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Anthony Lioi

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Introduction to Studio Ghibli

ANTHONY LIOI

Studio Ghibli (*Kabushiki-gaisha Sutajio Jiburi*) is one of the most influential animation studios in the world. Founded in 1985 by directors Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata and by producer Toshio Suzuki, Ghibli should be of special interest to scholars because of its global reach, cinematic force, and thematic range. Many Ghibli films reviewed below address ecological issues, such as the long-term effects of industrial waste (*Nausicaä*)¹; the damage done by atomic bombs (*Grave of the Fireflies*, *My Neighbor Totoro*); the relationship of ecotopia and artificial intelligence (*Castle in the Sky*); the resistance of animals to habitat loss (*Pom Poko*); the destruction of forests by industry (*Princess Mononoke*); and the persistence of deep time in the present (*Ponyo*). That Anglophone ecocriticism has done so little to attend to this work says more about scholarly conservatism than aesthetic merit or ethical impact. As a planetary discourse of “ecocosmopolitanism,” the “environmental humanities,” and “posthumanism” begins to form, this review cluster attempts to stimulate a belated conversation on Ghibli’s place in the ecological arts. It appears at a crucial moment in Ghibli’s history, when all three founders have announced that they will no longer produce feature-length work. In response to these retirements, the leadership of Ghibli declared in 2014 that the studio would take a hiatus of unspecified length. We therefore stand at the end of an era, 1986–2014. This era began with Miyazaki and Takahata’s first films for the studio, *Castle in the Sky* (1986) and *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988), respectively. It ended with their final films, *The Wind Rises* and *The Tale of Princess Kaguya*,

both released in 2013. The time is ripe to begin a formal assessment of this achievement.

NOTES

1. Technically, *Nausicaä* is not a Ghibli film, because Miyazaki produced it before the studio was founded. However, Ghibli was founded in response to the critical and popular success of *Nausicaä*, so it is included in most accounts of the studio's output.