Limited Animation, Unlimited Seriality: The Configurations of the Serial in the Anime Series *Haha o Tazunete Sanzenri, Akage no An* and *Tanoshî Mûmin Ikka*

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This paper aims to address a particular form of seriality associated with 'classic' Japanese anime series. At first glance, these programmes seem to be overly accurate and uninspiring adaptations of classic children's books. A typical and defining example of this would be the 1974 anime series *Arupusu no Shōjo Haiji* which as *Heidi* made it as one of the first animated programmes from Japan to German television in the 1970s. It will point to a close coupling of aesthetics and narration that produces its own temporality, which can be captured with terms and approaches of so-called *limited animation*. *Limited animation* is at the same time thought of as the starting point of an 'unlimited seriality', as an intensification of the serial or as a purist form of serial narration. *Limited animation*, however, also contains stasis, a stretching of time and interruptions, as the following three examples will make clear.

Haha o Tazunete Sanzenri

This Japanese anime series from 1976 known as *From the Apenines to the Andes*, broadcast in Germany under the title *Marco* in the 1980s, is characterized by an excessive form of expansiveness. The literary model is a short novella of about

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40 pages by the Italian author Edmondo de Amicis, published in 1886 in the then very popular but now mostly forgotten novella collection *Cuore*.[1] In tells the story of a boy from Genoa looking for his mother who has emigrated to Argentina. In Nippon Animation's version, directed by Isao Takahata and with background art by Hayao Miyazaki, not only is the search extended to quite a few episode: It takes 14 of the 52 episodes for Marco to even set out on the journey. That relatively few pages are extended to 52 episodes here not only means that a lot has to be added in the anime series version of the book, but also explains a particular perspective on the everyday that comes with not having to shorten plots. Thus, Marco is shown taking on various jobs to earn money for his poor family. The performance of the jobs (delivering mail, cleaning bottles) sometimes takes up entire episodes. An important role is also played by collages of cityscapes and landscapes, which also fill a great deal of time and are not intended to show connections between scenes, but help to constitute a space of their own in the narrative. Miyazaki, who would later found Studio Ghibli with Takahata, made studies on a trip to Italy for drawing the backgrounds, which he also did travelling to Switzerland in his collaboration on the *Heidi* series 2 years earlier.[2] Miyazaki stresses that in both series it was important for him to depict the reality of the time. In *Arupusu no Shōjo Haiji* it was the mountain landscapes and everyday life of the alpine world, and in *Haha o Tazunete Sanzenri* he took an interest in the process of industrialization and change in the reality of the urban population in the nineteenth century.[3] Creating backgrounds to montage sequence of still images is an important aspect of the aesthetics of anime, which goes back to the close relationship between television anime and manga.[4] In this case, the design of the backgrounds as still images also intensifies the approach to the everyday, but it seems to come at the expense of a narrative dynamic: This series dwells on countless incidental details.

Happy Moomin Family

Tanoshî Mûmin Ikka (Japan 1990) by Hiroshi Saitóh, published in Germany under the title *Die Mumins*, represents a film adaptation of Tove Jansson's stories that is faithful to the work of the Swedish speaking Finnish author. It was more strongly

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[1] De Amicis (1947).

[2] Lamarre (2009) p. 58.

[3] Miyazaki (2009) p. 330.

[4] Cf. Steinberg (2012) p. 74.

geared towards transmedia exploitation strategies than *Marco* and contributed to the popularity of the characters from the Mumins universe in Japan.[5] The 52 episodes of the German version represents the accidental product of ZDF's purchasing policy, as there are other episodes in the Japanese version that were never aired in Germany. *Tanoshî Mûmin Ikka* does not actually tell an ongoing story as a whole, but refers to several novel-like collections of stories in a series of individual volumes, some of which show traces of narrative progression.[6] The series is nevertheless an example of a very peculiar serial order: it is oriented towards the rhythm of the seasons, with stories set in winter and dealing with the annual hibernation of the Moomin family, with stories about the dawning of spring, summer and autumn, and the annual farewell and return of characters such as Snufkin. This programme thus offers an extremely flexible, open model of serialization, which, like the other objects discussed here, seems to be immune to a televisual order of the episodic, to the division into segments and the rhythmic composition of climaxes within and at the end of episodes. It tells its stories in the way that is demanded, to put it briefly, by the original stories and the characters that appear in them. This order is consistent with the nature of the Moomins, who are biological life forms, subject to the changing of the seasons and who, with minor exceptions, become inactive in winter. The early airings of *Tanoshî Mûmin Ikka* actually still adhered very closely to the weekly rhythm and distribution over a year, which suits this series very well. The Moomins are inert creatures and the equally inert, slow narrative style is in sync with the Japanese animation style, even though *Tanoshî Mûmin Ikka is* not really a representative of limited animation, the characteristics of which are much more pronounced in *Haha o Tazunete Sanzenri*. But both series avoid drama, preferring to describe gradual processes of steady change. For example, episode 9 "The Invisible Child" tells the story of orphan Ninny. She is given over to the care of the Moomin family because the unloving behavior and sarcasm of a relative who had taken her in has left her shy and literally invisible. With the Moomins, she recovers and slowly becomes more confident and courageous, which is traced in great detail as a process of gradually becoming visible. The deserted space of the image of this absent character can also be understood as an effect of this slow narrative form associated with Japanese anime series. Most series favor distinct state changes (like drama series), have them occur episodically (like in sitcom), or have

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[5] Clements, McCarthy (2015) p. 547.

[6] The original version of this collections of stories was published as *Trollkarlens Hatt* in 1948 in Swedish. An English version was published in 1950 as *Finn Family Moomintroll*. Some chapters from this volume are adapted and arranged in the series in a similar way.

them occur constantly (like in soap opera). In contrast to these dominant expressions of sericality there aren't necessarily many series that can really trace gradual processes and changes as well as *Tanoshî Mûmin Ikka*.

Akage no An

The final example that will be examined in more detail in this paper also highlights the tendency towards immobility of this narrative form. The first episodes of the anime series *Akage no An* (JP 1979), an adaptation of Lucy Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, broadcast in Germany under the title *Anne mit den roten Haaren* and also released on DVD, feature very little narrative progression per episode and are predominantly about how orphan Anne (mistakenly) ends up with sibling Matthew and Marilla on the Green Gables farm in eastern Canada at the end of the nineteenth century. The first episode shows Matthew preparing to pick up an orphan at the train station in a carriage and his irritation at the station that it is not a boy but a girl. It ends with a long—indeed a very long—carriage ride back to their farm. This carriage ride, its slow, unhurried rhythm enriched only by the lively child's many tales, extends to the second episode, in which Anne finally arrives at the farm, meets the stern Marilla, and spends a first night there. The next day, Anne, who Marilla feels cannot be used as a worker on the farm, is driven back to the orphanage, but this time by Marilla. This ride back is again extended to two full episodes, which the series uses to have Anne tell her life story. After arriving at the orphanage, Marilla decides to keep the unusual but exhausting child, and episode 6 finally shows Anne being brought back by carriage.

This redundancy and slowness becomes apparent in comparison to how the evolution of film language is often told. It is based on the development of editing that conveys sequences of movement, connections and transitions, but condenses them into the necessary number of shots. Film scholar Thomas Elsaesser refers to *Rescued by Rover* (GB 1905) as an example for this evolution and as an early representative of the cinema of narrative integration that presents the little journey of a dog briefly and comprehensibly in short shots. However, he also points out that this development of an economic form of narration is unfinished, as the film repeats these sequences of shots in almost exactly the same order as the dog's returns on his rescue mission of a stolen baby.[7] These repetitions place the film in a primitive form of cinema, what has been defined as a cinema of showing vs. telling, or, to use

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[7]Cf. Elsaesser (2002) p. 83 f.

another concept, a cinema of attractions, in which spectacular views (of a city and its various milieus visible along the way) and spectacular movements (of a dog) are more important than narrative efficiency.[8] *Akage no An* might similarly be considered primitive, as the series stretches and repeats what could be briefly summarized and edited together. It doesn't even gain anything in this stretching, since it can't simply film a few nature views inexpensively, as live-action series do, then show them at length and fill time with them. After all, the many nature views that are stitched together but never repeated must all be equally painstakingly drawn. Realism in anime and animation is always a laboriously constructed realism that lacks immediate access to a pre-filmic reality.

It may become apparent that we are indeed not dealing with redundancy and a sparse form of narration. For the impression of redundancy only arises from the fact that this retelling of the first episodes is on the level of a pure summary of content and still has little to say about the images, their composition and their temporality. In this case, the coupling of content with recurrent stylistic features of this animated series is interesting: there is little movement in the images themselves, and if there is such a thing as dynamism, it is generated by the montage, image composition and the auditory level, the sound of horses' hooves and the carriage. Sound design always plays a very important role in this type of series and leads to a peculiar form of realism or realistic staging: The soundtrack—music, noises, dialogue—as Daniel Kothenschulte elaborates, is very lovingly and precisely designed in series like *Arupusu no Shōjo Haiji*, also to compensate for the apparent stasis and lack of movement in the setting.[9] Sophisticated and intricately designed backgrounds also play a crucial role.[10] They evoke the impression of landscape paintings and watercolors, intensify an emotional relationship between the viewers and the characters, and replace the lack of movement in the images with a movement of the viewers through the images. The montage of backgrounds and landscape images establish connections to Anne and, in this case, mostly accentuate the longing and transfiguring view of an idyll in which the girl hopes to find a home.

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[8]Cf. ibid.

[9]Kothenschulte (2008) p. 56.

[10]Nieder (2008) p. 104.

The 'Unlimited Seriality' of the Television Anime of the *World Masterpiece Theatre*

Akage no An and *Haha o Tazunete Sanzenri* are part of a series of animated programmes produced annually under the title *World Masterpiece Theatre* by Nippon Animation since 1975 and broadcast on one of Japan's major channels Fuji TV.[11] These programs were created in the wake of the great success of the anime adaptation of *Heidi* as *Arupusu no Shōjo Haiji.*[12] This series of productions adapted great works of European and American children's literature in the form of animation, spanning 50 or 52 episodes, until 1996. Originally sponsored by soft drink manufacturer Calpis, the series began in 1975 with *Dog of Flanders* and went on to adapt such diverse works as *Tom Sawyer*, *Little Women*, *Rascal the Raccoon*, and *The Sound of Music.*[13]

The annual rhythm of mostly 52 episodes, which the German airing of *Tanoshî Mûmin Ikka* also follows, although it is not part of the *World Masterpiece Theatre series*, establishes, as is often the case with series, a contingent order that affects the form of the adaptation and thus represents a typical feature of television seriality. However, this is neither a miniseries, nor a typical season length of two dozen or so episodes, nor the endlessness of a soap opera. This format, which has similarities to the narrative progression of a serial, mainly gives the show a lot of time to tell its stories and defer the endings. For many, especially viewers in Europe, *World Masterpiece Theatre* series have been the first contact with Japanese anime series, but often without awareness of their origin,[14] although these series offered a completely new viewing experience of accurate but still plesasurable adaptations of works of children's extended to a large number of episodes.[15]The programmes became a staple of German public television in the 1980s and 1990s,[16] which was a good way for the broadcasters to fill a lot of airtime with relatively cheap programmes.[17]

The literary adaptations are rather ambitious works, accordingly the *World Masterpiece Theatre* had a great importance in the Japanese animation industry

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[11]Clements, McCarthy (2015) p. 932.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Treese (2007) p. 14.

[15]Göhlen (2008) p. 237.

[16]Ibid., p. 236 f.

[17]Ibid., p. 236.

and enjoyed, for example, high esteem among the cartoonists involved compared to other productions: "[. . .] many animators regarded WMT as the only work really worth doing."[18] The importance of this series is also evident from the fact that acclaimed anime artists such as Takahata and Miyazaki, who was later very critical of television anime,[19] were involved in the production. Miyazaki in fact took inspiration from World Masterpiece Theatre programmes for his first anime in the 1980s.[20] The importance of these series also has to do with the relationships many viewers have with their media childhood. Authors such as Daniel Kohtenschulte fondly describe the intense memories of series such as *Kimba—Der weiße Löwe* (*Janguru Taitei*, English title: *Kimba, The White Lion*) and *Heidi* as programs that seemed to come out of nowhere and were not yet associated with Japan or the genre of anime.[21] This article shares the same enthusiasm and starts from the view that this is not just a nostalgic, sentimental memory of old children's series: The intensity of the memory also has to do with the contributions these series made to the concept of television seriality.

The fact that *Akage no An*, for example, takes 50 episodes to tell the first novel in the *Anne of Green Gables* series by Lucy Maude Montgomery, published in 1908, in anime form, not only means a series time of about 1250 min (which the DVD advertises on its cover). It also leads to a very precise, seemingly less standardized and paced way of filming literary originals, which creates a peculiar rhythm. It remains a serial narrative, but it progresses very slowly, yet avoids any appeal to the episodic, which probably challenges the patience of many recipients.

At first glance, this narrative form seems naïve, ponderous, and spare. The narration drags along to fill 50 episodes, it seems to be based on efficiently translating every line of the original into moving images approaching the condition of immobility. In fact, there's a great contrast between adapting a literary work into a feature film, which is always looking to tighten and condense the plot and draw out the essence of a book, and the expansive serializing of *Akage no An* into a television series of 50 episodes that can take all the time in the world to put all the words into its audiovisual equivalent. It doesn't have to spend time selecting and identifying the essential moments of a work. At first glance, it doesn't seem like the original is being interpreted or adapted in any way at all. There's also no noticeable effort to establish cliffhanger structures. Movements and development tend to be

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[18]Clements, McCarthy (2015) p. 932.

[19]Cf. Miyazaki (2009) p. 76.

[20]Lamarre (2009) p. 57.

[21]Kothenschulte (2008) p. 56.

interrupted by each episode. Instead, an off-screen voiceover attempts to create a small moment of suspense when a preview of the next episode is offered at the end of each episode. But this preview rarely has much to do with the upcoming episode or just picks out a few events that aren't essential to it—more like mock cliffhangers that create false expectations. These aspects sum up a naive form of narration and seriality that seems disorganized and lacking in dynamism. But it can also be thought of as a consistent abstraction of seriality, a pure form of steady advancement that pays no heed to the order and rhythm of television and its segmented nature. This type of series avoids the schemata of televisual formatting and allows the original story alone to impose its form on the audiovisual text. In the process, however, other serial regimes emerge, which have their origins in forms of representation that are closely linked to the Japanese anime industry and which will be presented in more detail here.

These aesthetic regimes of the Japanese anime series from the *World Masterpiece Theatre* series are to be defined here as the concept of limited animation, in order to make it clear that this seriality is not only manifested in how the story is told (how quickly or how slowly, for example), but that this seriality also reveals itself in the aesthetics, the images, the montage and the sounds. Story, plot, narration, aesthetic form and seriality enter into a close but also unusual relationship. This is not a seriality of progression, nor one of repetition and variation, creating the familiar and unfamiliar in equal measure, but rather a seriality of stretching, of steady progress, of continuous but undramatic change. It should be described here as an unlimited seriality because it does not allow itself to be limited by the specifications of television; it avoids the schemata of the serial as repetition.

Limited Animation and Seriality

This unlimited seriality is closely linked to the concept of *limited animation*, which characterizes many, but not all, aspects of Japanese animation culture. Thomas Lamarre describes *limited animation* as an alternative aesthetic of the generation of movement in which movement results from, among other things, its combination of seemingly static images, or in which only a few elements in a single image are moved: "What remains to be noted is that in *limited animation* movement is shifted, on the one hand, to movement between images and, on the other, to movement between the planes of an image."[22] Basically, *limited animation* is about reducing

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[22]Lamarre (2008) p. 112.

the number of frames to be drawn for cheaper production on television, so instead of the approximately 24 frames in cinematic representations, and the 12 frames per second common in classical animation, animation is reduced to 8 frames per second or less, which prevents fluid impressions of movement.[23] However, *limited animation* applies techniques to compensate for the apparent lack of motion impression. Lamarre mentions, among other things, frequent changes of setting and the montage of static images, the animation of only one part of the face or only one element in the image, movement created by shifting the slides, the emphasis on dialogue and soundtrack, which can also be staged more intensely because *limited animation* dispenses with synchronicity with lip movements. However, this is not just a more efficient form of animation born out of necessity and lack of money. Lamarre refers to the Japanese animation theorist Mori Takuji, who points out that *limited animation* was first used in experimental film before it appeared on television.[24] Above all, Lamarre emphasizes that this aesthetic, following Deleuze's examination of the movement image and the time image, can be thought of as an alternative treatment of cinematic images that creates new spaces and times, but also new perceptions, and can point to a crisis of the action image in which the actions of the protagonists come to a halt or movements seem to become uncontrollable and explosive.[25] Thus affects and emotions become representable in a state of inactivity.[26] This means that anime finds dynamic representations for the ambivalence and inactivity of their protagonists, that the narration and animation allow themselves to let nothing happen or to give themselves time to express emotional states.

Steinberg also points to a potential of *limited animation*, as opposed to 'full animation', to create impressions of movement through immobility, primarily through the composition of a montage of images and a rhythmic alternation between the unmoving and the moving.[27] Steinberg's work seeks to explore transmedia dynamics, which he connects to the context of the birth of anime and *limited animation*. The rationale behind the design principles of *limited animation* is closely linked to the work of Tezuka Osamu, who is known as a manga artist, for experimental animated films, and for television series such as *Tetsuwan Atomu* (*Astroboy*) or *Janguru Taitei* (Eng. title *Kimba, the White Lion*). The founding myth of the Japanese variation of *limited animation* can be told as follows: Osamu wanted to

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[23] Ibid., p. 108.

[24] Ibid., p. 111.

[25] Ibid., p. 116.

[26] Ibid., p. 118.

[27] Steinberg (2012) p. 5.

produce an animated series for television with *Tetsuwan Atomu* in the 1960s, but the deal with a network offered him far too limited resources for the endeavor. Therefore, he not only applied the procedures of *limited animation* already known from American cartoon productions of UPA,[28] but coupled this procedure with manga aesthetics and developed strategies that made it possible to link advertising, merchandise and anime, which Steinberg calls the birth of the Japanese media mix: "The drawn image of Atomu [...] enabled a convergence of media and objects around it and contributed to the formation of a particularly systematic image-thing network around anime."[29] The *limited animation* provided the rationale for the collaboration with a Japanese chocolate producer that ultimately ensured the anime's success. But this collaboration was based on the specific transmedia qualities of anime, already revealed in the fact that it has a very close bond with the aesthetics of manga and its montage of different points of view.[30] There is already movement in the sequencing of immobile images of the manga that anticipates the principle of montage in anime. All these developments, such as the reduction of movement already named by Lamarre, the montage of different shots of rooms and faces, the sliding of planes of images, but also the looping of movement and the drawing on 'cell banks', an archive of already used images, leads to a "moving stillness economy" that not only makes it possible to reduce the 18,000 drawing needed for 25 min of an episode to an astonishing 1500.[31] The reduction and abstraction also creates the foundations for not only creating transmedia connections between the manga and anime, but also for creating an alternative representation of movement, thus expanding the possibilities of audiovisual representations. The characters of the anime, such as *Tetsuwan Atomu*, are thus given an existence that no longer limits them to the anime and that spills over into everyday life. Steinberg's intention is not only to make clear that Astroboy was able to acquire an omnipresence in reality through the clever cooperation with the chocolate company and its products, but also that the possibilities of transmedial exploitation in merchandise are also based on aesthetic properties of manga and anime and the design of *Tetsuwan Atomu*, which, for example, produces the property of 'stickerability': Astroboy lends itself to becoming a sticker, giving all items it is stuck to the exact same property that the character possesses in the anime. His movement frozen into a pose is the same movement on a sticker as it is in the

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[28]cf. Lamarre (2009) p. 188.

[29]Steinberg (2012) p. 39.

[30]Ibid., p. 9 f.

[31]Ibid., p. 16.

anime, thus continuing its existence outside of the anime. The sticker gives the character mobility and portability, it makes the character attachable so that it can transform other surfaces into the surface of the anime, and it thus naturally makes the character ubiquitous.[32]

Lamarre also refers to this aspect of a transmedial connection between the world and anime when he speaks in *The Anime Machine* of a power of the audiovisual objects of anime that generate perceptions and affects in the viewers in a variety of ways. He claims that the special expression of movement and the resulting affects of a dynamic relationship between things and people are the reason for the diverse activities of the recipients such as 'cosplay', 'dojinshi' (fan fiction) or 'fansubbing'.[33]

Lamarre names another aspect that marks a difference between *full animation* and *limited animation*, which he illustrates with a scene from *Tenkū no Shiro Rapyuta* (*The Castle in the Sky*, Japan 1986) by Miyazaki. Lamarre speaks of the quality of 'animetism' that is found whenever *limited animation* fundamentally deals with image and movement in a different way. 'Animetism' is revealed, for example, in an "open compositing" the creation of movement by moving slides.[34] The moving of layers thus creates an irritation and deviation from a live-action film design that cannot resort to this means, but it also creates a sense of openness. The film does not pull the viewers immersively into the film, but the film opens up to the viewers through clouds that are pulled apart on the layers *in The Castle in the Sky*:

> While the view is supremely panoramic, the sequence is not constructed to impart a sense of moving into the image world. There is a sense of a world opening up, a world with various layers that invite exploration...and awe.[35]

In addition to this opening, Lamarre names another effect of the uncontrolled and unpredictable, which results precisely from the fact that anime very often offers moments of stasis, but also explosive movements that can suddenly arise in intense montage sequences independently of a movement of the characters and refer to their

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[32] Ibid., p. 79 f.

[33] Lamarre (2009) p. XIII.

[34] "Animetism begins when you allow some degree of play or openness to appear between the layers of the image, or when you flatten the layers to make them look and feel like a single layer. Animetism puts less emphasis on compositing the image tightly, on hiding the gaps between the different layers of the image as the camera (or viewing position) moves." Cf. Ibid.: p. 37.

[35] Ibid., p. 38.

inner states.[36] Animation thus creates the movement of the unmoving, which brings about a different temporality of anime.

What are the effects of *limited animation* on the serial narrative that characterizes the anime examined here? The first thing to note is that Lamarre, referring to the film philosophy of Deleuze, tends to associate *limited animation* with the time image, while *full animation* is assigned to classical cinema and the movement image.[37] This strict classification is softened somewhat by Lamarre himself when, for example, he identifies in Miyazaki's work an interplay between the processes of *limited animation* and *full animation*, which enter into a dialogue in his work.[38] This dialogue is also found in *Akage no An*, for example, in a sequence of scenes in episode 48. The precise depiction of the movement of a cow and its calf in a meadow is followed by a scene full of immobility when panning over the unmoving faces of the mourners at a funeral.

In its strongest form, *limited animation* actually leads to a complete immobility and a new image regime. *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, produced by the studio Gainax in the 1990s, is an extreme form of *limited animation* in television series. The last episode of this series which can be assigned to the Mecha genre, offers a reduced therapy-like setting where the main character Shinji is confronted with his past. There is no activity in this depleted space, instead there is a wild montage of still images where icons and words, abstract patterns of lines and sketches and outlines for the storyboard are incorporated into the anime. Dani Cavallaro regards this scene as an embodiment of a "Beckettian minimalism" that takes an extreme form of stylization. She interprets the hero's immobility not only as an embodiment of his ambivalence, but also as conveying the emotions and traumata of a generation paralyzed by the Kobe earthquake, the economic crisis, or the terrorist attacks of the Aum Shinriko cult.[39] Supposedly, another reason for this extreme form of *limited animation* is credited to the fact that the production ran out of funds to lavishly animate the finale. What emerges, however, is a very idiosyncratic interpretation of movement, stasis and seriality, which Lamarre describes as follows:

> [...] the action image opens up from within, exploding into anxiety, uncertainty, disorientation, and also reverie, recollection, love, and confidence. But for this to happen you must first lose all sense of where this character is going and even of where the series is going. The action image is not only stretched out, it becomes populated

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[36] Lamarre (2008) p. 114.

[37] Lamarre (2009) p. 186.

[38] Ibid., p. 189 f.

[39] Cavallaro (2007) p. 69 f.

with affective response, mood swings, and emotional values. We are then shocked into thought and remembrance.[40]

This quote points out a different regime of time and image in anime, which can be used to express something specific and to charge the single image with meaning regardless of movement, action and progression. A common but limited understanding of seriality as a complexity that results from a psychological depth of the characters revealed in the narrative progression of delicately build story arcs are thus redefined to include the possibility of stasis, of ending, or a radical and crude slowness that the television anime may offer unlike any other form of seriality. This potential unfolds not only in *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, which holds a special place in anime culture as a cult series, but also in a series like *Akage no An* and other representatives of a genre of slow and hyper-accurate literary adaptations that assiduously translate page after page into animation. It is the mechanism of anime production or 'animetism' described by Lamarre that inscribes itself in these images, that finds other solutions to the arrangement of images in anime and thus modifies their serial patterns. In extreme cases, these stylistic operations question the very existence of the series. The differences to 'common' forms of televisual seriality are to be addressed on several levels in the context of *Akage no An*.

Rhythm

Referring to anime series such as *Mitsubachi Māya No Bōken (engl. Title: Maya the Honey Bee)* or *Arupusu no Shōjo Haiji*, Daniel Kothenschulte points to the staging of a tension between opulence and restriction as a defining characteristic of anime aesthetic.[41] Restriction is evident, for example, in the immobility of a single image, opulence in the care given to the sound design and music. The alternation that results from this dialectic establishes a perceptible rhythm to the individual anime. In Omar Calabrese's engagement with seriality as an expression of a neo-baroque aesthetics, Rhythm represents an important moment of the serial. He identifies this rhythm not only in the variation of recurring patterns, but also in a neo-baroque virtuosity that is not concerned with a single organizing principle:

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[40]Lamarre (2009) p. 199.

[41]Kothenschulte (2008) p. 59.

> In every art virtuosity consists in the total flight from a central organizing principle, by means of a closely knit network of rules, towards a vast polycentric combination and a system based on its transformations.[42]

Series differ in the way they organize sequences, what they repeat and retell, which static and which continuous moments they have. They have a rhythm that is perceptible and imprinted on the viewers, but also conditions them, and which is described in series production, as Linda Williams puts it, with the concept of the 'beat':

> When writers create a television script for any network television single-episode series, their first task is to 'break' the story into a moment-by-moment outline (or 'beat-sheet') constituting a series of moments that yield a typical rhythm of six beats before each commercial.[43]

Creating a familiar rhythm is only one possibility of serial composition. Calabrese emphasizes the moment of a "regulated irregularity", which is connected with a baroque understanding of virtuosity. It is not about creating the familiar with the serial repetition, but the unfamiliar.[44] Calabrese supports an understanding that does not teleologically examine how, for example, the episodic series develops into an ongoing series or narrative chronologies are quantitatively enlarged by focusing on more and more characters, but rather how different rhythms are discernible in each series, which can often be decoupled from what is being told.

Akage no An has a rhythm, which can also be experienced as such because the anime seems to tell so little and so slowly. Above all, the anime series has a 'different' rhythm that is not common to television, because this order differs from an order of segmentation and sequencing of the plot that is typical of television[45] and which suits so well to the production logics of following a 'beat-sheet' mentioned by Williams. From segmentation follows an alternation between different story levels, which establishes a familiar rhythm in many series. But the arrangement of scenes in Akage no An destroys such a rhythm and the anticipation of a familiar arrangement of shots. The episodes discussed, in which the process of a journey by carriage is extended to more than one episode, can no longer be explained by the segmented and serial order of television; it follows a different

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[42]Calabrese (1992) p. 40.

[43]Williams (2018) p. 179.

[44]Calabrese (1992) p. 43.

[45]Cf. Ellis (2001).

logic, such as the most detailed adaptation of the original literary work and the extension of a few actions and descriptions to a maximum of series time.

I will refer to a sequence of about one minute from the second episode of *Akage no An* to illustrate how this peculiar rhythm is created. Although *limited animation* seems to imply an efficient design that attempts to operate with repetition of drawings to save time and money, it should become clear with this description of a list of shots that there is no repetition since each shot is a new shot, if sometimes only minimally: The view of the carriage obscured by trees in a forest (1), Matthew and Anne on the carriage (2), a flock of birds against a cloudy blue sky (3), a pan from the sky to a forest path lost in the horizon (4), Anne and Matthew on the carriage drawn from a greater distance (5), the carriage from behind (6), the carriage on a bridge from the front (7), a wheel of a carriage in an isolated shot (8), Anne and Matthew on the carriage, in a shot similar to the second, but still taking a different point of view (9), the carriage on a bridge from the side from some distance framed by a flowering tree (10), and then a composition of five isolated shots with views of nature, which at the end are coupled to Anne's gaze and are intended to make it clear that she sees her home in the Green Gables farm and the nature surrounding it (Fig. 1).

Similar compositions of views can also be found in *Marco.* with arrangements of shots in which there is sometimes more, often less, and some times no movement at all, and which above all have nothing alternating or repetitive about them. Through the arrangement of the animated (mobile) and non-animated (immobile) shots, and in the minimal variation of these shots, a specific rhythm is created that seems highly organized and in a strange way both redundant and familiar, and non-redundant and unfamiliar. What at first glance seems like a stretching of time and efficient use of repetition actually follows no familiar pattern other than its own and that of many other unwiedly told stories in anime series. This difference to standard serial production is even more noticeable when the anime series is compared to a more recent television adaptation of *Anne of Green Gables*. Co-produced in Canada by Netflix, *Anne with an E.* delivers a live-action, modernized, very carefully crafted version of this story that also attempts to address the darker aspects of Anne's marginalization as an orphan or the inability of people in the Victorian age to express their feelings. But as complex, smart, and individually crafted as it may be as a typical Netflix product, unlike the first episodes of the anime version and its endlessly stretched carriage ride, this version falls back on common cliffhanger structures where the actions and movements are capped at the episode's end and the resolution of the search for rejected Anne is not picked up until the following episode. Again, the first carriage ride is relatively long in the live-action version, but compared to the anime pilot episode's length of over an hour, it's just
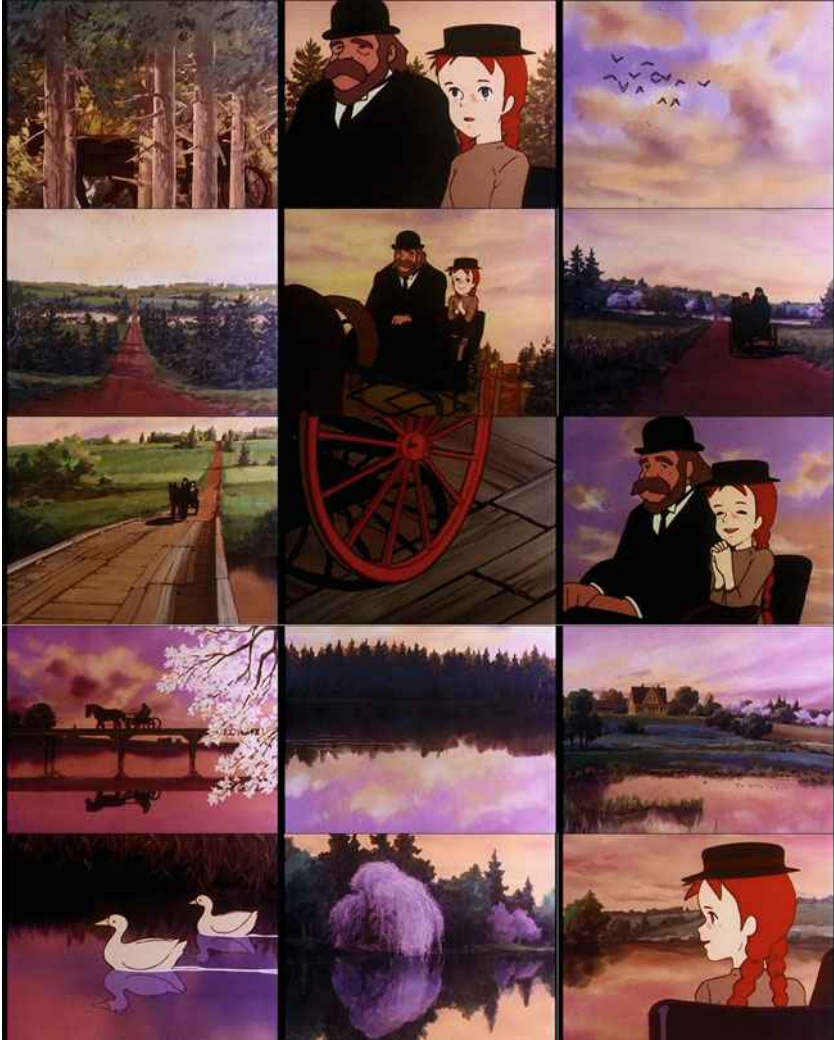
Fig. 1 Shot from *Anne with the Red Hair*, Episode 2. (DVD © Studio 1,002,016)

relatively long. And it additionally offers some variations by alternating with segments from another time period, which in this series fragmentarily tell Anne's backstory, while the anime version has its own long segment devoted exclusively to

that backstory on the carriage ride with Marilla. The staging of the live-action version is much better described by the notion of a televisual division into 'beats' than the design of the anime version, where it is difficult to speak of a 'beat' simply because of its slow rhythm.

Backgrounds and Repetitions

The minimal variation ensures that there is much that looks like a repetition or a redundant element, but on closer inspection turns out to be a new element. The fact that there is no repetition and that markings of segment transitions such as establishing shots are dispensed with has to do with the need to compensate for loss of movement with another form of movement. Lamarre points out that this strategy is a typical element of Miyazaki's films[46] and it also plays a role in his involvement in television works. Since the background drawings, often found as isolated landscape drawings in the series, are extremely dominant and are also the product of intense study by the animation artists involved in the anime,[47] they are not only an important element of rhythmic composition, but they also take on the task of conveying emotions for the viewers—usually but not always associated with the protagonist. Indeed, they are often also carriers of emotions that appear to be decoupled from the narration, which explains the isolated nature of these settings. These shots bear a resemblance to what Noël Burch has called Pillow Shots in the context of Yasuhiro Ozu's films.[48] These shots seem to have no meaning and perform no function of connection, the composition of space and objects strike us precisely because they have no causal relationships to events (but to feelings) and they are not subordinate to the narrative but superior to it.[49] Through their subtle, gentle interruption of the action (because they look like matching cuts connecting the space and the action, but are in fact spaces of the film in their own right), they create a slow and steady rhythm that, in Ozu's work, also always illustrates or embodies a very everyday, melancholic passing of time.[50] These decoupled shots, like the shots of *Tetsuwan Atomu* freezing his movements into a pose in such a way that they create the same impression of movement in the anime as they do in the

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[46] Lamarre (2008) p. 111.

[47] Cf. Miyazaki (2009) p. 330.

[48] Singer (2016).

[49] Cf. Bordwell, Thompson (1976) p. 46.

[50] Visarius (2007) p. 130.

manga and as stickers, offer opportunities to point beyond the narrative and make connections with the viewers, and therefore contain a moment of communication. That they serve to project emotion into them is abundantly clear in some other recurring composition of images, for example in episode 9 of *Akage no An.* In these compositions that convey Annes admiration for a new companion, fantasy and imaginary beings are mixed with and superimposed on reality, also alluding to a fantasy integrated into everyday life. The individual and artistic design of the backgrounds or of shots that only show landscape is also interesting because it contradicts an essence of *limited animation* that is also named in the works about it, namely the access to a 'cell bank' from which the same images and drawings are taken again and again in order to save time and money.[51] In fact, *Akage No Anne* refrains from helping itself to a 'cell bank'. As mentioned earlier, the seemingly economic design of these anime is not very economic, since it means that trips had to be made to Europe for *Haha o Tazunete Sanzenri* and *Arupusu no Shōjo Haiji* to make studies and sketches that were later transformed into compositions of backgrounds of city and country views. *Akage no An* and many series in the *World Masterpiece Theatre* series consistently eschew repetition as a defining characteristic of seriality. It is always new background drawings that we can see.

Desegmentation

As another feature of a particular seriality, *Akage no An* is characterized by a process of desegmentation, which has already been addressed in connection with the rhythm of the series. *Anne* and other anime series such as *Haha o Tazunete Sanzenri*, *Tanoshî Mûmin Ikka* or even classics such as *Mitsubachi Māya no Bōken* have, in various ways, an indeterminate dramaturgy that does not fit into the patterns of segmentation of television. In the 1980s, John Ellis used segmentation to define a major difference between television and motion pictures, which results from the adjusting of television to the television flow and from processes of serialization.[52] While Raymond Williams defines the regime of flow as rather chaotic, as an overlapping of various and distinct media content,[53] Ellis identifies a specific structure that gives flow and serialization a foothold, the structure of small segments

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[51]Steinberg (2012) p. 15 f.
[52]Cf. Ellis (2001).
[53]Cf. Williams (2001).

which are separate but can be coupled at the same time.[54] Television consists of units such as individual news items, reports, advertisements, music clips, trailers, signatures (idents), but also short segments in series such as longer scenes in sitcoms or individual scenes that end with a cliffhanger in soap operas and all other melodramatic series. These series support the segmented structure through a large arsenal of characters and the parallel telling of several stories. This results in a relative independence of these elements, which also guarantee the interruptibility of a television text.[55] A melodramatic series or a drama series does not have to be watched from beginning to end because this order does not strive towards an end and is made up of loose ends. We can therefore switch from one channel to another without it having to mean a significant break with our viewing experience. Quality series like to conceal this interruptibility, but they too enable a familiar rhythm through a segmentation that organizes perception.

This structure of segmentation continues, among other media technological and phenomenological characteristics, on the Internet as a kind of hypersegmentation.[56] Platforms such as YouTube can make good use of the segments of television; they emphasize an aggregate state that is connected to the configuration of television but actually leaves the units to stand on their own: The segmentation inherent in the medium of television becomes visible. Series can therefore also be broken down very well into scenes that can be watched on their own on YouTube and other platforms.

Anime series, however, break with this form of segmentation and, although the short episode time of just under 25 minutes seems to suggest otherwise, offer a highly de-segmented subject matter, with only the theme song and credits song, intro and outro commentary offering anything truly recurring (and therefore easy to find on YouTube). *Akage no An* is captivatingly undramatic, even when dramatic stories are told, such as Anne being suspected of stealing a brooch. The sequences of images, however, do not derive from the drama, but from the passage of time and the plot. As a series, unlike a film, it does not constitute a closed, uniform object that is assembled from the individual parts of a montage. It consists of many small, isolated parts (for example, the individual shots of landscape montages), but nevertheless does not break down into identifiable segments and thus appears not only slow but also astonishingly unwieldy for television.

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[54]Ellis (2001) p. 48 f.
[55]Cf. Modleski (2001).
[56]Cf. Dawson (2007) p. 240.

The Bulkiness of Anime Series

The aspect of desegmentation ensures that anime series do not fit easily into these broadcast structures of television and insist on their own temporality. In the case of *Haha o Tazunete Sanzenri*, for example, this bulkyness means that the series does not tell what it seems to tell. Although its sole content is the completion of the search for his mother, much else is actually told. The series loses itself in views of the landscape and the detailed depiction of events, the images and movements are repeatedly decoupled from the search for his mother. *Tanoshî Mûmin Ikka* is also a rather desegmented series, its inert creatures seeming to follow a rhythm of the seasons and their own biology much more closely than a televisual beat and rhythm based on segmentation, making it possible to manage stories extremely variably over one or more episodes, while being neither episodic nor ongoing, nor a harmonious blend of the two, a peculiar case of what is also readily referred to as 'flexi-narrative' in the context of recent drama series.[57] These anime series do not offer a harmonious, economical narrative form suited to the needs and beats of television. In their own way they are immoderate and shapeless, but in this way they also leave an impression. It is interesting that these eccentric but somehow advanced forms of series unfold preferentially in children's programming which also tends to disguise their complexity.

These are all attempts to describe the special temporality of these anime series, and thus perhaps explain why these programs leave or have left a special impression on their viewers. While time seems to pass even more slowly in soap operas than in reality[58] or real time series such as *24* create a new experience of what can happen in a day and most series offer the events of a narrative in an organized and condensed form, *Tanoshî Mûmin Ikka*, *Akage no An* or *Haha o Tazunete Sanzenri* represent examples of series in which time seems to pass in the same way as in reality, not overlaid by a television structure. This article may somewhat overemphasize this peculiarity of anime series and underplay how heavily they depend on conditions of televisual production, but it does so in order to put up for discussion the productivity of this seemingly naïve, but ultimately unlimited form of seriality.

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[57]Cf. Nelson (2013) p. 24.

[58]Cf. Modleski (2001) p. 348.

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