

The Anime Industry: establishing brand identity of animation studios through visual elements

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Abstract

The anime industry has grown until the twenty-first century from one animation studio into one of Japan's most valuable cultural brands, consisting of numerous unique branding ideas. From archotyping symbolic characters and presenting mythological fairy tales from a certain point of view to raising awareness of social, economic, and educational problems, each studio has widened its area of expertise, developing its uniqueness through several verbal and nonverbal communication techniques. This paper aims to find how one studio's branding idea stands out in an industry that keeps growing around its mythology and culture through the animated projects they display. Therefore, the introduction begins by explaining what *anime* mainly deals with and its importance in one studio's direction, whereas the last part of the introduction presents the methodology. Part 1 continues with an analysis of one top studio from the beginning of the twenty-first century, MAPPA Studio, and goes through key visuals and one scene from three of the studio's primary titles to find its primary branding idea. Part 2 presents the analysis of three of Pierrot Studio's most successful titles to find the uniqueness of the studio in building its brand.

Keywords: *brand, uniqueness, anime, studio, visual, communication elements*

Introduction

Key representative of Japan's national brand, the anime industry has grown into a strong voice in spreading Japanese folklore and traditions, its area of expertise delving into everyday life's common aspects, displaying its social, economic, and educational elements. The term *anime* holds several meanings, depending on the topic it conveys. Rayna Denison comes with an accurate definition by calling it an “umbrella term” when stating: “Like the most popular of Hollywood's film genres, *anime* also acts as an umbrella term for a broad spectrum of productions” (Denison, 2015), whereas other authors link the term with “a particular style associated with Japanese cel animation” (Odell & Blanc, 2014). Therefore, *anime* mainly deals with the specific animations produced in Japan and the genre in which a studio aims to develop its brand strategy. In this context, we see that, although the animated projects each Japanese animation studio releases fall into the *anime* category, a studio's perspectives differ depending on the communication techniques utilized, thus creating its uniqueness in comparison to other studios.

The animation studios behind anime hold a pivotal role in building the overall brand of the anime industry, mainly by displaying features such as iconic characters, fairy tales, myths, and certain symbols used in storytelling, using particular communication techniques to project them in different instances. Considering that in 1956 only one studio, namely Toei Animation, sustained the production of *anime* under Ōkawa Hiroshi, in his ambition “to become ‘the Disney of the East.’” (Yamaguchi, 2020), we can say that the studio, alone, represented the image of an entire industry. About seven decades later, the number of animation studios has grown to the point that the image of the anime industry consists of several smaller branding ideas, shaping a different kind of uniqueness composed of numerous perspectives that attract different audiences.

However, to better understand how the overall image of the anime brand is, we have to start from the basic idea of the word *brand*. Per Tannya Sammut-Bonnici, a *brand* is “a set of tangible and intangible attributes designed to create awareness and identity, and to build the reputation of a product, service, person, place, or organization.” (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). Meanwhile, *branding* represents “a long-term strategy” (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015), which aims to popularize the product. By putting the previous two pieces together, we see an animation

studio as a business that builds itself by using specific techniques and ideas, or certain myths, iconic characters, and fairy tales with specific interpretations as it is the case, in order to distinguish from another studio, hence building a product, or service, that is unique on the market and contributes to the overall image of what anime is.

On another train of thoughts, the elements used to build an anime studio fall onto another category which Holt calls *cultural branding* and sees it as “the set of axioms and strategic principles that guide the building of brands into cultural icons” (Holt, 2004), where a *cultural icon* represents “a symbol, especially of a culture or movement” (Holt, 2004). Therefore, the hypothesis that the brand the anime industry has built, and the brands that sustain the anime industry today are cultural brands.

Another necessary element we must take into consideration is what *storytelling* actually means. In the research from Lugmayr et al., we find several definitions or elements that build the actual meaning behind *storytelling*. Shortly, however, the authors name *storytelling* “a long-established tradition” (Lugmayr et al., 2016), specifying as well that stories are told in order “to entertain, to transfer knowledge between generations, to maintain cultural heritage, or to warn others of dangers.” (Lugmayr et al., 2016).

Hence, this paper aims to find how one animation studio’s perspective on anime shapes its uniqueness in comparison with another that pursues similar genres and, thus, plays a role in the anime industry's national brand through their animated projects. To do this, I have selected certain scenes with the main characters from animated projects concerning the same genres of two of the top studios of the last decade to find out how their studio’s perspective forms around the visual and story representations of those scenes. I have referred to those characters as *archetypal characters* since they are the central elements around which the stories revolve and around which the stories are formed to transmit their messages and emotions, and then categorized the characters in one of the twelve Jungian archetypes so that I could fully portray the characters’ images (Mark et al., 2001). The focus will fall mainly on the symbolic and mythological meaning behind the characters’ stories and their chromatic combinations, which Fogelström finds important in character designing (Fogelström, 2013). I will also be analyzing the characters in terms of visual construction, which, in his guide, Solarski connects with ideas and emotions (Solarski, 2012).

Regarding the scenes, however, the main focus will be on the verbal and nonverbal communication techniques, such as the visual elements portrayed in pictures from similar scenes, the characters presented, and mythological and philosophical symbols. Also, I will mainly discuss chromatics for which I will be using Morton's guide to identify the meaning behind the colors used to create the scenes and the characters (Morton, 2017). Furthermore, a more detailed analysis of both visual and musical aspects, as well as the moral, of one defining sequence from some of the latest animated projects of each studio would conclude each chapter and delve deeper into the studio's perspective toward anime in general.

1. Brand Identity of MAPPA Studio

Maruyama Animation Produce Project Association, or MAPPA Studio, was founded in June 2014 by Masao Maruyama, the cofounder of the Madhouse animation studio. Although the studio may not have such a long history, Madhouse's mark on Masao Maruyama contributed to shaping the identity MAPPA Studio found. Although MAPPA Studio initially debuted with projects like *Terror in Resonance* or *In This Corner of the World*, it wasn't until Manabu Otsuka stepped up as CEO and pursued projects such as *Shingeki no Kyojin*, *Shingeki no Bahamut: Virgin Soul*, and *Jujutsu Kaisen*, that the found its identity.

The first on the list, *Shingeki no Kyojin*, is an action-drama-oriented project, first aired in December 2012, that MAPPA Studio committed to from its fourth season, Wit Studio owning the production for the previous three. Nonetheless, the changes MAPPA Studio implemented in animations made a difference in its visuals and the emotion they transmit, thus incorporating the characteristics MAPPA Studio aims toward, according to Manabu Otsuka (*COMPANY /*, n.d.)

Mainly, the anime follows Eren Yeager and his comrades, who are constantly threatened to die facing the mysterious Giants who feed on humans. Each season showcases characters dying and Eren's growing hate toward the Giants and desire to end everything. In the fourth season, two peoples, one from Paradise Island, which resembles Japan and where Eren and his comrades originally are from, and the other from the continent, collide in the battle meant to decide the fate of Eren's people, named subjects of Ymir, the only people that could

turn into Giants and destroy the world. Eren Yeager, the archetypal character, acts as both the main character of the series and the antagonist set to do whatever it takes to save his people.

The first Figure I will analyze features a scene from episode twenty-two of the fourth season. It has a self-explanatory visual that captures the grimness and sense of terror conveyed through chromatic elements (Fig. 1).



The mix of dark brown and black displays an apocalyptic image characterized by power. Meanwhile, by adding orange, a symbol of activity and energy, to the chromatic, the audience experiences the complete portrait of dread displayed in the scene. The angle from which we can observe the setting reveals the city in peril, displaying the apocalyptic image of the Giants, called Titans in the anime, marching in the distance (Fig. 1).

An interesting fact comes from the source of inspiration behind the Giants. Hajime Isayama, the author behind the story, said that an encounter with “a drunk customer at the Internet café he was working at” inspired him, and what interested him most was “the ability to communicate even though the person was of the same species, and thought at that moment that the most familiar and scary animal in the world is actually the human.” (Nelkin, 2013).



Regarding the period, the military outfits mark the period of war in the scene. Regarding the emotion conveyed, the characters’ positions and expressions indicate that they look at each other in a moment of astonishment.

The second Figure shows Eren Yeager, the archetypal character of the story, in an angle from

which the light comes through a window, darkening the room, and falls behind his back to amplify the character's dark fierceness (Fig. 2).

Regarding the character's construction, we observe that MAPPA Studio's animators use numerous lines to contour the face and hair. In addition to those details, the blood running down the protagonist's hand, and the frowned expression, establish his antagonistic grimness and fierceness. However, the blue eyes, and the glimpse of light within them, contribute to the character's image by adding him a sense of purity. Therefore, the complexity of the chromatic showcases the archetypal character's position as both a protagonist and an antagonist.

Hence, keeping in mind that the main character is the leader of the Giants and his desire to protect his friends at all costs, even fighting the world, we understand the Giant's marching as the means of achieving that desire and becoming an antagonist. Eren Yeager showcases in Figure 2 both his innocent desire and his hate, hence strengthening his image as a complex character.

From a rhetorical point of view, MAPPA Studio transmits the dark dramatism present in Hajime Isayama's entire story through communication techniques that display the detailed apocalyptic visual fit for the horror genre such as chromatic, construction and symbolical representation. Meanwhile, in the second Figure, we have one of the most defining captures of the main character that transmits the accurate tone of the show. Eren Yeager drives the story as the archetypal character which archetypes both the hero and the villain, which we identify through nonverbal communication techniques such as the construction, the chromatic, the angles, the details, and the visual expression, but also his story, which is in balance with the visual. MAPPA Studio builds the personality of the show around a particular character's emotion, that is the hate of the archetypal character, so that the audience can identify themselves with it, and thus manage to stay loyal to the emotional side of the story.

The second on the list, *Shingeki no Bahamut*, is an action-adventure anime by MAPPA Studio with two seasons, the first, bearing the name of *Shingeki no*

Bahamut: Genesis, having its release in 2014, and the second, *Shingeki no Bahamut: Virgin Soul*, which also delves into the romance genre and features the purity of one of the main characters, in 2017.

The anime originates in a video game with the same name and follows the story of Favaro Leone and Nina Drango throughout a world where humans, demons, and gods have to coexist after the defeat of the dragon Bahamut that once tormented the earth and skies.



The final dinner from the end of the *Shingeki no Bahamut: Virgin Soul* season portrays a simple but rich visual by featuring diverse symbolic characters (Fig. 3).

The brown-orange tint mostly dominates the chromatics while the dim intensity of the colors, mainly oriented toward orange, gives the scene an adventurous, softly warm air. However, the diversity regarding the goods and the characters stabilizes the chromatics, consequently balancing the adventurous atmosphere toward calm and melancholy that characterize the end of the season (Fig. 3).

We observe in Figure 3 that each character has defined expressions, with numerous lines that display their features. The elder who occupies most of the scene, Bacchus, represents a deity, and he is the character at which everyone comes for advice, therefore archotyping the sage. Also, we observe that his orange-brown robe and long, white beard helps at creating that sage allure, hence balancing the visual with the representation of the character in the story.

The white duck with a crown, Hamsa, the animal symbol, bears a more philosophical meaning. The white represents a symbol of purity, elements that fit into the character's description. Meanwhile, per Hall's research, "Wild ducks and geese are the subject of numerous Chinese and Japanese legends and are a popular subject in ceramic decoration." But although the mandarin ducks symbolize eternal faithfulness in marriage (Hall, 1996), Hamsa doesn't feature his entire philosophical meaning in terms of its story, and instead he is Bacchus' partner, with whom he takes on different adventures. By bringing its two symbolic characteristics together, Hamsa represents the caregiver, the character that never leaves

Bacchus' side and links him with the others through a compassionate and funny attitude (Fig. 3).

Similarly, another supporting character from the visual is the young female dressed in black that stays next to Bacchus, Rita. Her dark hair, black dress, and tired expression symbolize emptiness, thus indicating her condition throughout the story of being immortal and having to live without any final goal.

The second female character with blonde hair and a blue outfit embodies a historical personality, both in terms of story impact and visuals, the French Saint Jeanne d'Arc. The blue chromatics of the clothing represents spirituality, displaying her connection to the gods and the saints throughout the story. However, the character features a grimmer version of the French saint, and that point is reinforced through the pale blonde hair that represents jealousy. Hence, the author pushes the character to do atrocious actions toward humanity to give it a dualistic image.

The third female character with short, pink hair, and white clothing is Nina Drango. Throughout the story, she is seen as an innocent person who becomes a hero after learning the grimmer truths of the world, though she is overshadowed by the grim sadness surrounding Favaro Leone in the end. We can categorize Nina Drango as both an innocent, and a hero. Her chromatics of pink and white resemble the naive attitude filled with compassion and purity in a scene where the dark, fading colors prevail, thus making her stand out in contrast to the more experienced protagonist, Favaro Leone.

The character who sets the atmosphere, Favaro Leone, is the protagonist of the show, and he is always thrown into an adventure and forced to move forward despite any losses in order to face and try to stop the dragon Bahamut. In the discussion and at the end of it, he is the one whose state of mind drives the atmosphere. However, in the story, the character is more complex than that. Usually someone who always grins at others and jokes, his attitude is filled with notes of melancholy toward the victory, and therefore, this scene of him acting compassionate and

melancholic contradicts with his adventurous and strong attitude, forcing the viewer to question his attitude and what victory actually means in this context of the story.

His chromatics consist of orange and brown and display strength and an adventurous air, characteristics reinforced by his appearance, stressed by the two cuts on his face. However, MAPPA Studio diminishes the sense of accomplishment from the end of the season by displaying the protagonist with a melancholic expression.

Therefore, taking these characteristics into consideration we once again have an archetypal character with dualistic image, although this one isn't a protagonistic-antagonistic one.



Regarding the angles, besides the table and the characters, we only observe a pair of stairs and the open doors in the first scene. The darkness in the background and the lack of objects contribute to a sense of nothingness, consequently lessening the adventurous atmosphere of the anime. In the second scene that features Favaro Leone, we have a more detailed angle that presents the character standing in the dim light of a fire, with the landscape of the sky and the city in the background, elements that complete the sad note of the scene.

From a rhetorical perspective, MAPPA Studio conveys the mix of adventure and melancholy to portray a realistic image of what an ending should represent through the emptiness of the scenes and by bringing the most representative characters together. The chromatic and philosophical symbols, featured through the characters, build the general atmosphere, thus giving the second season a sense of unity and the melancholic side of what an adventure truly means. In terms of the archetypal character, Favaro Leone, has a more definite visual construction in terms of what it transmits in comparison to Eren Yeager, and while one represents the hero-villain archetype in his story (Eren Yeager), the other fits in the hero-explorer archetype (Favaro Leone). Favaro Leone, however, still drives the story and his emotional state when he is present in any scene constantly sets the atmosphere of the show.

The third anime on the list, Jujutsu Kaisen, winner of prizes such as “the Animation of the Year award at the 2022 Tokyo Anime Award Festival” (Valdez, 2022) or “Crunchyroll’s Anime of The Year award” along with countless other secondary ones (Coats, 2022), is one of the most successful anime MAPPA Studio has released.

The action-horror anime takes place in a world of curses, represented through monstrous beings and demons, and follows Itadori Yuuji, a teenager whose actions lead him into this world, Megumi Fushiguro, the son of a magic clan, and their colleague Nobara Kugisaki.

A particular scene that renders the kind of atmosphere of the show features the encounter between one of the archetypal characters, Megumi Fushiguro, and a cursed creature, the Cursed Finger Bearer (From Fig. 5 to Fig. 9).



In terms of story, while the Cursed Finger Bearer is initially described as a fallen human and a victim of its animal instincts, Megumi Fushiguro is the rejected son of the leader of the Fushiguro family and has to survive in the cruel world of curses. Megumi is usually calm and resolute, though he gives in to the burning hate, nurtured since he had been abandoned by his family, if he has no other option. Also, Megumi is an archetypal character that drives the story along with Yuji Itadori.

Regarding the visual, in both Figures, we observe that the design of the characters has several lines to display their exact facial physics and illustrate the graphic opposition between them. Megumi wears a black suit, a color which marks his connection to the dark cruel of curses and demons. Additionally, chromatically speaking, the traces of blood radiating red that run down his face amplify the power the color black inspires. Moreover, the malicious grin, narrowed look, and bared teeth showcase the madness that takes over him when giving in to his instincts (Fig. 5).

In contrast, in Figure 6, the Cursed Finger Bearer has a monstrous appearance and an ampler physique than Megumi. The grotesque face, hideous grin, and fish teeth appoint the protagonist to an instinctual beast. But that characteristic is surprisingly rendered through a mainly white chromatic with some tones of light blue in order to showcase the difference between the two instinctual states of the characters. More exactly, while one gives in to his instincts on his will and manipulates them for power (Megumi), the other character's instincts are in their pure form and he only acts according to them without having a will.

As Pradantyo says, “antagonists often represent a sin or a vice; e.g., wrath, gluttony, pride; e.g., *God of War's* Baldur represents wrath through his visual display of anger and rage” (Pradantyo, 2021). Hence, Pradantyo's statement helps us picture the studio's intention to create a battle with a hostile atmosphere, despite having a protagonist and an antagonist facing each other. We can observe that MAPPA Studio demonizes both human and beast, both good and evil, to emphasize the similarity in instinctual judgment and strengthen the emotional impact by making the encounter a battle of the instincts.

Regarding the background, the battle takes place in a cave, placing the characters in a closed space to deepen the importance of the encounter. Through setting, MAPPA creates the conditions for a battle that appears separated from the rest of the anime. Thus, the fight of the instincts presented in the scene marks a pivotal moment for the character's development.

In terms of chromatics, the dark red nuances throughout the scene give intensity and power. However, the return to the cave's usual chromatic, blue and dark, diminishes the tension, thus marking the end of the battle and the Cursed Finger Bearer's death.

From the beginning, MAPPA Studio sets the tone by stating: “It’s incomplete! It’s ugly work at best!” (Crunchyroll Collection. 2021, 0:30 - 0:34) through the protagonist. Although the previous statement comes as additional information to explain the protagonistic character’s ability, it also describes how the encounter will proceed.

Also, the instrumental music amplifies the dynamic. The audio starts with a grim note, taking a rhythmic and stressed line for the rest of the battle and ending gradually to keep up with the decreasing tension.

Regarding a more detailed view of the dynamic, we observe that MAPPA Studio slows the pace at specific frames to emphasize Megumi’s thoughts and maddening expressions. Hence, the studio aims to direct the audience toward certain elements, such as the three beings Megumi summons and the Cursed Finger Bearer’s states of surprise and fear.

At the end of the scene, when the dynamic diminishes, the studio brings another element of surprise. Once the archetypal character appears behind the antagonist, the studio cuts the tension by having Megumi Fushiguro eliminate the Cursed Finger Bearer (Crunchyroll Collection. 2021, 1:30 - 1:46).

The movie techniques used in the scene were crystalized in manga and anime by Osamu Tezuka, although, for more details about it, I recommend a thorough lecture of the 2009th edition of *God of Comics: Osamu Tezuka and the Creation of Post-World War II Manga (Great Comics Artists Series)* by Natsu Onoda Power.

The three beings, or animal symbols, that appear throughout the encounter bear the philosophical meaning behind the course of the battle, starting with the toads from Figure 7. In Japanese philosophy, the Toad Immortal represents “a benign sage with great magical knowledge about medications and drugs” (*11. Gama Sennin*, n.d.). However, their dark chromatic features a grimmer version of the

philosophical element, giving it a somber meaning, thus featuring the horror element in the philosophical idea behind the symbols (Fig. 7).



The owl comes second in the philosophical storyline. In Japan, the owl represents good luck and wisdom (*Mystical Impressions: Views of Luck in Japan and Abroad*, 2020). Although the protagonist uses the owl mainly for traveling, thus indicating its mobility and freedom, he also uses it in battle in combination with other abilities, thus representing the adjustment of the symbol to the action genre. Its intervention after the toad features the idea of freeing the beast from its instinctual cage, where the intense, white lightning represents the purification element (Fig. 8).



The last symbol, the wolf, represents the guardian deity of the mountain in Japanese culture. In mythology, the wolf helped Prince Yamato Takeru, who lost his way, then guided him to leave the mountain (Akai shi, 2021). However, MAPPA Studio leaves its mark on the symbol by demonizing the wolf to feature its duality. The dual chromatic, white and black, builds a symbol centered around being capable of both good and evil. Therefore, regarding its place in the purification process, the demon wolf concludes the process of cleansing the Cursed Finger Bearer through a deity's might (Fig. 9).

The ending frame features the archetypal character eliminating the antagonist by stabbing his torso from behind and making him explode, featuring the end of the battle of the instincts. MAPPA Studio displays the emotions of the Cursed Finger Bearer before its death, thus strengthening the grimmer impact the moment conveys.

Therefore, MAPPA Studio features a battle of human instincts between two opposites, centered around the horror element. The rhetoric behind the scene indicates the studio's focus on human emotion, featuring the realistic elements behind the action genre, namely the madness and the instincts that drive a battle, but also the need to defeat evil even with the cost of becoming evil. In terms of the scene, the chromatic, the setting, the dynamic, and the audio features a hostile atmosphere, but also a sense of adrenaline that drives the characters. The chromatic also helps in building the mythological symbols, which give the fight philosophical meaning and a particular story, whereas the characters' are used to drive the story and the scene forward, both being equally displayed with representative visuals for what they mean for the story, although one is just another antagonist, and the other is one of the main character. Also, compared to the previous two anime, Megumi is an archetypal character that doesn't belong to the hero archetype category. Its story, attitude, and visuals have a more dualistic meaning, thus its most distinguishing element is his desire to hide his nurtured hate in order to remain with his comrades, therefore assigning him in the everyman archetype category and, at times, in the villain archetype category, as we have seen.

2. Brand Identity of Pierrot Studio

Founded in 1979 by Yūji Nunokawa, Pierrot Studio is one of the most successful Japanese animation studios. In his five decades of activity, the studio has created numerous titles of both films and anime, covering a variety of genres, and, since its founding, the Pierrot Studio's central focus has been to bring "animation experiences that resonate with the ever-changing entertainment trends" (Pierrot Official Website, n.d.).

Looking through the names Pierrot Studio has worked on, we observe that the primary genre they approach is shounen, which consists of action-related stories aimed toward a young audience, such as *Naruto*, *Yu Yu Hakusho*, or *Bleach*. However, considering that a degree of similarity is necessary between the projects of the two studios, I have chosen, along with *Bleach*, some of the new titles that fall in similar genres to those presented in the previous chapter, namely *Tokyo Ghoul*, for the apocalyptic representation, and *Black Clover*, for the battle sequence.

The first on the list to analyze, *Tokyo Ghoul*, an action-drama anime from 2014, follows the story of Kaneki Ken in an alternative world, in which ghouls, creatures that feed on human flesh, invade Tokyo by blending with humans. After an encounter with a ghoul, the protagonist, Kaneki Ken, wakes up in a hospital and finds out that he has become a ghoul and has to live like one from that moment onward. As the other characters from MAPPA, the archetypal character of *Tokyo Ghoul* is thrown into the ghoul world and has to overcome several threats.

As already mentioned, *Tokyo Ghoul* features a similar idea regarding the Apocalypse at the end of its fourth season, when Kaneki Ken releases a mutant being that devours human flesh in Tokyo and loses control over it (Fig. 10).

However, the visual Pierrot Studio features in Figure 10 doesn't designate any tension and grimness. Regarding the setting, we observe the city, which represents a contemporary version of Tokyo, regarded from above one building. Therefore, the audience finds a sense of belonging by identifying with a familiar place since the story presents realistic elements. However, the presence of the giant mutant stands as a reminder of the supernatural element.



Nonetheless, chromatically speaking, the attention falls on the innocent and hopeful atmosphere through the warm, soft-orange color of the sunlight coming from the side and the quiet calmness of the two characters. Although the black outfits of the characters represent the mourning in the twilight of the apocalypse, we notice that the color merges with the dark city that gradually warms from bottom to top, while Kaneki Ken's white hair breaks the balance. Therefore, in terms of chromatics, the scene has nuances that strengthen a dramatic, yet hopeful atmosphere, with a drop of innocence coming from Kaneki Ken's white hair.

The other character from Figure 10, Hideyoshi Nagachika, is a secondary character, representing the protagonist's connection with the human race and the friend Kaneki had lost somewhere in the middle of the series. In this scene, Hideyoshi returns to give Kaneki a chance

to unite ghouls and humans, therefore foreshadowing the end of the show. Additionally, through his hair's chromatic, which resembles the color of the sunlight, Pierrot Studio conveys the warmth of the visual, thus indicating the message of the scene that features the hopeful unification.



In the visual from Figure 11, we observe that Pierrot Studio uses a minimal number of details to contour the archetypal character's face. Apart from the eyes and the hair, they use only a few lines to frame the mouth and nose, focusing mainly on the sense of confusion transmitted through the gray eyes (Fig. 11).

From a philosophical point of view, Pierrot Studio conveys the duality of the character through the chromatic of the hair, which is a mix of black and white.

However, the gray eyes and suit stress impartial purity, which characterize Kaneki at that point of the season. In contrast, the brown-black background features the protagonist's loyalty and responsibility regarding his position in the story. Moreover, the angle from which the light falls highlights the character's surprise, which, along with his story, completes his image of the innocent hero archetype.

Hence, in terms of visual rhetoric, Pierrot Studio presents the simplicity of human emotions conveyed through the chromatic and angles to indicate the importance of creating the space surrounding a character. The archetypal character, Kaneki Ken, is simplified both chromatically and in terms of story impact since, although he goes through more states of mind, he can always be understood without effort (the archetypal character's states of mind in the two scenes, one where hope dominates and the other where his innocence stands out). Although the visual presents an apocalyptic threat, we observe that the main focus falls on the hopeful and motivational atmosphere, strengthened by elements such as chromatic and characters. Therefore, the atmosphere catches the audience, directing their attention toward the positive aspects rather than the negative ones.

The second on the list, *Bleach*, is an action-adventure anime from 2004 that follows Kurosaki Ichigo, who has to become a Soul Reaper at the beginning of the series to save his family, and then was accepted by the world of Souls as a Shinigami and asked to keep the balance between the human world, and the worlds of souls and demons. According to CBR.com, “As Tite Kubo revealed in interviews, *Bleach* was inspired by traditional Japanese death gods and Shinigami, that wore black robes and collected souls.” (Kemner, 2021). Considering the previous statement, we can place *Bleach* as one of the representative titles in spreading Japanese culture, thus featuring a pivotal name in the anime industry.

The first visual features a moment when the main cast welcomes the arrival of a new ally, marking the end of a conflict between them (Fig. 12).

Visually, the figure displays an empty table in a yard, a block of flats on the left, and two houses, one in the middle and one on the right. However, we observe that the visual focuses on the characters and their chromatics, only using the background to give a sense of location (Fig. 12).



Regarding the chromatic, beige, green, and brown dominate the background, thus combining to give the scene a sense of calm vitality and stabilizing the strength of the brown with beige. Also, the blue sky gives the scene serenity, despite being used to indicate the time of the day.

Regarding the characters, the visual features both secondary and primary characters. However, we observe that the primary focus falls only on a few of them, such as the two female characters from the front and the animal symbol running along the table, indicating them by creating a sense of centralization through chromatic and position. The color red is found in three spots, encircling the other characters and narrowing the point of attention. Then, the two nuances of pink in the middle of the picture direct the attention to the only characters whose faces meet the audience without seeming aggressive. Last but not least, the nuances of black

are elements that contradict beige and white to prevent the light colors from appearing excessive, thus creating a chromatic balance in which the soft pink stands out.

From a different perspective, as we have learned from Solarski (Solarski, 2012), each character conveys a particular message through chromatics. For example, red indicates aggression and vitality, which feature quick-tempered behavior of some characters, black indicates seriousness and a connection to the darkness, the second featuring the link with the world of souls, and pink symbolizes affection, which both characters display both throughout the show and in the scene.

The female characters from the middle of the visual, Kuchiki Rukia, who has black hair, and Orihime Inoue, who has orange hair, represent the two closest characters to the protagonist. However, their hair color marks the difference between them. While black represents a critical element of the soul world, thus showcasing Kuchiki Rukia's allegiance to the soul world, Orihime Inoue's hair is of the same color as the protagonist.

Among the other characters, besides the male character with red hair from the background, Renji Abarai, a Soul Reaper from the soul world, we have only secondary or episodic characters. The two children give the visual a sense of purity to the scene, while the male character preparing food embodies a paternal figure that looks over the others. The other two secondary characters represent other Soul Reapers, whose presences complete the diversity by having them adjust to the human world, although their primary element remains present through the black that appears on their chromatic.

The plush animal running on the table, Kaizō Konpaku, shortly Kon, is a symbolic character through name and purpose. His name translates as modified soul, an indicator of his condition as a vessel whose soul with no bounds can swap with someone else to exchange bodies for a certain period. Hence, he is a link between the three worlds through his soul, which hasn't any allegiance.

In the second visual, we have Kurosaki Ichigo, the archetypal character that drives the story. Throughout the series, the story follows him and is molded after his state of mind and development. Unlike in the stories from MAPPA Studio, Pierrot Studio's Kurosaki Ichigo is a character rather easy to understand, featuring, sometimes even antagonistic elements, though

not delving too deep into them to damage his heroic image. He is mostly regarded as a free spirit, someone who follows the rules as long as they aren't constraining him and always goes to help his friends even if that means raising against the Soul Society. However, the key element behind each of his actions is his desire for good, which is constantly clear throughout the story.



In a close manner to Kaneki Ken, Pierrot Studio doesn't stress other facial details than the hair and the eyes. Regarding the chromatics, the orange indicates the adventurousness of the character, while the purple completes the identity by giving a sense of mystery. In this visual, Pierrot Studio uses the background to feature a protagonist with an unsuppressed identity and crystalize his individuality by merging it with the atmosphere and not having him driving it entirely.

We observe that the central idea of the scene is that people could gather together despite their differences. To convey that, Pierrot Studio uses the chromatic to emphasize the diversity of the cast which links to all the three worlds and brings them together, illustrating the sense of unification. Regarding its rhetorical message, through the angles of capturing the protagonist and the two secondary characters, the visual creates a sense of participation in the scene, thus projecting the general atmosphere toward the audience.

The archetypal character here fits in the explorer archetype here for his acceptance toward freedom and exploring the three worlds when he had to, although he can also be placed in the hero archetype through his visual and impact through the story. We also observe that *Bleach* follows the archetypal character and his development, although it is not such a complex story to understand like the stories from MAPPA Studio, but instead, the main focus falls on the archetypal character's constant sense of mystery which drives the audience toward the optimistic atmosphere and motivates them to find what comes next.

The last on the list, *Black Clover*, is an action-adventure anime about a medieval world where magic means everything, as the narrator and the characters keep repeating throughout

the story. The story follows the protagonist, Asta, who was born magicless but never gave up on his dream to become the Magic Emperor of the Clover Kingdom. One day, he finds the Grimoire of anti-magic and leaves his village along with his friend in an adventure to pursue his dream, where the audiences see him become a magic knight, and then joins the Black Bulls' squad. He always protects the people around him and sees the good part in evil, therefore helping some of his enemies to redeem themselves.

An encounter that features the general atmosphere of the anime comes from episode 49, where the protagonist, Asta, faces a significant antagonist of the series Vetto, which aims to collect the stones that would bring chaos to the world and presents similarities with a beast (From Fig. 14 to Fig. 24).



Asta, the archetypal character, resembles a young male, a feature aimed toward a young audience, characteristic to the shounen genre. The chromatic, consisting of black, white, blue, and soft brown, feature the character's complex image. The white marks his childish and innocent attitude, while the soft brown indicates his strength and friendliness. However, by mixing blue and black, we have both a reference to the demon's presence within the character and a clue regarding his peaceful intentions (Fig. 14).

Contradictory, the antagonist has muscular physique, long white hair and beard, and beastlike teeth, which links him to the animal kind. His chromatics mainly consist of tones of beige and white, displaying his attitude towards nature and animals, which he desires to protect.

However, his desires are also marked by the blue color on the shoulder clothing, showcasing the peacefulness of Vetto's desires (Fig. 15).

Regarding the story, the similarity between the protagonist and the antagonist appears in their attitude regarding "Despair..." (Crunchyroll Collection, 2018, 1:39) and what it means. For the protagonist, it means the fear of accepting oneself with its weaknesses and impotence in this battle, the results of his lack of magic, which he conquers at the moment when he accepts himself and syncs with the demon within him. For the antagonist, the concept means not knowing what to do in front of the enemy, and therefore sees *despair* as what others should feel when facing him and not something he could experience. Both his attitude and chromatic work as proof toward how he avoids it. Vetto mostly acts as an animal, and fights by giving in to his instincts and relying on the people's fear for what they don't know when is cornered. Thus, when Asta finally defeats him, Vetto learns what *despair* is and that his superiority is a mere illusion created in order to avoid that.

By comparing the two ideas, we observe that Pierrot Studio features an antagonist and a protagonist with no contradictory visions. Each one sees *despair* as something they don't want to admit until they finally do.

Although the scene debuts with one of its key symbols, the demon (Fig. 21), it doesn't make the chromatic appear aggressive or grim since the tones of purple encircling the silhouette give it a mysterious and spiritual air. However, the atmosphere shifts in the immediate moment when the protagonist says, "Not yet... I'm not giving up!" (Crunchyroll Collection, 2018, 0:16 – 0:20), and sets the tone of the scene.

Regarding other characters, we have Vanessa Enoteca, a secondary female character whose story references the fairytale of Rapunzel through the ability called *the thread of fate* (Fig. 16). In terms of events, Vanessa Enoteca had been her mother's hostage in a tower until one of the main characters saved her, likewise the way the prince saved Rapunzel in the original tale.



As for appearance, Vanessa Enoteca wears a red outfit and a hat that mark her identity as a witch. The chromatic completed by her pink hair denotes sexuality and compassion, although her blue eyes give the character a sense of purity to balance the behavior (Fig. 16).

Finral Roulacase, features a secondary male character mainly defined by his chromatics. Mostly throughout the show, he doesn't stand out in any way apart from his ability to create portals. He is mostly friendly and lively, characteristics displayed by the chromatic combination of brown and green. However, the chromatic also stands as a symbol of his magic, which allows him to travel freely (Fig. 17).



We observe that the location of the sequence is a closed cave, open to the outside behind the archetypal character, strengthening his image, just like in the case of the scene from MAPPA Studio's *Jujutsu Kaisen*. However, the cave is chromatically composed of aqua blue and black, resembling the refreshing atmosphere and power that characterize the sequence.

The dynamic of the encounter accompanies the anime's first opening played in the background, *Haruka Mirai*, which translates into *To the Faraway Future*, which gives the scene a rhythmically hopeful atmosphere.



An interesting point of discussion marks the narrator's intervention, who brings additional information regarding the fundamental idea of the entire anime. More accurately, the narrator states that: "The three leaves of the clover represent faith, hope, and love. Within a fourth leaf dwells good luck. Within a fifth leaf..." (Crunchyroll Collection, 2018, 0:36 – 0:50). The subsequent frame completes the statement by displaying the protagonist's demonic form, therefore featuring the acceptance of oneself. Hence, the clover, an intercultural symbol, represents the principal element of the anime, explicitly appearing once in a few episodes and also linking the anime title, *Black Clover*, with the protagonist (From Fig. 18 to Fig. 20).



The secondary symbol, the demon, represents, in this scene, the self the main protagonist accepts. Later on in the anime, we learn that the demon's name is Liebe, which etymologically comes from German and means love and symbolizes the demon's wish for acceptance and compassion. Additionally, his chromatics come as a reference to his demonic origin and gives a sense of mystery. Therefore, we understand why he doesn't appear somber in any way, a feature that also works as a grabber for the audience (Fig. 21).

A third symbol comes from the rusted sword of the protagonist (Fig. 22). The anime features the protagonist as a hard worker, gaining the sword with the anti-magic Grimoire as an outcome of his effort. Therefore, the rusted sword marks the character's continuous effort he devotes toward his goals.

In addition, with this visual, we observe here that Pierrot Studio doesn't animate the blood and



instead keeps it to look like bruises, thus reducing the intensity of the scene and focusing on the symbolic elements of the archetypal character.

The last element, which bears a symbolic meaning, is the grimoire, which appears in figures 14 and 15 at the beginning of the encounter. The first one, which belongs to the protagonist, has a dark red chromatic featuring the majestic power of the demon. Whereas the second one that appears next to the antagonist has an orange tint, displaying the character's enhanced vitality.

The scene concludes with the protagonist giving the ending blow, a moment which Pierrot Studio animates in black and white and presents from more angles to deepen the moment. An important detail is that the studio doesn't display the antagonist's death but only the defeat, thus keeping the encounter as one which reinforces the importance of accepting oneself.



Also, by synching the last blow with the protagonist's replica, "You've lost!", and the song's line, "You are my hope", (Crunchyroll Collection, 2018 1:47), Pierrot Studio builds the conclusion of the battle in a moralistic tone. Additionally, the studio brings up the idea of continuity and the conclusion of the debate between the characters, thus

leaving the audience connected with the show even after the end of the battle.

Hence, without presenting certain Japanese philosophical or mythological symbols, Pierrot Studio builds a scene to which the audience can relate through its moralistic message and characters, at which audiences from all the world can relate. The archetypal character, Asta, fits both visually and in terms of story impact in the innocent hero archetype category, though his innocence and purity that make him see the good in evil sometimes place him under more realistic characters, therefore also making him fall into the jester archetype in order to mock this kind of naïve attitude.

3. The dualistic realism of MAPPA Studio and Pierrot Studio - a brand of innocence and heroism

Through the previous visuals, scenes, and characters' backgrounds, we have observed that MAPPA Studio focuses mainly on the numerous layers that build the human emotion and the general tone around which a story finds its complex identity and compresses all of it in its archetypal character.

Therefore, the characters represent an essential element in MAPPA's perspective. Each one has a complex construction and chromatic that displays their personality, but also a story explored in more than one direction in order to build ambiguity. Additionally, the setting bears equal importance through chromatics, dominated by black and orange, indicating the somber tone and the angles of capturing the scenes. However, by merging them with the story, we observe that MAPPA Studio displays a complex view toward what anime should transmit. Each of the archetypal characters presented bear a complex perspective which creates a dualistic image around them, therefore portraying the grim side of what the human emotions bring.

From a different perspective, we can observe that MAPPA Studio takes projects with philosophical and mythological symbols, mainly from Japanese culture, leaving a mark on them by giving them a more complex message than their mythological one and creating their image in-between negative and positive. Rhetorically speaking, the figures from *Shingeki no Kyojin*, *Shingeki no Bahamut: Virgin Soul*, and the scene from *Jujutsu Kaisen* indicate that MAPPA Studio sees the final as a pivotal moment or a conclusion toward an emotion or event, therefore symbolically saying that the story had explored it to the fullest at that point. From that perspective, we understand that the sense of an ending is necessary for the audience to conclude a particular line of events and strengthen the emotional impact.

Although the apocalypse from the first anime doesn't mean the end of the show, the studio displays it through astonishment and fear toward the future. It marks the turn of Eren Yeager into an antagonist and portrays a scene with powerful emotional impact in front of the audience. Although the other two anime present opposite actions, a battle, and a dinner, the studio focuses on the sense of ending each conveys through chromatic and gestures, making the emotional impact of the atmospheres dissipate as the scenes conclude.

On another train of thought, we observe that Pierrot Studio sees anime as a means to illustrate the purity of humankind and keeps it simple while adapting it to what the audiences want to see. Although the secondary themes, such as horror and drama in *Tokyo Ghoul* or adventure in *Bleach* and *Black Clover*, hold equal importance with the action, their significance in the story doesn't diminish the moralistic message the studio aims to transmit and both are easy to understand and identify. But, more than that, those themes and the way they are approached show us that Pierrot Studio has a wider view toward what anime means than MAPPA Studio.

Regarding the characters' construction and chromatics, Pierrot Studio puts few details into the facial features, mainly focusing on emotions conveyed through the eyes and the expressions. Regarding the setting, we observe that Pierrot Studio always goes for simple settings that go hand in hand with the archetypal character's states of mind, and therefore are mainly simple.

Through the chromatic, dominated by warm and serene colors such as brown, white and dim orange, and angles, the characters, and the space set the positive tone of the show. Meanwhile, minor elements such as the sense of mystery and other elements conveyed through the characters only help them stand out and don't complicate the story.

Among the symbols used, we have less philosophical and mythological elements and more usual ones that feature the character's traits or accomplishments, thus making them appealing to a larger audience that may or may not lack knowledge of Japanese culture. Hence, they play an essential role in building a hopeful and innocent mindset rather than one based on the contradiction of human emotions.

For example, although Pierrot Studio builds the elements of an apocalyptic threat in *Tokyo Ghoul*, it also keeps the optimistic element, thus giving the audience a sense of possibility and future. Meanwhile, whereas in *Bleach* a common idea centered around an adventurous tone, *Black Clover* maintains the heroism and purity of the protagonist by not having the antagonist's death appear visually in the scene.

In terms of what defines its animations as a whole, we observe that both studios use audios that enhance the message the archetypal characters convey. Pierrot Studio stays loyal to

its word and mainly animates projects which are easy to understand and appeals to the larger audience. But although MAPPA Studio sticks to its main purpose as well, we observe that they approach more complex projects which aim toward a grimmer lesson which can also be seen as cruel but have a bigger emotional impact rather than taking a simple project which would bring more entertainment and less emotion to the viewer.

In terms of characters and the stories they drive, we have observed that MAPPA Studios goes for morally gray characters and protagonists which mediate between good and evil, therefore affecting the viewer's perspective toward the shows and the stories, but with perspectives that prove to be heroic no matter how grim they are. However, Pierrot Studio features moralistic characters and protagonists who face their challenges, learn from them, and move forward, both emotionally and in terms of story. This type of perspective showcases the little emotional impact and the simplicity of the stories the brand aims to develop toward.

We observe that each of the two studios' ideas are distinct in more than one way, and therefore each must have an audience that regards one of the two as better. On a large scale, we can see that the term *dualism* can also be seen from different perspectives as the two studios did. However, this paper only delves into how the animated projects create the distinction between the studios and what the central idea behind their brand is displayed in those projects.

Conclusion

We have seen how some of Japan's animation studios build their brand idea through verbal and nonverbal communication techniques such as the audio-visual, symbolic characters and events, and the emotional impact conveyed in the animations. Though in different measures, Pierrot Studio and MAPPA Studio both follow perspectives regarding how people identify themselves with emotion and morality, therefore featuring specific elements which strengthen their approach. Each of the two brands appeal to different audiences, thus enlarging the area the anime industry covers.

Regarding Japan's national brand, we see that anime plays an essential role in spreading Japanese culture, although they also delve into intercultural elements in order to enlarge their audiences. While MAPPA Studio brings forward the grimness of human emotions and helps

people learn about the consequences of their actions, Pierrot Studio leads people toward taking action with a positive attitude, thus focusing on creating a motivational mindset.

On a large scale, the growth of the anime industry in the past decades is a clear indication of the way studios build animations that have come to resemble certain elements such as the chromatic and symbols of the scenes or the characters in a story, and gestures that would lead to certain emotions with which people identify themselves. Therefore, it is fair to say that communication techniques are the pivotal elements behind the animated projects of brands of each animation studio and the anime industry

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