and artwork, Miyazaki mainly fabricates cities from medieval and nineteenth-century Central European and Scandinavian architecture. Within these periods and places, he primarily focuses on medieval, timber-frame vernacular architecture and monumental Beaux-Arts buildings.



Figure 33: Kiki walking through the residential streets of Koriko



Figure 34. St. Hansgatan, Visby, Sweden

## VISBY, SWEDEN

Miyazaki openly cites Visby as the primary inspiration for *Kiki's Delivery Service's* setting (figures 33 and 34). Visby is a UNESCO World Heritage site and considered one of the best preserved medieval cities in Scandinavia. It is on the coast of the Baltic Sea and originated as a medieval harbor. The medieval portion of Visby is built upon cliffs and surrounded by a defensive stone wall. While the city has since expanded and modernized, at its core, Visby's architecture is hallmarked by small, light-colored rubblework masonry buildings with terracotta tiled roofs (figure 35). Miyazaki heavily replicates this building type and tonality in the residential portion of Koriko, where Tombo lives and Osono's bakery is located (figure 36). Here, the city consists of individual homes, linked by courtyards, small stone pathways, and narrow stairwells. When Miyazaki depicts Kiki walking, it is almost always in this part of the city. Ultimately, this allows Miyazaki to communicate a sense of intimacy and specificity in this landscape. Like Visby's streets, Kiki's walks highlight the irregularity and individuality of structures, which boast metal gates, low walls, and gardens.





Figure 35. Koriko cityscape



Figure 36. Visby, looking west

As evidenced by the overlook outside the bakery, Miyazaki's city exists on many levels of land like Visby itself. Consequently, Miyazaki produces extensive vistas that contrast with the ground level views. From above, he emphasizes the short height, light colors, and tiled roofs of the buildings. Miyazaki further replicates the topography of Visby by encircling the city of Koriko in a medieval defensive wall (figure 37). However, like Visby, this wall does not contain all of the city (figure 38). Rather, it separates the denser areas from the flat beach at its base. When Kiki and Tombo set out to test Tombo's flying bicycle contraption, they fly past the rocky base of Koriko, a tall wall, and a beach at its base. While Miyazaki expands the scale of the wall and city, he took the basic structure from Visby. He emphasizes that this wall is no longer used for military purposes. As in Visby, the wall functions as a well-preserved reminder of the city's medieval history.



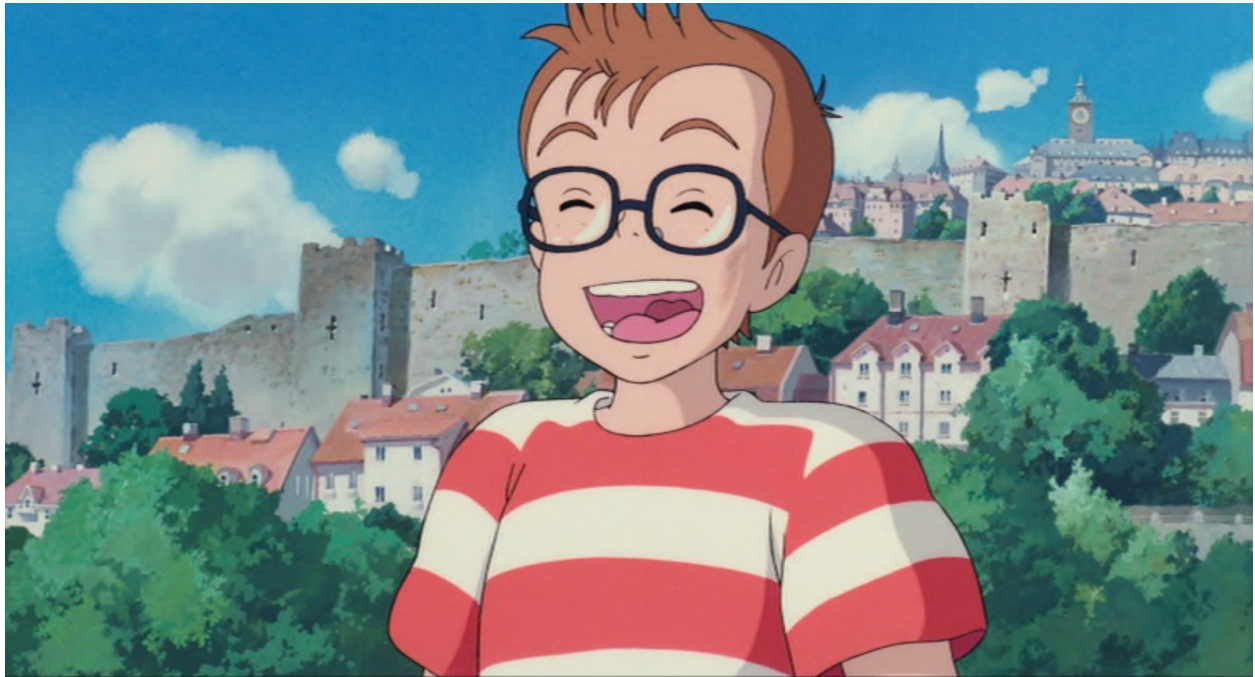


Figure 37. Tombo at the base of Koriko, in front of the city wall



Figure 38. Visby Town Wall

Miyazaki applies the same architectural style to Kiki's hometown and to Port Haven in *Howl's Moving Castle*. In fact, Koriko and Port Haven look like they could be a part of the same city. In all these locations, Miyazaki employs a sharply angled perspective of the city, both from bird's eye view and from street level. Buildings exist on sharp angles, along roads sloping down towards the sea (figures 39 and 40). This perspective permits panoramic views of the city itself and frames the ocean below. Though this skyline exists in Visby, Miyazaki removes the accompanying ruins. Visby has numerous medieval church ruins, including Sankt Nicolaus and Sankta Karin. Both structures have been abandoned since the 1500s; however, the nave, aisles, vaults, and apses remain largely intact. In choosing not to depict ruins in Koriko, Miyazaki removes physical markers of conflict, but retains the historicism they represent. Interestingly, Miyazaki hints at the aging of Port Haven. Compared with the quaint neighborhoods of Koriko, the streets of Port Haven feature cracked facades, peeling paint, and occasional vagrants. Tourists visit Visby because of its old-world charm and the well-preserved, tangible remnants of its history. In modeling both his architecture and urban layouts on Visby, Miyazaki plays into this appeal. However, by excluding the ruins from Koriko, he refuses a clear historical reading and smooths out historical wrinkles. The medieval houses and streets infuse the films with a kind of historicism without divulging a separation between the past and present.





Figure 39. Port, *Kiki's Delivery Service*



Figure 40. Port Haven, *Howl's Moving Castle*

## STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

At first glance, Koriko seems to be an entirely Swedish city. However, it is not simply an evocation of the medieval core of Visby. Rather, Miyazaki combines architecture from Visby and from Stockholm. The buildings and environments in *Kiki's Delivery Service* are arguably the most definitely locatable in both films. For example, the bridge Kiki flies and almost crashes into a bus under features the same tri-vault form as Regeringsgatans bro in central Stockholm (figures 41 and 42). The alley where Kiki escapes from the policeman features a vaulted passageway to a curving, sloping cobblestone side street. This vault resembles those on Ferkens Gränd and Gåsgränd. In addition to resembling the streets through these two vaults, the street in Koriko follows a similar topography to Baggensgatan. Though based on theoretically identifiable locations, Miyazaki compresses real spaces into a uniform cityscape. Regeringsgatans bro is a twentieth century bridge located nearly two kilometers away in a different neighborhood from the seventeenth century Ferkens Gränd, Gåsgränd, and Baggensgatan. However, in Miyazaki's rendition of these places, they are only a few meters apart.





Figure 41. Bridge and traffic jam in Koriko



Figure 42. Regeringsgatan's bro over Kungsgatan, Stockholm

As with Visby and Colmar, Miyazaki is particularly interested in the quaint, old town of Gamla Stan in Stockholm. Gamla Stan features a port and was originally constructed in the Middle Ages. However, the neighborhood took shape over many centuries. Compared with the residential neighborhood based on Visby, Miyazaki emphasizes the verticality of the city in the opening and climax scenes. He focuses on multistory apartment buildings, steeples, and a central clock tower (figure 43). Across Stockholm and especially on churches, steeples stick out across the skyline. These steeples are different from their French Gothic counterparts; they have thicker bases, complex designs, and very pointed spires. For example, miniature spires often surround at the base of the steeple. Many of these steeples also feature clocks at their bases (figure 44). Miyazaki depicts this kind of spire and multiplies its presence in Koriko. Further, he adapts and enlarges the clock motif into an entire clock tower. The clock tower is a central narrative and visual feature of Koriko; it raises above the rest of the city and is almost always visible. However, there is no such central tower in Stockholm. Rather, in its height and visual prominence, the tower recalls brick campaniles like Campanile di San Marco in Venice (figure 45). Miyazaki patches together different structures - Swedish clock towers and Italian campaniles - to create a hybrid structure that establishes a concentrated city center.





Figure 43. Clock tower and piazza in Koriko



Figures 44 & 45. Storkyrkan (Great Church) from Storkyrkobrinken, Gamla Stan, Stockholm and Campanile di San Marco, Venice, Italy

As Kiki flies and falls through the thoroughfares of Koriko, she is framed by multistory buildings with stone and brick facades (figure 46). These structures resemble the iconic buildings in Gamla Stan, in their earth-toned and decorated facades (figure 47). The buildings in Gamla Stan often feature storefronts on the ground level and decorated facades. Miyazaki replicates this commercial nature in his own structures, which feature outdoor cafes in public squares like Gamla Stan's Stortorget. Further, Miyazaki is attentive to the details that make Gamla Stan particularly picturesque. Like Gamla Stan's buildings, Koriko's feature decorated facades with flower boxes, awnings, sculptural embellishments, and stepped and clock gables. In addition to these decorative elements, Miyazaki also quotes the signage found on the streets of Gamla Stan. In addition to hand-painted lettering on the buildings themselves, the buildings in Gamla Stan and in the two films display handmade signs that hang off the side of the buildings (figure 48). The most prominent example of this kind of signage occurs at the end of *Kiki's Delivery Service*, when Kiki affixes her own business sign to Osono's bakery (figure 49). Similar signs can be found throughout Miyazaki's cities (figure 50). Like those in Gamla Stan, these signs are made of simple iron and painted images accompanied by text. Interestingly, Miyazaki included legible text on his signs. Though legible, these texts are not necessarily comprehensible. They bear a combination of French, German, English, Japanese and gibberish. Thus, like Miyazaki's cities as a whole, these signs refuse a singular location in favor of an idealized, caricatured Europeanness.





Figure 46. Main street in downtown Koriko



Figure 47. Stortorget, Gamla Stan, Stockholm



Figure 48. Street and signs in Koriko



Figure 49. Kiki and Tombo hanging a sign for Kiki's delivery service



Figure 50. Hand-painted text on facade, *Howl's Moving Castle*



## COLMAR, FRANCE

Whereas *Kiki's Delivery Service* depicts a predominantly Scandinavian city, *Howl's Moving Castle* pictures a mainly Western European, French city. Miyazaki again reproduces a medieval landscape for the most intimate, lived-in settings of the film. He models Sophie's hometown and the castle, where the majority of film takes place, on Colmar (figures 51 and 52). Colmar is a part of the Alsace-Lorraine region of France, which has a contentious and cross-cultural history. Since it was conquered by Louis XIV in 1673, the area has alternated between French and German control. As a result, Alsatian culture and architecture demonstrates a hybrid of French and German characteristics. Cities like Strasbourg bear similar traits to Colmar. However, like Visby, Colmar is championed for its thoroughly preserved old town.<sup>[20]</sup>



Figure 51. Public square in Sophie's hometown



Figure 52. Rue des Marchands, Colmar, France

Miyazaki elicits Colmar in his extensive use of half-timbered architecture, which almost exclusively lines the streets of Sophie's hometown. Half-timbered construction is named quite literally for its construction process; the base of the structures is stone, while the top half is built out of wood panels and infill material. The wooden beams are not decorative, but rather exposed structural members. These structures are not unique to Colmar. However, in many other locations, the exposed wood has been covered or modified.<sup>[21]</sup> While these beams can be applied in different shapes - t's, x's, crosses, curved arches - Miyazaki favors relatively simple combinations of x's and t's. Further, Miyazaki renders half-timbered structures in a range of greens, pinks, and mustards rather than more typical cream and brown neutrals. These more fairytale-like colored buildings can be found throughout Colmar, particularly in a neighborhood along old port canals nicknamed "La Petite Venise."<sup>5</sup> Thus, Miyazaki drew from Colmar not only in architectural inspiration, but also a color palette.

Miyazaki affixes aspects of Alsacian domestic architecture to the robotic exterior of Howl's castle. Individual half-timber cottages poke out of the castle's metal shell. Though the castle appears to be made up of rounded and incongruous forms on the outside, the miniscule cottages hint at its actual interior. The living space of the castle is actually quite small; the main space is a kitchen featuring a large hearth (figure 53). Like half-timber structures, the interior reveals wooden structural elements like wooden piers and a low beamed ceiling. Interestingly, though Miyazaki employed the medieval Scandinavian building type for generic structures in *Kiki's Delivery Service*, Osono's bakery is constructed using the same half-timbered approach. The bakery is bright yellow and half-timber, with German text in the window and above the

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<sup>5</sup> "La Petite Venise" is most likely nicknamed after the Venetian island of Burano, both because of its location along a canal and its bright, synthetic paint colors. Though the underlying structures are very old, the bright colors only remain so bright because of the synthetic, durable nature of the modern paint.



entryway (figure 54). Kiki's apartment belies the age of the building and features a similar hearth and wooden beams as those found in Howl's castle.



Figure 53: Interior of Howl's castle



Figure 54. Osono's bakery

In *Howl's Moving Castle*, Miyazaki arranges his half-timbered structures in an urban plan paralleling Colmar's. Though on a smaller scale than more contemporary cities, Colmar's old town features larger main streets and smaller alleys nestled between buildings. These streets open into haphazardly shaped public squares. In *Howl's Moving Castle*, Sophie not only navigates through backstreets, but "walks" through air above city squares with Howl (figures 55 and 56). Unlike the broad boulevards and courtyards in *Kiki's Delivery Service*, the outdoor cafés and parades are experienced on a smaller scale, pedestrian level. The buildings seem to encroach on public space, with second-story overhangs and protruding facades. These toppled forms take inspiration from Colmar's architecture, where many buildings feature tiered buildings with top portions larger than the ground level.



Figure 55. Sophie walking through alleys behind main street parade



Figure 56. Sophie and Howl walk through air above central town square



## PARIS, FRANCE

Throughout *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle*, Miyazaki drew on Parisian architecture from a number of different periods in the city's history. In both films, the big cities are often seen from above while in flight. From above, Koriko resembles Île de la Cité. From the foreshortened angle, the island city appears wider than it is long, forming a shape similar to Île de la Cité (figures 57 and 58). Further, a network of bridges radiate from the city's edges, much like Pont Neuf and Pont Saint-Michel, and connect Koriko to the mainland. In establishing this parallel, Miyazaki once again connects his cities to the oldest, medieval portions of European cities. However, Miyazaki complicates his references to Paris by incorporating both Rococo and Beaux-Arts elements.



Figure 57. Koriko, *The Art of Kiki's Delivery Service*

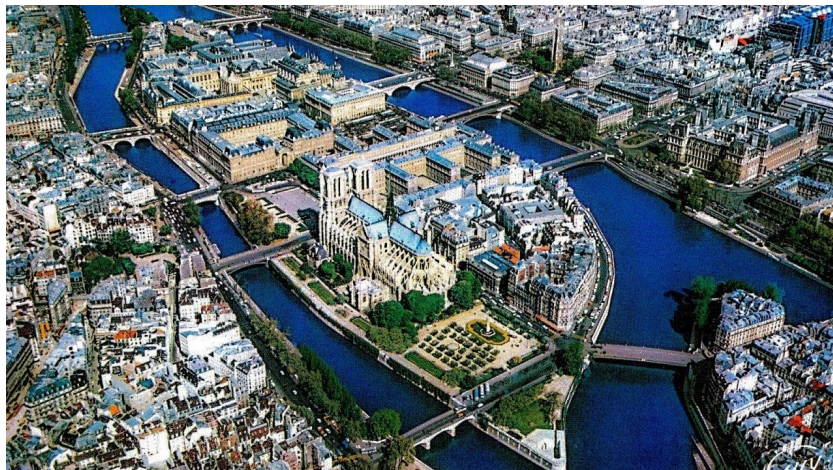


Figure 58. Île de la Cité, Paris

In both *Koriko and Kingsbury*, these bird's-eye views highlight the ubiquity of domed roofs with dormers. The rise of Beaux-Arts architecture in Paris popularized this type of roof. The design draws on earlier French mansard roofs, but employs modern construction materials like copper and glass. Miyazaki expands upon the pastel teal of oxidized copper and depicts roofs in a wide array of blues, reds, and greens (figures 59 and 60). In addition to playing with this modern version of mansard roofs, Miyazaki also engages with the neoclassical elements and monumental scale popularized in Beaux Arts architecture. They feature columns, pilasters, cornices, pediments, turrets, and multi-pronged extensions and wings. The resulting Beaux Arts-inspired buildings are larger than any of the other buildings in the film.





Figure 59. Kingsbury, *Howl's Moving Castle*



Figure 60. Koriko, *Kiki's Delivery Service*

Miyazaki reserves his use of Beaux Arts architectural motifs for the largest and most open spaces in the two films. In doing so, he acknowledges not only Beaux Arts architecture, but also Haussmannization, the large-scale urban renewal project that created the vistas of Paris we know today. Under Napoleon III, Baron de Haussmann cleared much of medieval Paris and replaced it with Beaux Arts facades and exceptionally large boulevards. The city centers of Koriko and Kingsbury both feature monumental metal statues of a man on horseback. These statues rest on stone pillars decorated with scroll flourishes and lionhead fountains. Though the pillars feature large metal plaques, the text they bear is illegible scribbles. Monumental statues date back to the triumphal columns and arches of ancient Rome and can be found in cities around the world. However, these statues recall Haussmann's emphasis on creating perfectly framed views of monuments. The statues in Koriko and Kingsbury are located in large, open public spaces. Kiki sits in a public park on steps at the base of the statue (figure 61). Sophie passes by the statue protected by bollards and a soldier in the middle of a grand public square (figure 62). These monuments demonstrate a more modern vision of Paris, and of beautification through urban renewal. Thus, these spaces are historically at odds with the narrow medieval streets and plazas found elsewhere in the films. While they still demonstrate historical architecture, they speak to a different period of history.





Figure 61. Statue in public park, *Kiki's Delivery Service*

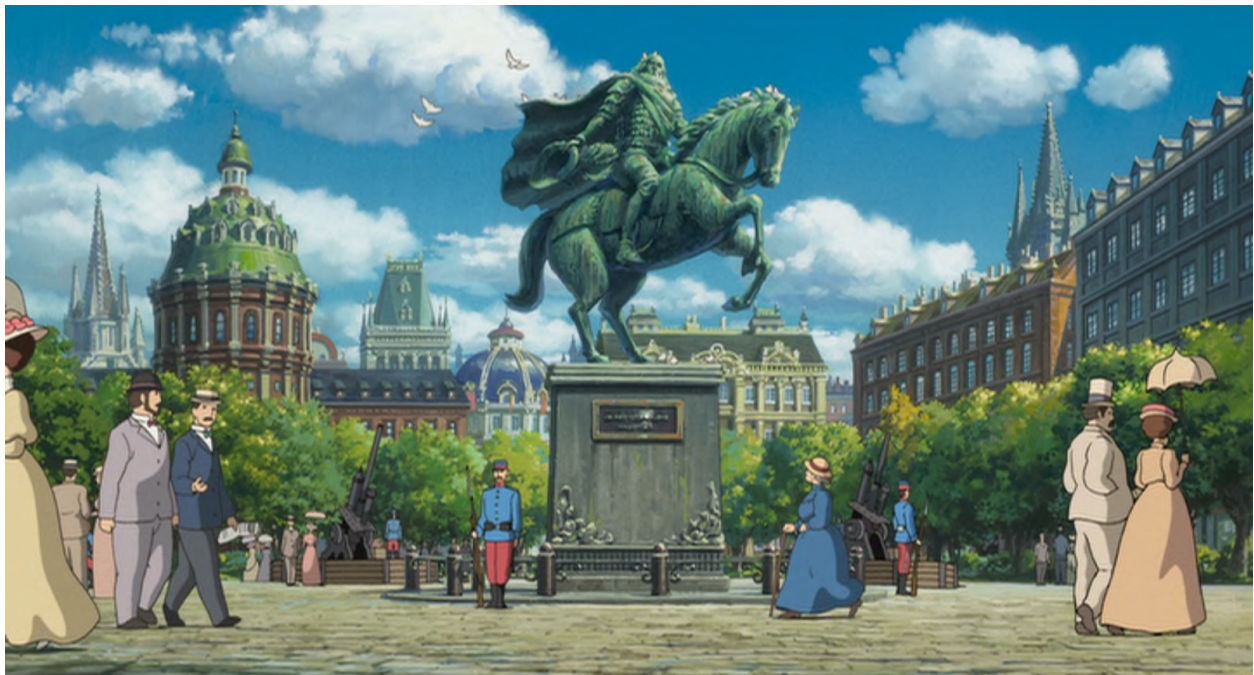


Figure 62. Statue in public square, *Howl's Moving Castle*

The rise of Beaux Arts architecture coincided with the application of new building techniques to large public exhibition spaces, such as World's Fairs and International Expositions. The first of these, the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, was also the site of a massive iron and glass structure known as the Crystal Palace. The Crystal Palace was revolutionary in its rapid construction and massive scale. Joseph Paxton, the architect of the Crystal Palace, was actually a gardener. For the Crystal Palace, he simply adapted and enlarged his previous greenhouse designs. Paxton's design influenced a series of similar exhibition halls, including the Grand Palais in Paris (figure 65). Miyazaki includes different iterations of glass palaces in both *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle*. In *Kiki*, glass structures are individual, domestic features. Kiki's mother conjures potions in a greenhouse attached to her house; the old lady Kiki befriends has a similar solarium addition on her house (figure 63). In *Howl*, Miyazaki enlarges these smaller greenhouses into Madame Suliman's large-scale glass palace (figure 64). Like the Grand Palais, this massive greenhouse is a long structure with arches and domes made of glass panels. Miyazaki adds pilasters and painted pendentives to the otherwise glass structure. In doing so, he includes structurally impossible elements in an otherwise realistic structure.





Figure 63. Kiki's mother in her greenhouse



Figure 64. Madame Suliman's glass palace



Figure 65. Grand Palais, Paris

As evidenced by the rich red and gold gilded pendentives in Madame Suliman's glass palace, Miyazaki decorates his Beaux-Arts interiors with Baroque elements. Miyazaki's extensive use of fanciful curves and pastel colors parallels the expressive nature of Baroque. The buildings in Kingsbury are especially extravagant, with sculptural flourishes and domes. In the case of the Kingsbury palace, Miyazaki creates a fantastical rendition of the Palace of Versailles. Like Versailles, the palace is part of an enclosed complex, with a gated courtyard surrounding a main palace at the top of a grand staircase (figure 66). The exterior of the palace is ornately decorated with gilded domes and massive columns with acanthus-like leaves. (figure 67) Interiors demonstrate a similar richness of materials, including gilding, golden chandeliers, mirrors, large-scale portraits, rich carpets, and velvet curtains (figure 68). These lavish spaces contrast deeply with the lived-in spaces of Port Haven, the castle, and Sophie's hometown. They feel artificial and communicate Sophie and Howl's distrust of Madame Suliman's own facade and her wartime manipulations.



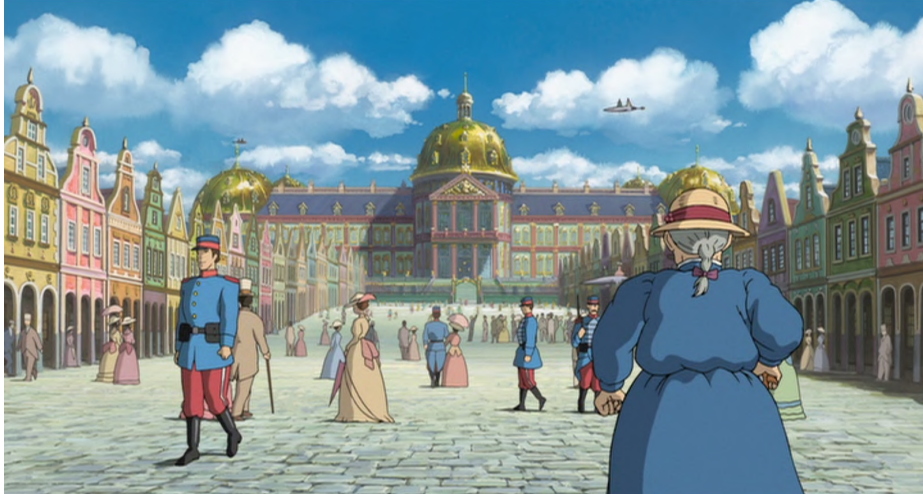


Figure 66. Kingsbury palace

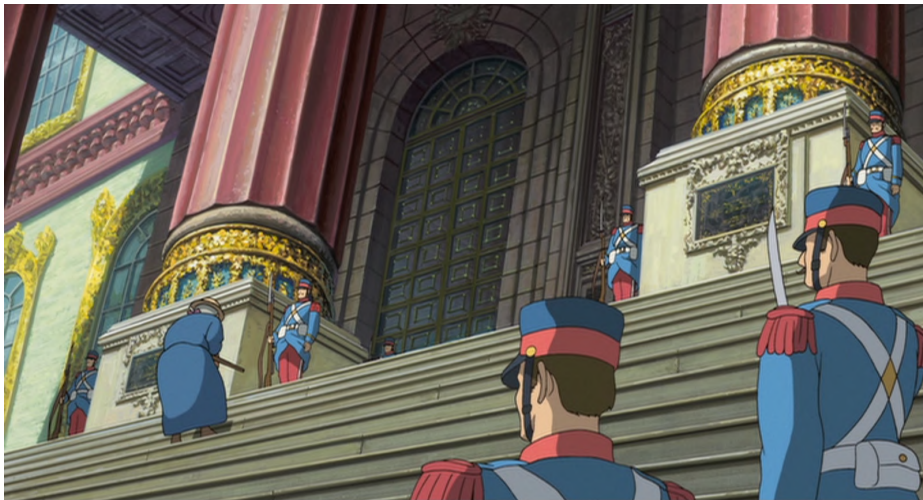


Figure 67. Kingsbury palace, detail



Figure 68. Interior of Sophie's family hat shop

## HEIDELBERG, GERMANY

Like Visby and Colmar, Heidelberg features a central, historic old town. However, Miyazaki does not borrow from the city of Heidelberg itself, but from its relationship to the surrounding environment. Heidelberg is situated along the Neckar River in the Rhine Rift Valley. The Old City is located on the eastern side of the river and has long been connected to the western shore by a series of bridges. The current bridge, the Karl Theodor Bridge, was constructed in 1788. It is made of tan sandstone bricks and features a series of wide, arched piers. A gate composed of two columned lookouts is at the eastern end of the bridge. This bridge, colloquially called Old Bridge, is prominent in Heidelberg's cityscape (figure 70). When depicting Sophie's hometown from a distance, Miyazaki orients it like Heidelberg. Miyazaki depicts the town on the right side of a river, with hills and mountains behind it (figure 69). It is connected to the Wastes by a bridge that deeply resembles Heidelberg's Old Bridge in color, material, and form. Miyazaki's bridge is even placed in a similar position within the town; it features a columned gate and connects to the middle of the city.





Figure 69. View of Sophie's hometown from the Wastes



Figure 70. Heidelberg, Germany from Across the Neckar River

## AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS + VENICE, ITALY

In Kingsbury, Miyazaki modifies the color palette of Sophie's hometown. While he maintained multicolored facades, he lightens and saturates the previously muted tones. Despite their conversant color palettes, the buildings in Kingsbury and Sophie's hometown feature entirely different architectural styles. Miyazaki and his staff cited their interest in Vermeer and Dutch painting, but neither explicitly noted the influence of Dutch architecture. Nevertheless, a key portion of Kingsbury's architecture derives from Amsterdam's canal houses (figure 72). Miyazaki encloses a courtyard around the palace with a series of three-story, attached buildings. They feature flat, narrow facades and flamboyant triangular gables on the top floors (figure 71). Rather than depict gables of varying heights and curvatures, Miyazaki creates canal houses with uniform heights and exclusively Dutch gables. Dutch gables feature curved pediments and decorative volutes at the side and top points. Paired with Miyazaki's pastel color choices, these gables result in a particularly expressive, whimsical facade.



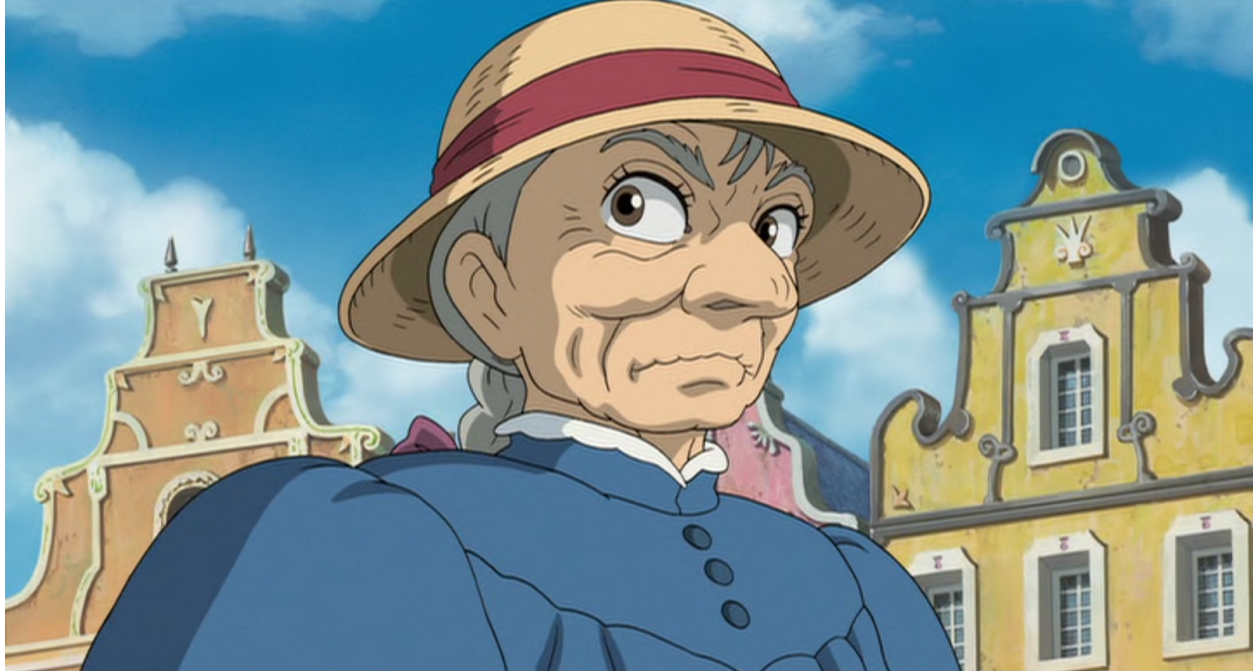


Figure 71. Gables in Kingsbury palace complex



Figure 72. Damrak, “Dancing Houses,” Amsterdam

While canal houses originally served multiple functions, including businesses and housing, they generally feature a ground floor with a single door and large windows.<sup>[22]</sup> Miyazaki replaces these more singular entrances with arcades. In doing so, he mixes a Dutch building type with an Venetian Gothic motif. In Venice, architects applied the arcades to palaces along the Grand Canal. The Doge's Palace features an extensive series of arches on every level of its facade (figure 74). The ground floor features simple with wide pointed arches. The Doge's Palace was influential; other Venetian royals imitated it in their own palaces to show political alliance.<sup>[23]</sup> Ca' d'Oro, for example, also features a ground floor arcade with both pointed and rounded arches (figure 75). Though Miyazaki only depicts one type of arch per building and avoided the more complex quatrefoils and ogee arches found on higher floors of Venetian palaces, he alternates between pointed and rounded arch forms from one building to another (figure 73). By adding arcades, Miyazaki elevates the more modest form of the canal house to a palatial status.



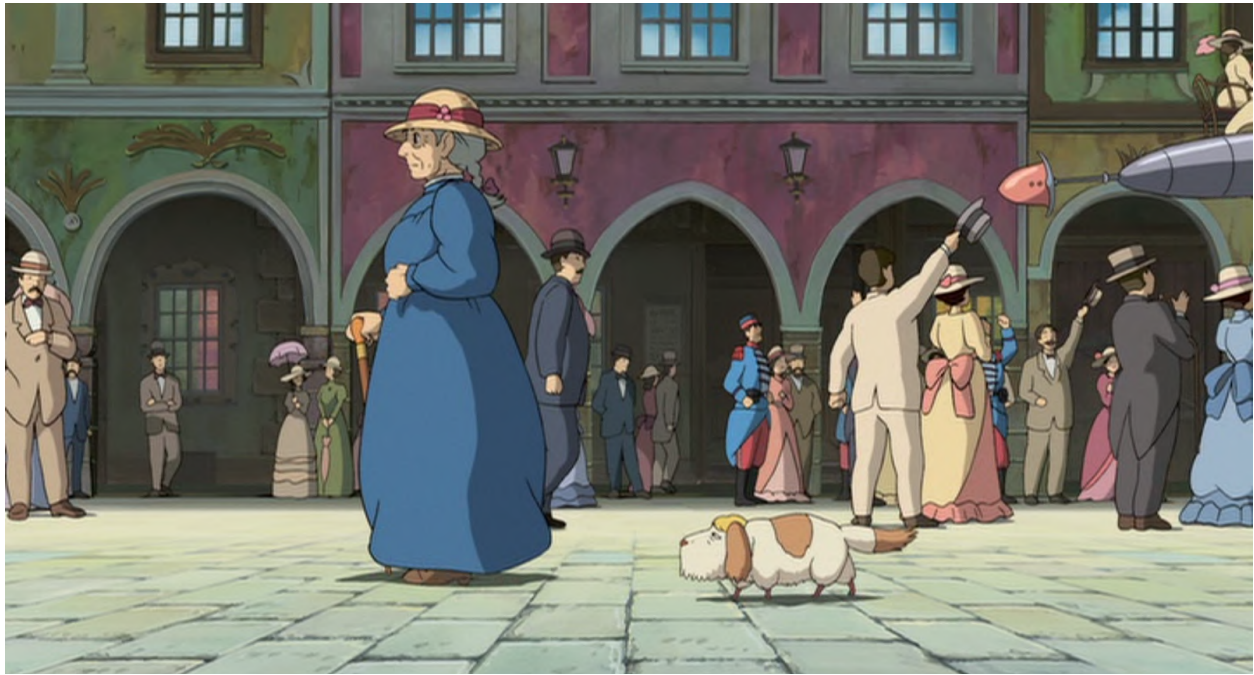


Figure 73. Arcades in Kingsbury palace complex



Figures 74 & 75. The Doge's Palace and Ca' D'oro

Though based on real places and depicted in tangible detail, the cities in *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* refuse literal readings. Miyazaki collapses time and space, drawing from multiple cities and architectural movements. While each location may primarily resemble one city, they are all hybrids. Miyazaki emphasizes and edits certain elements in order to make the spaces seem more fantastical and cohesive. For example, he amplifies the pastel color palettes of the original locations and applies them more extensively. In addition, he expands the scale of the cities. Miyazaki is not interested in delineating individual iconic structures, but rather in populating vernacular forms of architecture. He specified:

“I am attracted to second-rate, or even second-and-a-half-rate versions of [sukiya style of traditional architecture]...It's a very nostalgic thing for me. It's true that there's something odd about this, because I was born in 1941, which means that my first memories are of bombed-out cities, but, as they say, people are nostalgic for the houses they once lived in. So when I look through the windows of these structures I find it heartwarming to imagine what sorts of memories they might contain.”<sup>[24]</sup>

Miyazaki expresses a romantic perception of vernacular architecture. Just like monuments, “second-rate” traditional buildings bear the markers of history. However, Miyazaki repeats uniform structures and smooths out natural architectural variations without repeating the scars of conflict like war. This utopian ambition is particularly evident in his extensive depictions of timber-frame row houses like those found in Visby, Colmar, Amsterdam, and Stockholm.

Miyazaki's landscapes demonstrate a selective view of real architecture and European history. Interestingly, the portions of real cities that Miyazaki decides to depict are often tourist sites. Miyazaki was not interested in depicting medieval architecture for its own sake, but rather used it to evoke the well-preserved “old towns” of each city. Accordingly, Miyazaki only depicts signs of wear, such exposed brick or overgrown flowers, that directly contribute to the idea of a

stereotypically charming setting. However, in settings like Visby, Colmar, and Gamla Stan, structures only remain charmingly “old” due to extensive, ongoing preservation and restoration efforts supported through tourist revenue. These historic urban cores promote a nostalgic image of the city, largely removed from the reality of modern day life. As in the two films, these areas emphasize certain activities, such as shopping, historic industry, and food, to produce a consumable and particularly quaint version of history. As evidenced by the abundance of images on Google, the spaces Miyazaki drew inspiration from are highly documented, not only in academic research but also by amateur blogs and in vernacular photographs. Therefore, while Miyazaki and his animators primarily drew on their own field research, they also engaged with a broader cultural consciousness and romanticization of these locations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that the two films were released fifteen years apart. Shifts in social, cultural, and economic contexts, both in Japan and globally, in this interval meant the films were produced in and speak to slightly different contemporary contexts.

### III. WHERE THE WAR NEVER HAPPENED

*“Is it the enemy’s or one of ours?”*

*What difference does it make?”*

Sophie & Howl, *Howl’s Moving Castle*

†

Miyazaki began work on *Howl’s Moving Castle* soon after the American-led invasion of Iraq. The attacks enraged and greatly influenced Miyazaki.<sup>[25]</sup> Accordingly, the film shows bombings and burning cities as senseless violence without a defined objective or enemy. Miyazaki also situates *Kiki’s Delivery Service* in the context of war. However, as opposed to the presence of war-torn landscapes found in *Howl*, *Kiki* pictures an alternative version of the postwar period. In explaining the setting of the film, Miyazaki stated, “I was imagining how the world would have been in the 50s if the war never happened. You know, the world that wasn’t.”<sup>[26]</sup> In this comment, he acknowledged the ubiquitous effects of World War II. In the two films, Miyazaki thought critically about the legacy of modern war on the physical landscape. Miyazaki’s favoring of historicizing settings not only stemmed from aesthetic preferences, but from an active reimagining of a world without war.

*Kiki’s Delivery Service* and *Howl’s Moving Castle* were created in the 1980s and 2000s, respectively, but generally ignore contemporary architecture. This is not to say Miyazaki was unaware of contemporary settings and issues. In fact, Miyazaki has been vocal about the contemporary issues that informed both films. He repeatedly establishes parallels between Kiki and young women moving to Tokyo to pursue careers in animation. He foregrounded the war in *Howl’s Moving Castle* in response to the Iraq War. While Miyazaki had these current events in mind when creating the films, he did not explicitly show them in the films themselves. Rather,



he extrapolates broader themes of independence and war and applies them in settings removed from their contemporary contexts.

While Miyazaki chooses to set his films in cities full of historical rather than contemporary architecture, he does not ignore modernity. In both films, the cities bear markers of modern industry as it existed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Miyazaki is deeply interested in flight; both films feature characteristic depictions of planes and steampunk flying machines. The characters ride on modern forms of transportation, including trains, buses, cars, and trolleys. Figures in the city center of Koriko don modern, cosmopolitan businesswear while Osono wears a traditional dress and apron (figure 76, 77, and 78). Similar hints of modernity can be found in individual buildings. While Kiki relies on her radio, Osono, the young boy, and old woman all own TVs. However, these forms are incongruous and even intrusive within the rest of the historicizing landscape. When Kiki first arrives in Koriko, the two women in contemporary dress are unwelcoming. Later, the Spirit of Freedom dirigible crashes into Koriko's clock tower, causing it to crumble. The planes in *Howl's Moving Castle* are even more explicitly destructive, as they drop evil wizards and bombs on the ground below.

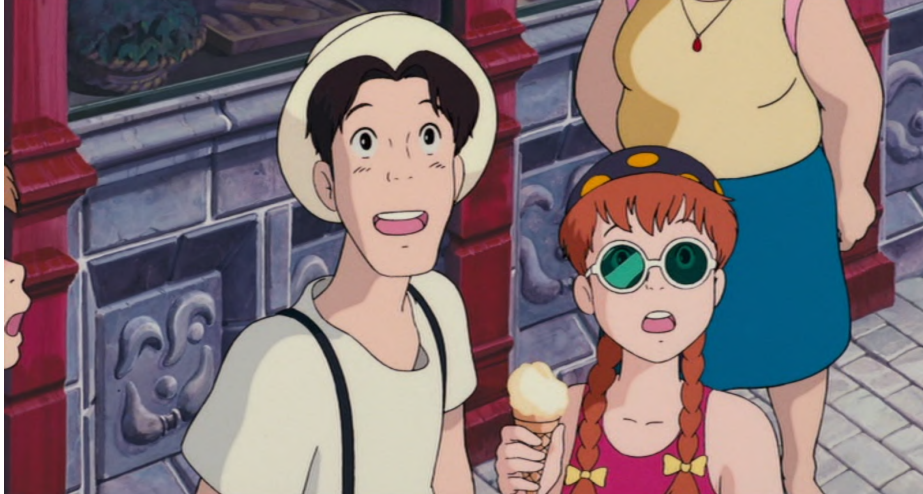


Figure 76. Teenagers in the city center of Koriko

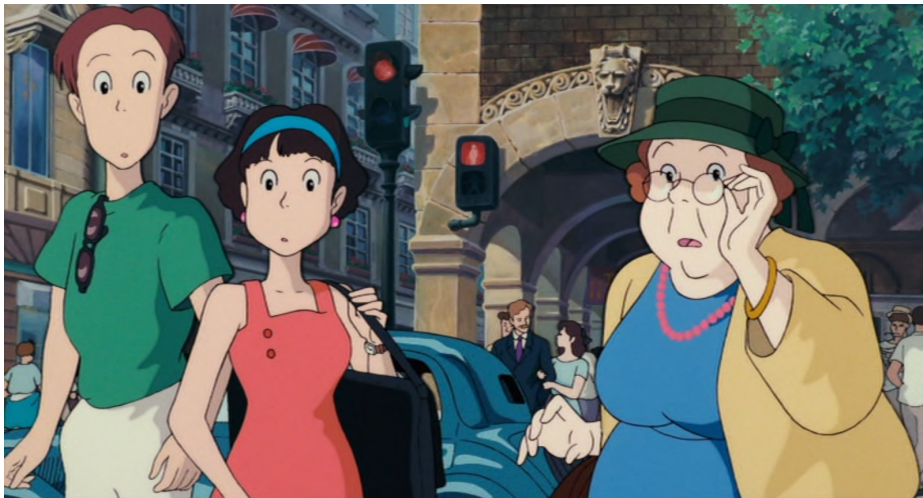


Figure 77. Unwelcoming residents in the city center of Koriko



Figure 78. Osono

In his map-like overviews of both Koriko and Sophie's hometown, Miyazaki shows belching smokestacks on the edges of the cities. These smokestacks imply an industrial sector on the periphery of the cities, though this area is never mentioned or experienced except through these aerial views. Miyazaki shows a number of similarly modern settings throughout *Kiki's Delivery Service*, but only from above while in flight. The opening credits of the film follow Kiki as she leaves home and surveys the land for a place to spend her year of witch's training. She meets another witch flying above her own chosen town. Miyazaki depicts this witch's town in a cacophony of neon lights, including a flashing windmill and a central roadway with car lights (figure 79). Kiki initially remarks about how large the town seems, but the other witch snobbishly downplays the size. The encounter leaves Kiki dismayed and questioning her own abilities. In this scene, Miyazaki not only dismisses the grandeur of modern cities filled with bright lights, but leaves Kiki with a distaste for these spaces. Kiki also flies through a factory complex during this scene. As she does, she coughs and covers her mouth (figure 80). This is the closest encounter we have with a totally modern location. Yet, Miyazaki shows this landscape as polluted and something Kiki wants to avoid. Further, both the witch's town and the factories exist as isolated patches within otherwise rural landscapes. Unlike gardens and the sea, they are far away from Koriko and, thus, removed from Kiki's desired urban experience.



Figure 79. Snobby witch's city from above



Figure 80. Kiki coughing from factory smoke



During her first business delivery, Kiki brings a birthday present to a young boy living in the suburbs of Koriko. As Kiki flies farther from the city center, the landscape below displays hints of modern architecture. Miyazaki depicts a cluster of apartment buildings (figure 81). Compared with the apartments found in the city centers of both films, these apartments are starkly modern. They are tall, white concrete structures, and have curved layouts resembling Bauhaus and mid-century modern designs (figure 82). They feature small boxes on the roofs indicating modern electrical amenities and air conditioning units. Perhaps most notably, the apartments are not arranged around a main pedestrian street or central square, but rather around a parking lot and highway. In this way, they recall implementations of Le Corbusier's model for a vertical garden city (figure 83). Miyazaki juxtaposes these modern apartments with surrounding clusters of individual stone houses like those found in the Kiki's hometown and in Koriko. As a result, these apartments feel like new additions to an older rural environment.

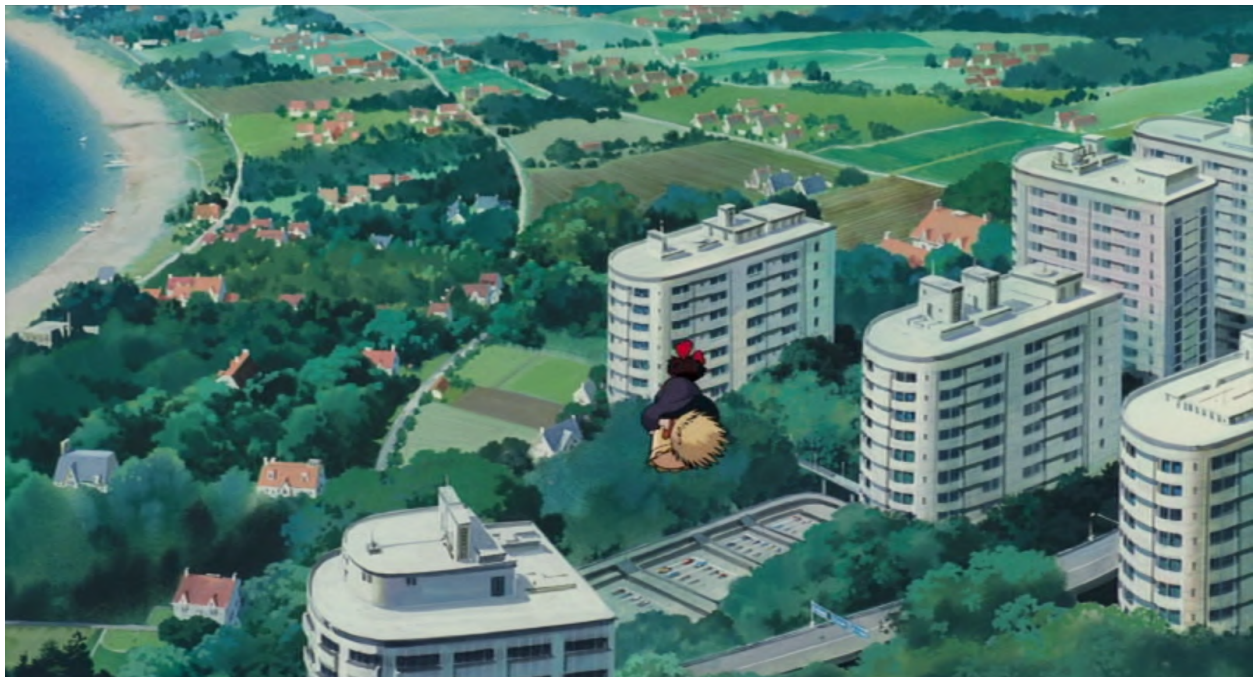
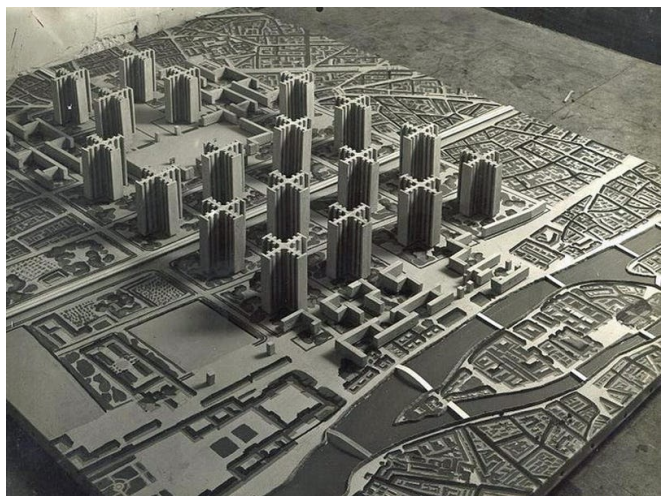


Figure 81. Kiki flying over suburban modern architecture



Figures 82 & 83. Siemensstadt Housing Estate in Berlin and Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin

As he demonstrates in these scenes, Miyazaki knows how to animate modern landscapes. He again focuses on forms that originated in Europe, specifically the British plan for factories and Western European modernism. Therefore, his disclusion of modern architecture from the main settings of the film was a conscious choice. Miyazaki relegates modern architecture to the periphery of cities, distanced from the characters; they only interact with it while in flight and through map-like views. Even Howl's castle, a technological contraption, is relegated to the Wastes, a stigmatized no-man's-land separate from urban life. There is a degree of realism in this clear delineation of space, as cities like Paris feature ordinances against buildings of a certain height in the city center. Following the construction and wide criticism of the modernist Tour Montparnasse in 1973, the government passed a regulation restricting the height of skyscrapers in central Paris. As a result, skyscrapers are largely restricted to La Défense on the western edge of Paris.<sup>[27]</sup> Thus, the inclusion of modern peripheries points to different areas outside of the ones we directly experience. This contributes to the credibility and individuality of Miyazaki's cities. They have neighborhoods with mappable relationships to each other. More importantly, the spaces Miyazaki dwells on reflect his own subjectivity and the lived experiences of the individual characters.

Much like his interpretations of specific historic European cities, Miyazaki's perception of modern architecture simultaneously points to and ameliorates the scars of conflict. Miyazaki was born in 1941 in the midst of World War II. Though the war was both physically and economically disastrous for Japan as a whole, the Miyazaki family profited directly from it. Miyazaki's grandfather founded a successful factory and built a family fortune. During the war, the Miyazaki factory worked on war planes in partnership with the Nakajima Aircraft Factory. From 1944 to 1946, Miyazaki's family moved to his grandfather's estate in Utsunomiya, about sixty miles outside of Tokyo, to be closer to factory operations.<sup>[28]</sup> Though the family was

relatively sheltered at their picturesque escape, they still experienced the firebombing of Utsunomiya on July 12, 1945.<sup>[29]</sup> His family's relative safety during the worst years of World War II in Japan were formative for Miyazaki. He recalls the one to two and a half acre garden on his grandfather's land. Miyazaki and his brother felt like the garden was an endless adventure and spent whole days playing around the garden's waterfalls and pond.<sup>[30]</sup> However, the joy Miyazaki experienced in this sheltered space is accompanied by a sense of guilt over his family's affluence and well-being in a time of national crisis. He recalled fleeing from the bombings and leaving behind a mother and child crying for help:

“The fact that I had been raised comfortably in a family getting rich through munitions at a time when most people were suffering materially and that, in the very midst of people dying, our family was able to escape in a truck when there was almost no gasoline to be had, and that we ended up abandoning people who were begging us to let them on - this a memory that become a firm part of my four-year-old self.”<sup>[31]</sup>

Miyazaki's older brother remembers the incident slightly differently; there was no space for extra people in the van and it may have been a male, childless neighbor who asked for help. Nevertheless, these recollections underscore the formative role of Miyazaki's own trauma and experiences during World War II. Miyazaki's own memories, not only of World War II, but also of his travels in Europe, heavily shape his filmic representations. However, this anecdote highlights the potential dissonance in creating tangible, specific settings from memory.

Both *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* explore the personal tension Miyazaki felt between safety and the threat of war. For Miyazaki, modern war only existed on the periphery of his childhood consciousness. Thus, by foregrounding romantic visions of cities and removing modern architecture, he maps out his own memories of World War II. Further, he villainizes modernity's inextricable tie to war. By making us aware of the lack of modernity in



these landscapes, Miyazaki explores his own guilt and its role within collective Japanese trauma. Accordingly, Miyazaki wove his grandfather's garden of solace into the urban fabrics of the film, particularly in Kiki's and Howl's childhood homes. However, Miyazaki imbues these landscapes with the agency he lacked in his own childhood. Kiki chooses to leave home and seek out discomfort in a big city. Howl decides to stand up against Madame Suliman and thwart wartime attacks. By re-evaluating their personal landscapes, these characters replace the war with their own idealistic views of the world.

Even though *Howl's Moving Castle* centers around a war, Miyazaki depicts it in a selective manner. Planes, mutant wizards, and bombs invade cities and wreak havoc. Miyazaki does not depict human suffering or death. Rather, he focuses on the destruction of cities and buildings. The climax of the film shows Sophie's hometown on fire from enemy bombs while Suliman's blobby henchmen try to break into the hat shop (figures 84 and 85). Sophie highlights the absurdity of the situation, where the army is more interested in personal gains than in helping a city under enemy fire. Sophie's exclamation again highlights burning buildings as the central casualty. Miyazaki does not show human loss and instead includes the effects of war on the urban landscape. Accordingly, throughout the film, Howl flies over burning cities. The individual outlines of buildings are barely visible from Howl's bird's eye views. Miyazaki applies painterly brushstrokes of unusually deep blacks, oranges, and reds to show scorched and burning land (figure 86). These cities convey the total destruction of war through abstracted forms.



Figure 84. The street outside the hat shop on fire



Figure 85. Bombing of Sophie's hometown

*Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* picture the collective trauma of World War II through abstracted and subjective landscapes. In imaging the war through absence and presence, the two films are in dialogue with postwar Japanese photography. In the late 1950s and 1960s, the same period that Miyazaki began his own career, a group of Japanese photographers began to reimage the effects of World War II on Japan. As opposed to creating straight documentary photographs, like the photojournalistic images that emerged immediately after the war, photographers became interested in producing subjective photographs arranged in photo books and magazines.<sup>[32]</sup> Two influential photo books, *Hiroshima-Nagasaki Document* (1961) by Ken Domon and Shomei Tomatsu and *The Map* by Kawada Kikuji (1965), demonstrate these photographers' interest in experimental and unconventional forms of photography (figures 87 and 88). The photographers experimented with expressive printing processes that produce contrasty, grainy images with sooty blacks. Images fill the pages and bleed to the edges.

*Hiroshima-Nagasaki Document* (1961) by Ken Domon and Shomei Tomatsu is a collection of photographs taken in 1960 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Domon and Tomatsu photographed victims of the bombings, as well as specific objects and fragments left behind.<sup>[33]</sup> They include no identifying texts and allow the images to carry the entire narrative of the book. Further, the images are not organized categorically, but connect disparate forms. For example, the two photographers include graphic images of people's radiation-scarred flesh alongside a photograph of a wristwatch which stopped counting time when the bomb exploded. These photographs do not outright show the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Rather, they depict the visceral afterlives of the bombs as "'sense memories'...that operate through the body to produce a kind of seeing truth."<sup>[34]</sup> Domon's and Tomatsu's photographs argue that, whether on the body or mass-produced objects, memory can be imprinted materially.

Like *Hiroshima-Nagasaki Document*, *The Map* explores the physicality of an invisible bomb. Despite its title, Kikuji does not literally map sites of destruction. Rather, he produces a “symbolic documentary.”<sup>[35]</sup> Kikuji begins the book with a photograph of a bombing victim’s scarred back.<sup>[36]</sup> Even more than Domon and Tomastu’s photographs, Kikuji abstracts the body’s form. He follows this initial photograph with images of the scarred “skin” of the Atomic Bomb Dome. Both blistered and peeling, the bodies and land become textured topographical maps. He describes the atomic bomb as a “stain.”<sup>[37]</sup> Thus, he is not representing the bomb itself, but the pervasive and permanent spread of its effects. His photographs, inky and covering the entirety of the pages, resemble stains themselves. As Neil Matheson points out, as they hold the book and examine the photographs, “the reader cannot avoid touching the scarred skin and flaking walls of the image itself.”<sup>[38]</sup> Through these photographs, Kikuji “maps” the spread of trauma across the bombed landscape and into present cultural consciousness.





Figure 86. Howl flying over an bombed-out city

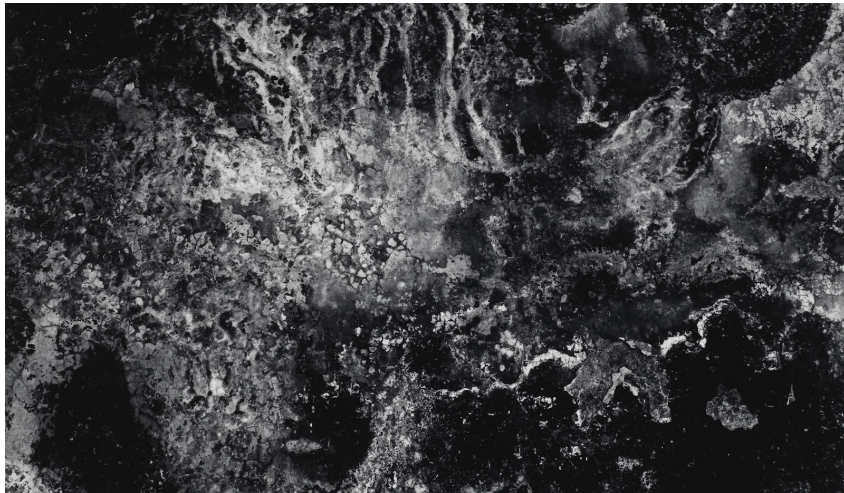


Figure 88. Figure Kikuji Kawada, *The A-Bomb Memorial Dome, Ceiling, Stain and Flaking-Off* (1960-1965)

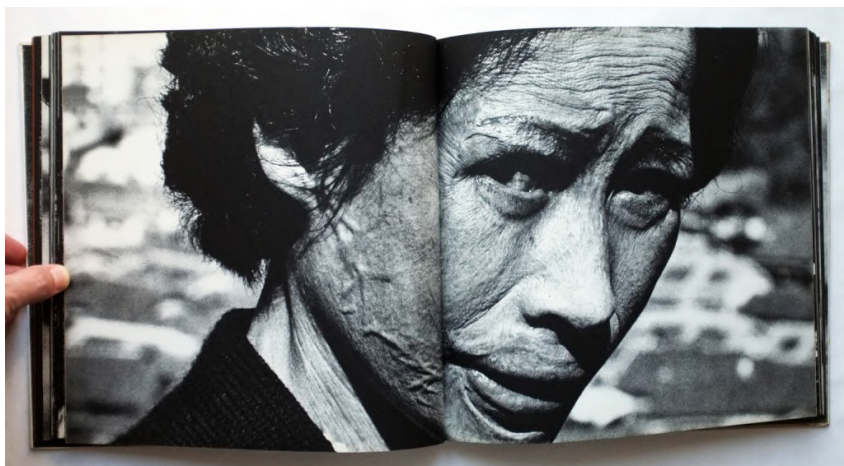


Figure 87. Shomei Tomatsu & Ken Domon, *Hiroshima-Nagasaki Document* (1961)

The atomic bombs obliterated the land where they exploded. In both *Hiroshima-Nagasaki Document* and *The Map*, Japanese photographers examine the ways in which we can memorialize something that has ceased to exist and only lives on in material remnants. In the act of looking at the close-up images, opening fold-out spreads, and turning the pages of the book, Domon, Tomatsu, and Kikuji create a deeply tactile experience. They encourage readers to establish connections across various surfaces and, thus, create a “mapped” experience. As Neil Matheson asserts, photography and film provide similarly optical, multisensory experiences.<sup>[39]</sup> In their ability to capture fleeting movements, movies and photographs mimic both the “freeze-frame” nature of memory and the momentary flash of the atomic bomb.<sup>[40]</sup>

Trauma is experienced through the body. By engaging in embodied filmic and photographic experiences, viewers participate in a “‘ritual’ [that] connects individual experience with collective experience, activating collective memory into the body.”<sup>[41]</sup> In producing an alternate postwar European history, Miyazaki spoke to his own memories and the collective trauma of World War II using a specifically postwar Japanese artistic mindset. Like *Hiroshima-Nagasaki Document* and *The Map*, *Kiki’s Delivery Service* and *Howl’s Moving Castle* ground abstracted versions of reality in tactile experiences. In both Europe and Japan, historic buildings from the very time periods Miyazaki was inspired by were destroyed in bombings of major cities.<sup>[42]</sup> In a sense, Miyazaki’s cities constructs alternatives to these lost spaces. However, if his only goal was to replace what was lost, Miyazaki could have simply recreated a literal version of a specific city in Europe or Japan. Instead, new maps and worlds function as generative stand-ins for the lives, spaces, and structures that were lost in World War II. These structures are not direct replacements of existing structures, but a fabrication of an alternate universe - a world where the war never happened.

Miyazaki states that he is not motivated by personal trauma to make films. Instead, he lumps his individual experiences into part of a larger, universal trauma. Like his photographer contemporaries, Miyazaki speaks about the “scars” of traumatic events and believes they never disappear. He asserts that we each must persevere through trauma.<sup>[43]</sup> Perhaps, then, the creation of new landscapes is Miyazaki’s form of persistence. For Miyazaki, nostalgia for past places, like trauma, is not contained to personal experience. He stated:

“I believe, in fact, that nostalgia is one of the fundamental starting points for most people involved in creating animation. Human history exists in a continuum encompassing both the past and the future, but the moment someone is born into this present instant, into 1978, he or she has lost certain opportunities or possibilities, including the chance to be born in other ages. Yet we can still enjoy ourselves in different fantasy worlds. And this yearning for other, lost possibilities may also be a major motivator for those of us in the industry.”<sup>[44]</sup>

Unlike other definitions of nostalgia, Miyazaki’s definition transcends a longing for his own past experiences. For Miyazaki, nostalgia is ahistorical and idealist. Through these films, Miyazaki establishes connections across cities, historical events, and cultural differences. Miyazaki drew physical inspiration from European cities and psychological inspiration from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is important to note that Europe and Japan, particularly Hiroshima and Nagasaki, experienced very different levels of destruction. In European cities, there was nearly always the ability to recover damaged spaces. Further, the locations that Miyazaki pulls from were largely unscathed by the war. However, Hiroshima and Nagasaki were totally wiped out. While Miyazaki’s cities are informed by a nostalgia for lost places, they recognize the inability to truly reconstruct what is lost. In abstracting war but maintaining tactile settings, Miyazaki allows

viewers to inhabit an alternate reality. The cities write a utopian history, fueled by a longing for a world without war.



## CLOSING



Figure 89. Kiki holding map over Koriko

In *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle*, place is constantly contested. In both their narratives and visual representations of space, the films depict characters who grapple with the landscapes around them. Miyazaki's characters walk, fly, and travel through cities and across different locations (figure 89). While this movement may seem intuitive, Miyazaki reminds us of the difficulties of interacting with the urban landscape. Kiki, Sophie, and Howl all directly interact with the surrounding architecture. Kiki constantly grazes city streets and bounces off buildings as she flies through Koriko (figure 90). Similarly, Sophie crashes into a cupola in Kingsbury, leaving Howl with a torn shirt and a gash in his back (figure 91). In these moments of unpleasant physical contact with architecture, Miyazaki gives the city tactile weight. Similarly, Miyazaki takes the time to depict the processes of cleaning interior space. When both Kiki and Sophie arrive in their new homes, they scrub the floors and dust the cobweb-filled ceilings. It is not until they have completed these tasks that these spaces truly belong to them.<sup>[45]</sup> Whether on city streets or in their own homes, the characters must negotiate their relationships to the city to make it their own.



Figure 90. Kiki bouncing off a cupola in Koriko while flying with a heavy package



Figure 91. Sophie crashing into a cupola while learning to fly

The settings in *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle* are in constant flux. Characters not only constantly change place, but also actively modify their surroundings. Even when they establish permanent homes, these spaces are disrupted. Miyazaki mitigates the seeming permanence of his precisely rendered architecture by also animating the collapse of these spaces. Once Kiki establishes a successful business model and creates a sense of place, she suddenly loses her ability to fly. While her concern is entirely unfounded, Kiki worries that losing her flying delivery business will cause Osono to not let her stay in the room above the bakery. Sophie witnesses even more literal transformations as the castle shapeshifts in the last scenes of the film. Sophie, Howl, and Miyazaki bend, contort, and collapse the castle they have so attentively created. The castle audibly groans and bursts at the seams as Howl expands the living space (figure 92). It again twists and collapses inward when Sophie takes Califer out of the central hearth (figure 93). In these moments, Miyazaki expresses the instability and fallacy of fixed locations. These environments face momentary destruction and emerge in new, changed forms.





Figure 92. Howl and Calcifer expand the castle



Figure 93. Howl's castle twisting inward as it collapses



Figure 94. Empty building behind The Great Wizard Jenkins facade in Port Haven



The character's active challenges in creating, losing, and interacting with their environments mirror Miyazaki's own filmmaking process. Through the analogue process of cel animation, Miyazaki and his staff render detailed settings filled with minute details and specific architectural references. Just as his characters use magic to move through space, Miyazaki effortlessly transcends architectural and historical boundaries in his animated cities. He creates places that seem locatable and inhabitable, but simultaneously reveals their inconsistencies and transience. When Madame Suliman's army tries to apprehend Howl, they barge into his supposed homes in both Port Haven and Kingsbury. However, they stumble into empty, crumbling spaces (figure 94). Without their magic connection to the castle, these spaces are merely elaborate, disconnected facades.

Through his paradoxical sense of place(less)ness, Miyazaki grapples with the collective sense of loss experienced during World War II. Miyazaki's twisting, shifting, and empty structures recall the shells of exploding and bombed-out cities. However, unlike real war ruins, these sites can and are reconstructed without scars. The final scene of *Howl's Moving Castle*, for example, shows a reincarnated castle. There is no shortage of material on themes of cultural recovery in Miyazaki's films, particularly *Spirited Away* and *My Neighbor Totoro*.<sup>7</sup> At first, the same nostalgia for the recreation of past worlds seems to be at play in *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Howl's Moving Castle*. Miyazaki's creations offer a way of coping and recovering what was lost in the war. But, how can a culture be recovered if there is no one unanimous culture loss at stake? Thus, Miyazaki does not simply communicate a longing for a singular time or place before World War II. Rather, he criticizes war violence by constructing an alternative history where war is actively resisted and avoided.

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<sup>7</sup> Susan Napier's scholarship on Miyazaki in particular focuses on cultural recovery. For further reading see:

"Matter of Place: Carnival, Containment, and Cultural Recovery in Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*," *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Summer 2006): 287-310.

Miyazaki explained that “anime may depict fictional worlds, but I nonetheless believe that at its core it must have a certain realism. Even if the world depicted is a lie, the trick is to make it seem as real as possible.”<sup>[46]</sup> Miyazaki knows the settings of *Kiki’s Delivery Service* and *Howl’s Moving Castle* are tricks. Laughing, he states that “the European audience can see it’s all mixed up, but most Japanese thought it was just a town in Europe. I deceived them beautifully.”<sup>[47]</sup> Even if European audiences can distinguish the inconsistent locations in the films, this knowledge illuminates the kinds of memories and nostalgia at play. Miyazaki relies on his audiences being deceived and confused. Miyazaki is idealistic. He describes memories and pictures, rather than field drawings or preliminary sketches, of real life locations. He creates visually rich landscapes that allow viewers to luxuriate in sites of childlike wonder. By tricking us into believing what we are unbelievable landscapes, Miyazaki creates a utopian reality. He frees himself from the binaries of Europe or Japan, war or no war, real or unreal. The films are liminal spaces, which address the dark themes of death and destruction in World War II through childlike, embodied forms.

And wouldn’t we all like to inhabit these worlds?

## ENDNOTES

Hayao Miyazaki, dir. *Kiki's Delivery Service*. 1989; Studio Ghibli/GKids, 2017. DVD.

Hayao Miyazaki, dir. *Howl's Moving Castle*. 2004; Studio Ghibli/Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2006. DVD.

[1] Jonathan Ellis, "The art of anime: Freeze-frames and moving pictures in Miyazaki Hayao's *Kiki's Delivery Service*," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2010): 22.

[2] Hayao Miyazaki, dir. "Creating Kiki's Delivery Service," *Kiki's Delivery Service*. 1989; Studio Ghibli/GKids, 2017. DVD.

[3] Hayao Miyazaki, dir. "Creating Kiki's Delivery Service," *Kiki's Delivery Service*. 1989; Studio Ghibli/GKids, 2017. DVD.

[4] *The Art of Kiki's Delivery Service*, ed. by Studio Ghibli (San Francisco: VIZ Media, 2018), 11.

[5] *The Art of Howl's Moving Castle*, ed. by Studio Ghibli (San Francisco: VIZ Media, 2018), 12.

[6] Eiko Kadono, "Chapter 3: Kiki in the Big City," *Kiki's Delivery Service*, trans. Lynne E. Riggs (Toronto, New York, and Vancouver: Annick Press, 2003).

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## APPENDIX

### AKA MIYAZAKI & MY FRIENDS: A VISUAL STUDY



Kiki & Cassie (me!)



Tombo & Eilif





Ursula & Hannah



Howl & Massimo