



## Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation

By S. Napier

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With the popularity of Pokemon still far from waning, Japanese animation, known as anime to its fans, has a firm hold on American pop culture. However, anime is much more than children's cartoons. It runs the gamut from historical epics to sci-fi sexual thrillers. Often dismissed as fanciful entertainment, anime is actually quite adept at portraying important social and cultural issues like alienation, gender inequality, and teenage angst. This book investigates the ways that anime presents these issues in an in-depth and sophisticated manner, uncovering the identity conflicts, fears over rapid technological advancement, and other key themes present in much of Japanese animation.

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**Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation** By S. Napier **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Although packaged as a book for general readers, *Anime: From Akira to Princess Mononoke* is a dreary academic study that showcases the clichés of "higher" criticism but tells the reader little about the art form. The potentially interesting points that Susan Napier raises (e.g., Are characters with blond, pink, or purple hair really perceived as Japanese?) are ignominiously buried in arcane jargon. And she too often discusses other authors' theories instead of anime itself. In a section on *Ranma 1/2*, she refers to various books, but in a footnote she cites only a single published interview with series creator Rumiko Takahashi. If Napier regards the Ranma series as significant, why didn't she interview the artist?

The text is riddled with errors, which suggests that the author hasn't watched the films carefully. For example, she cites a "brilliant" essay referring to the loss of all electrical power in Japan (a symbol of "modernization under the patriarchal system") in episode 3 of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. No blackout occurs in this episode. In episode 6, however, all the electricity in Japan is requisitioned to power a superweapon. *From Akira to Princess Mononoke* is the sort of book churned out by professors to satisfy publish-or-perish rules. --Charles Solomon

#### Review

'This is a riveting and inspiring book. One that I have thoroughly enjoyed reading and from which I have learned a great deal. As a source of concrete information about Japanese animation it is invaluable...On publication it will be the only in-depth, sophisticated study of Japanese animation available in the English language.' - Sharon Kinsella, Research Fellow in Japanese Studies, Cambridge University

'This book...is informative, well-written, insightful, and yet entertaining - an unusual combination. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it...Napier's study...is both generous and critically insightful, based on a thorough knowledge of most of the important genres of anime. I think that this tone of enthusiasm for the material, combined with scholarly rigor, will make the book appealing to a wide audience.' - Sharalyn Orbaugh, Associate Professor of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia

'...Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke...provides an essential toe-dip into the tsunami of Eastern films that have influenced modern blockbusters such as The Matrix series.' - The Times

#### About the Author

Susan J. Napier is Professor of Japanese Studies at Tufts University, USA. She is the author of four books, including *The Fantastic in Japanese Literature: The Subversion of Modernity* and *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*.

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#### Christopher Price:

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