How Far Does Anime Challenge Joseph Nye's 'Soft Power' and Its Approach to Culture?

Japanese animation ('anime') often focusses on fantasy and outlandish realities yet, like many other cultural products and traditions, is very firmly woven into real-world International Relations (IR), existing at the centre of the Japanese student protests of the 60s and 70s and possessing a surprising yet well-substantiated fanbase in Black communities in Western countries.[1] Declared Japan's "greatest cultural export" by Tamaki Saito, anime is an especially tempting subject for a 'soft power' understanding of cultural products in IR- defined by Joseph Nye as "intangible power resources such as culture, ideology and institutions". However, the applicability of 'soft power' to anime has been contested, with Dana Fennell et al's conclusion that consumption of the cultural product fosters a "multicultural"[2] world view and "does not necessarily equate to soft power in the traditional sense"[3] and Kosuke Shimizu's leveraging of Tosaka Jun's notion of 'moral reflection' to reveal that culture in IR "is often narrated in an essentialised and fixed way to reproduce hegemony".[4] Thus, the challenge here is to first consider where the concept of 'soft power' can remain relevant to understandings of anime while also secondly exploring other means of mobilising the cultural product in studies of IR.

1. The 'Soft' In 'Soft Power'

This paper argues an answer can be found at two levels: firstly, and more directly, a historical exploration of the genre reveals a conflict between central government directives on anime and the actual intentions of consumers and producers such as Hayao Miyazaki, who argue that anime's capacity to express experiences and 'moral reflections' goes *beyond* its function as an economic and diplomatic asset.[5] A second and more damning answer for the soft power framework can be found in the concentration of anime fanbases in Black communities in Western countries, a trend summarised by podcast host Nocando as consumers seeking an "alternative" to stories "tinged by white privilege".[6] This study therefore explores both the consumption and production of anime across global, domestic and historic dimensions, deploying the analytical tools found in subaltern studies, cultural studies, postcolonial theory and **uneven and combined development** (UCD) literature in an attempt to gauge these perspectives and conceptualise what studies of 'soft power' may render 'unseen'. At the broadest level, this paper can be read as being demonstrative of how a variety of critical IR and non-IR approaches can be mobilised in conjunction to undermine the traditional referents and focuses of the field, looking outside of the usual places and listening to those other than the usual voices to get a closer picture of how individuals experience international reality.

1.2. Conceptualising the 'Unseen' – An 'Alternative' Theoretical Framework

In attempting to understand this 'unseen' side to soft power this paper draws on the analytical tools offered by subaltern and postcolonial studies but most fundamentally can be seen to fit within Roland Bleiker's powerful claim that "representation is always an act of power".[7] In seeking to "represent politics as realistically and authentically as possible",[8] studies in line with Bleiker's 'The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory' recognise that the represented can never completely mirror the representation and, therefore, views representations themselves as significant in order to achieve a "more diverse but also more direct encounter with the political".[9] This approach can be seen to have profound alignment with the subaltern and postcolonial research agenda, described by Eric Selbin & Meghana Nayek at the most basic level as resisting the centring of IR on voices from the global north/west that

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privilege "certain political projects" and censoring "multiple ways of understanding and living in the world".[10] A theoretical framework focussing on aesthetics is particularly useful in this regard, rather than simply "inserting cases studies from around the world", it can mobilise alternative modes of study that allow us to confront "the way we talk about, share and experience these narratives".[11]

It is important to note that, whilst recognition of the causal power and analytical relevance of representations and cultural content are indeed recent revelations in the field of IR, they are already well-substantiated outside of the discipline. Joseph Margolis' exposition of 'non-reductive materialism' as far back as 1978 describes the causal efficacy of cultural ideas irreducible to their physical foundations.[12] Not deterministic of any material outcomes in and of themselves, cultural ideas emerge here as existing beyond the realm of the physical but also existing side-by-side the physical in explaining material outcomes and it is exactly this ontology that supports the exploration of the value of cultural products *outside* of soft power in the field of IR- cultural products *can* be understood in terms of their relevance to material power relations, but they can *also* lend themselves to a wide range of other insights and explanations.

Described by Dipesh Chakrabarty as Ranajit Guha's "quest for a history in which the subaltern was the maker of his own destiny",[13] subaltern studies follow calls by historians E.P. Thompson and E.S. Thompson's "history from below" but fundamentally diverge in their Foucauldian "interrogation of the relationship between power and knowledge" and "critique of the nation form".[14] In doing so in the specific case of Indian colonial history, Guha criticises the "vertical mobilisation" of "peasant insurgency" for "elite history" and instead focusses on those experiences dismissed as "pre-political" under traditional historical frameworks.[15] These mission statements are then refracted through the critical deconstructions offered by Gayatri Spivak to find a potent alliance with Postcolonial studies. Spivak questions any straightforward program of 'letting the subaltern speak' when Western forms of knowledge are interwoven with interests specific to Western perspectives and are thus obsessed with reproducing itself.[16] Given that "power emerged through [Western] institutions and practices to describe the Orient",[17] critical perspectives are necessitated in such a study of cultural products originating in the East and Joane Sharp's symposium 'Geographies of Postcolonialism' can be seen to provide a sort of roadmap through Spivak's challenges. For Sharp, such a research agenda can be seen to provide a space of "geographical imagination" in which "communities are stretched across state boundaries, but grounded in the recognition of their place in the remaking of identities and possibility of connection",[18] thus undermining traditional paradigms of state sovereignty and power in IR to recognise more complex, dynamic and transnational modes of knowledge and existence. For example, she points to Judith Butler's "feminist ethics of cosmopolitanism" challenging the "normative framings of Liberal democratic deliberation and choice-making self-reflective subjects, [instead seeing] subjects as endlessly reconstituted through dialectical processes of recognition within multiple networks of power".[19] These sort of analytical insights into an alternative view of the international find profound relevance to the current debate as to 'soft power's applicability to anime as well as its appeal to African-American communities, simultaneously illustrating the sort of conflict between Western and non-Western modes of understanding culture in IR espoused by Shimizu as well as providing the means by which anime's function as an expression for African-American experiences can be articulated.

1.3. Literature Review:

1.3.1. 'Soft Power' and its Critics

Defining power as "an ability to do things and control others, to get others to do what they otherwise would not",[20] Joseph Nye introduces traditional 'hard power' "co-optive" means of achieving control through "the military game an overall structure of the balance of power" in contrast with the "coercive" means of 'soft power' increasingly relevant in the contemporary world system[21], involving a state's "ability to structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with its own".[22] Widely recognised as the co-founder of the neoliberal approach to IR alongside Robert Keohane, this conceptual division is central to Nye's arguments that the international system in the aftermath of the Cold War is being increasingly defined by "growing international independence", with international power struggles being fought indirectly through international institutions and manifested via the transnational spread of global corporations.[23] These arguments emerge in contrast to the realist

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and neorealist focus on direct confrontations centring on state power balances and objective material capacities; for Nye, this is fittingly exemplified in the rise of Japan as a "trading state"[24] over the late 20th century which, in the absence of military power owing to its self-imposed restrictions as a post-imperialist nation, placed greater emphasis on "intangible modes of power" "such as culture, ideology and institutions" to achieve relative gains and development goals through coercion. However, while the Japanese "manufacturing sector provides it with an important source of soft power… [it] is somewhat limited by the inward orientation of its culture" vis-à-vis the current dominant role occupied by the United States and, therefore in Nye's initial introduction of the 'soft power' concept seems unlikely to depose the US' hegemonic position.[25]

This has seen opposition both from the Neorealist approach rendered by Niall Ferguson, arguing that "the trouble with soft power is that it's, well, soft"[26] as well as from Kyoungtaek that it contains "conceptual ambiguity" as to its exact distance from hard power.[27] Engaging Nye's example of Japan, Kyoungtaek argues that the Japanese focus on 'Gross National Cool' (e.g. 'cool Japan initiative') is a "numerical index of cultural contents businesses" which is directly understood as 'hard power' under Nye's initial rendition and, therefore, it is unclear where Japan's 'soft power' is derived.[28] Following Julie Reeves' division between a) "the humanistic idea of culture" related to the colonial enterprise and arguing that individuals are able to confront their own culture, and, b) "the anthropological idea of culture" which sees people and culture as far more intertwined,[29] Kyoungtaek argues that Nye's 'soft power' concept contains a fundamental conflation that allows states to cover self-interested actions "with the obscure mantle of soft power".[30] As such, Kyoungtaek can be seen to inadvertently compliment Ferguson's criticisms in arguing for a distinction between a) 'SOFT power' (a passive variant based on liberal cultural exchange) and b) 'soft POWER' (that which is actively mobilised for state interest).[31] In doing so he places himself alongside Nancy Snow's similar interventions into the public diplomacy model of state culture promoted by Jessica Gienow-Hecht.[32]

1.3.2. Anime and Cartoons in International Relations

These debates hold implications for studies of anime in IR, with Michael Norris[33] and Ibrahim Akbas[34] both arguing to some degree for it to be understood in terms of 'soft power', mainly through tourism and the promotion of 'Anime Ambassadors', whereas Fennell et al,[35] Amy-Shirong Lu[36] and Andrew Mckevitt[37] conclude that anime has a relevance to IR tangential to 'soft power'- namely, fostering multiculturalism and expressing encounters with the international. For example, Fenell et al's study into Western fanbase's online posts regarding particular anime series concludes that rather than directly expressing support for Japanese values, fans took "pleasure" in "straddling" the diverse multicultural representations found within the genre and therefore its relevance to IR can primarily be understood in terms of fostering multiculturalism and reducing ethnocentrism rather than "soft power in the traditional sense".[38] Similarly, Mckevitt describes the extensive history of fan support for anime in the US as driven by peer-to-peer exchange and fan dubbing in a relationship that was, at least initially, devoid of any state involvement and solely revolving around community activism and a "cosmopolitan, globalised worldview" against the "economic nationalism" evidenced in the 'Buy America' campaigns, for example.[39] Yee-Kuang Heng can be seen as occupying a middle point between these views- although he agrees with Fennel et al that the Japanese '*kawaii'* culture (meaning 'cute', specifically in a childlike sense) often present in anime does *not* significantly translate to 'soft power', he neglects consideration of other means by which '*kawaii'* can still be considered relevant to the discipline and instead posits that Japan's 'soft power' is derived from a "degree of alignment with global norms" and a positioning as an international "trouble shooter" on issues such as climate change.[40]
Regardless, all of these views recognise 'soft power' to some degree in the persistence of 'otaku tourism' (described by Akbas as "a kind of 'pilgrimage" of global anime fans to specific districts of Tokyo where anime products are sold, such as Akihabara[41]) and in this literature a deeper debate can be found centring on Koichi Iwabuchi's concept of '*mukokuseki'*[42](described as "something… lacking any nationality" or a lack of "cultural odour"), arguing that anime is distinctively devoid of Japanese imagery. However, Adrian Athique responds that this in itself "distinctively Japanese" and thus does translate to 'soft power' benefits for the state.[43] Within this, Lu's exploration of the multi-layered cultural politics of anime finds a plethora of representations consistent with Japan's distinct national experience, from the "de-politicised internationalisation" of its racially ambiguous characters (e.g. with large eyes and muted skin tones), to "occidentalised internationalisation" which often portrays Western-looking blonde characters as enemies, and "self-orientalised internationalisation" which presents Japan as a Western country within the East and other Asian countries as inferior, essentially "orientalis[ing] itself to suit national goals".[44] This diverse and

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conflicting cultural politics can thus firstly be seen to exemplify Goncalves et al's conclusions that anime is "not monolithic" and that Western audiences generally "bring their own motivations for consumption",[45] raising explicit challenges for how a research framework should proceed in the field. In summary, Fennel et al, Lu, and Iwabuchi fall in line with Bleiker's 'aesthetic turn' in taking the thematic contents of the cultural product itself as significant to explore the frontiers of 'soft power' and can be supported by Kyoungtaek's description of a 'limit point' in culture's ability to directly translate to support for state power and sovereignty. This paper locates itself beyond this 'limit' in conceptualising modes of understanding 'anime' in IR *tangential* to 'soft power' and thus critique views provided by Norris, Akbas, Heng and Athique.

At a deeper level, Shimizu views the Japanese government's gradual internalising of 'soft power' paradigms from 2005 onwards as conflictual with the actual intentions expressed by anime producers themselves. Focussing specifically on globally renowned animator Hayao Miyazaki (founder of production office Studio Ghibli), Shimizu argues that Miyazaki's depictions of ethnic diversity within Japan, as well as wider themes resistant to the "institutionalised nation-state" in films like 'Princess Mononoke', are actively disregarded by central Japanese ministries in favour of "forcibly unif[ying] the cultural diversity under the name of Japanese culture and soft power diplomacy".[46] Railing against these attempts, Shimizu argues that distinctively Japanese notions of '*jōshiki*' ("the politics of everydayness") and Tosaka Jun's philosophy of culture as a "moral reflection" which is "indispensable for critical reflection in constructing scientific and philosophical theories".[47] Suffice to say, Shimizu's study can be seen as also advancing alternate means of understanding the relevance of culture to IR tangential to 'soft power'. Miyazaki himself has written extensively on the distinctive role he believes the anime medium for the expression of experience, stating in 1988:

*"I think that a popular movie has to be full of true emotion, even if it's frivolous. The entrance should be low and wide so that anyone can be invited in, but the exit should be high and purified. It shouldn't be something that admits, emphasizes, or enlarges the lowness. I don't like Disney movies. The entrance and the exit are lined up at the same low height and width. I can't help but feel that it looks down on the audience."**[48]**

Miyazaki, much like Nocando's aversion to stories "tinged by white privilege",[49] clearly sees something distinct about anime's capacity for expression and thus encourages comparison with that of American cartoons. Lauren Karp's 'Truth, Justice and the American Way: What Superman Teaches Us about the American Dream and Changing Values within the US' provides an extensive discussion of the changes in the production of prototypical American cartoon hero over history, initially appearing as a crash-landed alien and the "ultimate immigrant" primarily concerning himself with "saving Depression-era labourers"[50] to being stripped of all the "disrespect for authority that initially made him popular".[51] Corroborating Matthew Costello & Kent Worcester's view that superheroes can typically be read as "reflecting the cultural context in which they were created"[52] as well as Thomas Inge's eminent intervention into the field arguing that comics play "heavily on the sensibility of the American populace... serv[ing] as revealing reflectors of popular attitudes",[53] Karp describes how "when America seemed at the height of its economic and international power, Superman now stood taller than all of his opponents".[54] In this way, a specific research frame can be seen to emerge, moving from specific engagements of the production and consumption habits of anime domestically to their global counterparts in contrast with that of American cartoons to explore how the contents of anime can be rendered academically relevant and, ultimately, explore the 'unseen' side to 'soft power'.

2. Anime at the Domestic Level

2.1. A Brief History of Anime:

2.1.1. Early Anime Productions in View of the International

Born out of exchanges with American animators but soon developing a niche for itself in global exports, in many ways the emergence and spread of anime as a distinct expressive medium is a textbook example of UCD. This "interactive multiplicity of human society"[55] can be potently witnessed in the case of Japan's first terrestrially serialised series: *Astro Boy.**[56]*** Much like Miyazaki's simultaneous expressions of indebtedness to Disney films yet intention to take the medium in a different direction, *Astro Boy*'s creator Osamu Tezuka was strongly inspired by Disney productions

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yet, as Susan Napier argues, the show's long-term serialisation led a turn towards "adult orientation and more complex storylines".[57] Securing global distribution deals, Tezuka's work was not confined to simply reproducing the American style of animation and this was emphasised further when his second feature *Kimba the White Lion* became the subject of controversy between American and Japanese production houses. Broadcast in both Japan and American between 1965-67, *Kimba the White Lion* focusses on a lion cub named Kimba's struggles in the African bush against the evil one-eyed lion Claw to fulfil the legacy of his deceased father- a narrative that many Japanese animators criticise Disney for plagiarising in their 1994 film *The Lion King*.[58] Whilst it is reported that Walt Disney himself declared that he wanted to "make something just like" Tezuka's *Astro Boy* and that at least two animators on *The Lion King* admitted they had watched *Kimba the White Lion* beforehand,[59] this controversy suffices to show that anime very quickly grew out of simply paying homage to American animation and became globally renowned in its own right- in the terms of Napier, "by the late 1990's it was clear that anime both was influenced by and influenced a range of Western cultural products".[60]

Similarly befitting of UCD, it is important to note that, at least initially, anime's spread to America was a community-driven process with markedly little influence from institutional and national forces. Providing an extensive history of the medium's popularity in America, Andrew Mckevitt argues that anime's initial spread was fundamentally a "process from below" [62] and "participatory culture"[63] driven by fans themselves translating shows and organising community newsletters and events. For Mckevitt, this significance can be summed up as the 'globalising of America', allowing people "envision communities that shape group identities and claim individual loyalties while transcending national boundaries".[64] Although, this gradually caught the attention of global streaming platforms like Crunchyroll and Netflix post-2000 which began to commercialise these flows (see section 3.3), this initial relationship further suggests that anime and cultural products more widely can be captured through relations of UCD operating beneath national and institutional forces that are emphasised in Nye's 'soft power' framework. 'Soft power', however, can nonetheless be witnessed in the first feature-length anime film *Momotarō: Secret Sailors*, preceding *Astro Boy* by around 20 years. Commissioned by the Japanese Naval Ministry as propaganda material during World War 2 and itself inspired by the 1940 Disney film *Fantasia,*[65] *Momotarō: Secret Sailors* was explicitly intended to serve Japan's Imperialist aspirations and thus is a reminder of how 'soft power' understandings can exist side-by-side more critical modes of rendering the cultural product relevant to studies of IR.

2.1.2. Anime as a 'Moral Reflection'

Unfortunately, Imperialist aspirations were not the only means by which World War 2 influenced the genre and two landmark 1988 anime productions, Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira* and Hayao Miyazaki's *Grave of the Fireflies*, both clearly take inspiration from the use of atomic bombs (the former being a sci-fi bioengineered superpower and the latter being explicitly based on the events of World War 2). Far from reinforcing central directives, however, Napier describes both of these works as providing a "victim's history" and that "apocalyptic themes and imagery tend to increase at times of social change and uncertainty"[66] while Freda Freiberg terms this the "postnuclear sublime", attempting to digest the collective memory of Japan's nuclear terror.[67] Both films occupy a turning-point in the development of the anime medium, with *Akira* being the most expensive anime movie ever produced at the time and *Grave of the Fireflies* being the debut release from Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli on which Shimizu builds his positioning of anime as a "moral reflection" operating beneath the institutional and national focus on 'soft power'.

Indeed, Sharon Kinsella's 'Cuties in Japan' highlights another element of this critical reflection in her discussion of '*kawaii*' in direct opposition to Heng's emphasis on its relation to paradigms of power. For Kinsella, the rise of manga and anime over the post-war period coincides with wider shifts within Japanese society as "adult came to have the additional meaning of conservative, while childlike and play came to have the additional meanings of progressive and open-minded".[68] Described by Okonogi Keigo as the "moratorium people",[69] over the late '60s and early '70s a spate of student protests broke out across the country in which "rather than reading the classics and doing as they were told, students started to read instead children's and adolescent comics, more or less adopting the comic medium as their own".[70] This complex moral relationship with central authorities remains central to the medium today, with the most commercially popular manga style *shōnen* (literally translating to 'young boy') centring around maverick, often male characters who have disrespect for authority yet often achieve morally good outcomes in their own way.[71] For example, *One Piece* (the longest continuous publication and highest-selling manga to date) tells

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the story of the rogue 'Straw Hat' pirate crew fighting the forces of a corrupt World Government and military Marines through their own childlike ideals of good, which invariably prevail in the end. Viewed in this context, anime's rise to mainstream popularity visibly coalesces a range of international and domestic relations that cannot be reduced simply to central state power. Whilst it is true that elements such as '*kawaii*' can be seen to tangentially serve 'soft power' paradigms with 'otaku tourism' to anime districts of Tokyo like Shibuya and Harajuku, there is a complex history influencing the consumption and production of the medium today that is entirely separate to this.

From this brief history alone, a series of core themes of the anime medium can be seen to emerge that frame its relevance to discussions in IR, positioning the cultural product as having expressions and societal significance tangential to that of 'soft power' and central sovereign directives, which can nonetheless be witnessed in propaganda production *Momotarō: Secret Sailors* or 'otaku tourism'. From its situation in relations of unevenness and combination to its "complex story lines" and ability to provide critical reflections on national experience, a mobilisation of the genre as tangential to Nye's 'soft power' paradigms can begin to be constructed.

2.2. A Conflict Between Producers and Central Directives

Recent years have seen the Japanese government itself adopt a 'soft power' approach to culture with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) launching the "anime ambassador" program in 2008 to use "traditional culture and art… as its primary tools for cultural diplomacy" and chairing the International MANGA Award to encourage the spread of "MANGA culture overseas and international cultural exchange through MANGA".[72] These policies have explicitly internalised Nye's original framework, viewing cultural products as integral to Japanese power relations and highlighting a "need for a greater dissemination of Japanese culture" given that "soft power in diplomacy [has] become increasingly important in recent years".[73] However, despite the outright mention of Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli in MOFA mission statements, expressions of resistance to the commercialisation and co-opting of anime for central interests from producers like Hayao Miyazaki further indicate a function of the cultural product tangential to 'soft power'. For Shimizu, this takes the form of an "objection to the prevailing modernized 'Japanese-ness' as the basis of nation-statehood and Japanese culture" and instead view preferentially a "pre-modern, indigenous culture of Japan… pre-dating private property and other political institutions" known as '*jomon bunka'.[74]* Similarly, Napier argues that "films like *Princess Mononoke* actually work to resist and even confront some public stereotypes, inspiring huge numbers of moviegoers to look at some of the myths of modern Japan in a more critical way".[75] This clearly falls alongside Shimizu's view that anime can be understood through Tosaka Jun's notion of culture as a "moral reflection" and that, while "Miyazaki's intention is to question and critically assess the prevailing order of nation-state and consumer capitalism", this is ignored by the Japanese government's attempts to co-opt the medium for power politics.[76]

In this way, Shimizu's warning that when culture is "presented as essentialised and fixed that East/West paradigms become violent nationalism rather than critical reflection"[77] can both provide a critique of Nye's 'soft power' framework and orientate an alternative framework for this study. In a theory born in Western countries that chiefly aims to make sense of international power relations and thus is little concerned with the actual content of 'soft power' resources, in many ways Nye's arguments make sense. The 'soft power' framework emerged at the end of the 20th century in which the nature of power relations were indeed shifting from direct military engagement and posturing during the Cold War to a more insidious competition based around institutions and this can be directly witnessed in the more recent launching of Japan's 'anime ambassador' program, for example. Inbuilt in this perspective, therefore, is the assumption that an international theory needs to make sense of these shifts for policymakers to take account of these emerging power paradigms, for instance Nye's incipient example of the US being confronted by the emergence of Japan as a Liberal state in the 1980s.[78] This holds true for Niall Fergusson's criticism of 'soft power' as "soft" as well,[79] in that he is criticising the approach from the view of whether these international shifts *do* necessitate a shift in policy directives for Western countries. Sharp's warning that "power emerged through [Western] institutions and practices to describe the orient" appears increasingly relevant here as 'soft power' gradually begins to emerge as one such practice.[80] However, even this brief discussion so far has highlighted that if cultural content itself is understood as significant, as in non-reductive materialism and Bleiker's 'aesthetic turn', then there is a plethora of other ways in which culture can be understood as relevant to the discipline, leading to wildly different insights into international reality.

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So far, contrary to the perspectives offered by Nye and Heng, Chapter 2 has highlighted how the domestic history of anime can be understood as a 'moral reflection' on unique individual and national experience and borne out of ongoing and dynamic international exchanges which can be best captured under a UCD framework of "the interactive multiplicity of human society… [as] a fundamental source of creative change and innovation in human history" operating beneath the national and institutional forces central to 'soft power'.[81] Furthermore, this approach to the cultural product can also be seen to better capture its reality for those most involved, for example anime producers like Miyazaki and consumers such as those involved in the 1970's Japan student protests. As such, a critique of Nye's 'soft power' framework has been mobilised in highlighting the function of cultural products such as anime in international relations *tangential* to power politics that would be missed purely under Nye's worldview. However, a more damning critique of the framework which casts 'soft power' as actively harmful will be mobilised by looking at the international consumption and production of anime in Chapter 3.

3. Anime at the Global Level

3.1. An "Alternative" to "Stories Tinged by White Privilege"

The popularity of anime (in particular, *shōnen* anime such as *Dragon Ball Z* and *Naruto*) within Black communities in Western countries is widely discussed on online forums. For example, 2018 saw anime publication Kotaku release an article titled 'Why Black Men Love Dragon Ball Z',[82] multimedia journalist Onike Brown explored 'How Black Fans Contribute to Anime's Widespread Popularity' in 2020[83] and a "hood" remake of the *Naruto* series has reached over 6 million views on YouTube since its release in 2019,[84] just to name a few. This trend stretches to a perceived, yet rather unexpected, alliance between the hip hop (itself originating in Black communities in New York) and anime communities, with 10 million strong media company Genius publishing two videos detailing references to various anime series (again, most commonly *Dragon Ball Z* and *Naruto*) from, almost exclusively African-American, hip hop artists.[85] This is further evidenced in the gradually increasing release of anime series that explicitly blend these two diasporas: *Samurai Champloo* is a hip-hop themed Samurai story featuring a soundtrack produced by legendary hip hop artist Nujabes, with director Shinichirō Watanabe declaring that "Samurai and modern hip hop artists have something in common… rappers open their way to the future with one microphone, samurai decide their fate with one sword".[86] Similarly, the series *Afro-Samurai* also features a soundtrack produced by the Wu-Tang Clan's RZA and includes a significant amount of Black contributors, including Samuel L. Jackson voicing the main character. Very few of these references look for concrete statistics which, in fact, do seem to substantiate the phenomenon: one recent American viewership poll from global intelligence company Morning Consult finds that both Hispanic and African-American communities are almost twice as likely to express "very favourable" opinions towards the cultural product than White respondents and are consistently less likely to express "unfavourable" impressions. Meanwhile, another poll from YouGov found that on average each ethnic group was around equally as likely to express favourable opinions to typical American cartoons such as *Tom & Jerry* and *Bugs Bunny* whilst African-Americans were three times as likely to list *Dragon Ball* as their favourite 'cartoon' overall.

The degree to which this phenomenon is substantiated both empirically and anecdotally thus provides a strong impetus to consider Nocando's declaration that anime's appeal to Black communities in Western countries hinges on its ability to provide an "alternative" to "stories tinged by white privilege".[89] In conversation with the creators of wildly successful 'Black anime' series *the Boondocks* on podcast show *Fun with Dumb,* host Jonathan Park raises the question of why African-Americans in particular seem to support anime and the show's panel immediately begin debating the question without contention. Their first response is to remind Park that this is, at the very least, not a new phenomenon as the above news articles would suggest – Nocando (himself a hip hop artist and anime fan) mentions how his father was a huge fan of the 60's anime series *Speed Racer* and that more widely Kung-Fu movies in the '70s and '80s had a significant support base in Black communities too, terming it a "non-white, alternative structure". Indeed, this would be supported by early Black hip hop group Wu-Tang Clan's basing of their entire debut project *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)* on two 70's Kung-Fu films *Enter the Dragon* and *the 36th Chamber of Shaolin*. It is in this context that the *Fun With Dumb* hosts position anime's appeal to Black communities as an "alternative" to "stories tinged by white privilege", with Carl Jones arguing that both Kung-Fu films and anime hinge on an "identity crisis" in African-American communities' representation in mainstream American culture and Nocando terming Superman cartoons "boring" because it is "struggle free".[90] Compounding these explanations, Genius'

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own exploration of the alliance between hip hop and anime also finds that this appeal rests on the "struggle" of its main characters to succeed and overcome challenges[91] whilst Napier's exploration of anime outlines "more complex storylines" and an insurance "that the viewer cannot slip so easily into a simplistic moral equation" as key themes of the cultural product more widely.[92] These themes can be seen to hint at a far stronger critique of Nye's 'soft power' framework in the anime tradition than in Chapter 2, indicating that the cultural product contains a voice for underrepresented communities and an outlet for their experiences that are entirely silenced under Nye's essentialised view of culture. From substantiating these anecdotal references to the popularity of anime in Black communities to finding a consensus among these perspectives on its appeal hinging on moral complexity and struggle in anime storylines as compared to Western cartoons, a thematic comparison between the two traditions can now be conducted to test these conclusions.

3.2. Thematic Comparison Between Anime and American Cartoons

Nocando and Brian Jones point to, firstly, the distinctly non-Western appearance and, secondly, specific narrative and moral content of anime to argue that it provides an "alternative" to "stories tinged by white privilege"[93], and their own contrast between the Japanese series *Dragon Ball Z* and America's *Superman* provides a strong starting point with which to test this perspective. American superhero comics and related cartoons are described by Costello and Worcester as "reflecting the cultural context in which they were created", often being "wielded as propagandistic icons".[94] For Karp, *Superman* specifically mirrors the rise of the US in the international system, arguing that "when America seemed at the height of its economic and international power [in the Post-War period], Superman… stood taller than his opponents".[95] Initially published in serial in 1938, Superman first appeared as a "saviour who could save Americans from their everyday problems" with creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster reminiscing that "Superman grew out of our… feeling that we were right there at the bottom and we could empathise with people".[96] However, the Superman comics were gradually subject to a range of constraints during and immediately following World War 2 with Dr Wertham's widely-publicised accusation that his Depression-era pro-labour escapades were a support of juvenile delinquency and Communism leading to a series of Comic Code regulations that banned the "disrespect for authority" that initially made the hero popular.[97] Founders Siegel and Shuster were soon duped out of their creative rights over the series and 1952 subsequently saw a new tagline for the hero: "truth, justice and the American way", turning the once hero of the everyday man into what Karp labels a "flag with a face".[98] Reading the Superman story in this way, a degree of weight can already be seen to be lent to Nocando's comments – simply by not being subject to the same nationalist constraints that Superman was, anime heroes like Goku from *Dragon Ball Z* can immediately be seen as 'alternate' and subversive in an American societal context.

A second parallel can be drawn between the two series in that both Goku and Superman derive their superpowers from their alien heritage, with Superman hailing from the fictional Planet Krypton and Goku from Planet Vegeta and both being sent to Earth to escape the destruction of their home planets. However, although Superman arrives in Kansas as the "ultimate immigrant", he soon begins to fight for the "American way" and even serves the US during a fictional World War 2.[99] Meanwhile, the *Dragon Ball* mythos invents a fictional Earth which is decidedly more detached from real-world representations. *Dragon Ball*'s Earth is made up of regions decidedly more detached from the real world with cities like "East City" and "West City" and Goku's initial adventures mainly seeing him defending his friends and competing in Martial Arts tournaments to develop his strength. Where Superman is explicitly positioned as a national protector, Goku emerges as a far more localised superhero concerned instead with his small community of friends and fighters and struggling to get stronger. This narrative contrast contains implications for the '*mukokuseki'* debate surrounding anime as Goku is never explicitly associated with any real-world statehood – thus supporting the views of Fennel and Mckevitt that anime's primary appeal to Western audiences is in the form of fostering "multiculturalism"[100] and fantasy immersion rather than translating into any direct and tangible support for the Japanese state. In fact, *Dragon Ball*'s early storylines appear based on the Chinese folk tale *Journey to the West* as, much like the Chinese mythical hero Sun Wukong, Goku (full name: Son Goku) flies on a cloud known as the "flying nimbus", wields a magically-extending pole and as a child bears the features of a monkey. Even this vague influence is then inverted in the sequel *Dragon Ball Z* (which, coincidentally, is the series that saw the show catapulted to spectacular popularity in Western countries) in which Goku develops the ability to turn into a "Super Saiyan", with his blonde hair and blue eyes in many ways taking on the appearance of a Western superhero. Again, at the very least in contrast to their American counterparts, this appears to support the view that anime series are

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notably stateless in their representations and contain what Lu terms "de-politicised internationalisation", depicting racially ambiguous characters and overtly fictional worlds.[101]

A final layer of comparison can be drawn between Japanese and American superheroes more generally through interrogation of their motivations for action. Marvel's flagship superhero Spiderman first pronounced the now-ubiquitous adage "with great power comes great responsibility"[105] in 1962 but this actually has much deeper roots in Western political discourse, appearing during the French Revolution with the Comité de Salut Public's 'Plan de travail, de surveillance et de correspondence' statement that the representatives of the committee "must contemplate that a great responsibility is the inseparable result of a great power".[106] The conceptual association of "great power" and "great responsibility" subsequently features in speeches by, amongst others, US President William McKinley in 1899[107] and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in 1906[108] before being attributed to *Spiderman*. This ethos for a superhero contains stark contrast with a speech by Goku in episode 95 of the *Dragon Ball Z* series in which he states "power comes in response to a need, not a desire. You have to create that need".[109] Where Spiderman's motivations for action are quite literally rooted in that of Western political leaders and a tradition of the politics of (exogenously given) power, Goku focuses on the struggle for that power itself, confirming Napier's and Nocando's earlier conclusions that "struggle" forms a key theme of the anime medium. Similarly, where Western superheroes are often charged with upholding moral values of "truth" and "justice"[110] and the fending off of endlessly-appearing supervillains such as *Spiderman*'s Green Goblin or *Superman*'s Lex Luthor, *Dragon Ball* and *Dragon Ball Z* contain a more complex morality. Blurring the lines of good and evil, many of the narrative's antagonists transition to co-protagonists over the *Dragon Ball* storyline, for example the ruthless alien Piccolo Jr. ends up defending Goku and even raising his son Gohan after Goku is killed in battle. More significantly is Prince Vegeta, who initially appears as a mass murderer and perpetrator of heinous crimes yet gradually becomes co-opted in Goku's group of friends and aids them in their struggles to survive. It is worth noting that, at least vocally, Vegeta's moral compass never fully changes and, in contrast to Goku's motivation to defend himself and his friends, Vegeta is mainly motivated by getting stronger than his adversaries, complaining that "every time [he] reach[es] a new level of strength, a greater power appears to challenge [his] authority".[111] Nonetheless, Vegeta is one of the most popular characters the series has produced, initially ranking fourth among viewers in Shōnen Jump's 1993 popularity poll and subsequently ranking second only to Goku in every poll since.[112] This contrast between Japanese and Western superheroes' motivations for action again lends weight to earlier debates on anime's specific appeal, firstly reinforcing this notion of "struggle" as a distinctive element of the medium yet also corroborating Miyazaki and Napier's view that anime contains an insurance "that the viewer cannot slip so easily into a simplistic moral equation".[113]

In sum, a thematic comparison of anime and Western superhero cartoons lends a great deal of weight to Nocando's view that anime can provide an "alternative" to "stories tinged by white privilege" for Black communities in Western countries.[114] The degree to which the *Superman* series was co-opted in nationalist ideals in the United States immediately renders animation 'alternate' by default, and this is compounded by the fact that anime with significant Western popularity such as *Dragon Ball Z* are often devoid of such explicit national associations. Finally, these stories tend to focus on struggles to endure through tough circumstances and characters with complex morality that can be seen as appealing to subjugated communities and act as a vehicle for more nuanced expression vis-à-vis Western cartoons. These conclusions are further reinforced by corroborating other views on anime more widely, substantiating the Complex's view that anime's appeal rests on a "struggle", Lu's insistence that anime (or, at least, series especially popular in Western countries) exhibit a stark degree of '*mukokuseki*'**[115]** and Napier's view that "simplistic moral equation[s]" are not forthcoming within the medium.[116]

In many ways, Western superhero cartoons such as *Superman* and *Spiderman* can be read as an allegory for Western hegemony, featuring character's motivated by the politics of power from their supernaturally privileged position and even outright supporting the United States in fictional portrayals of World War 2. Much like America's militaristic omnipresence across the 20th and 21st centuries[117], superheroes like Superman and Spiderman are portrayed as the sole defenders of the city charged with upholding "truth" and "justice" and defeating one-dimensional "evil" villains.[118] By contrast, anime's focus on the much more individualised and localised struggles of heroes like Goku and Vegeta to defend their friends and strengthen themselves can be seen as containing parallels with subjugated communities in Western countries. Superhero cartoons such as *Superman* can be seen to

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stand for ideals that minorities such as African Americans are often excluded from, not least of all because these heroes are almost exclusively white, and this can in many ways be encapsulated in bell hooks criticism of "the notion that we should all be… 'just human' under the framework of white supremacy [which] has usually meant that subordinate groups must surrender their identities".[119] By extension, the appeal of 'alternative' representations and moralities that the anime medium provides can be understood as a means with which to articulate this distinctness in identity. While still rooted in interpretive analysis as of yet, the capacity for anime to express narratives and moralities that can be seen as resonant with such communities is further evidenced in the recent globalisation (or rather, de-localisation from Japan) of anime production and in particular the concentration of recent productions that appeal to Black audiences, explored in section 3.3.

3.3. The De-Localisation of Anime Production and Consumption

Whilst section 2.1 detailed the emergence of anime productions in Japan and their spread around the globe in the latter half of the 20th century, the 21st century has seen increasing globalisation of these productions and de-localisation *away* from its Japanese roots. Most significantly, in 2018 global streaming giant Netflix made the widely-publicised declaration that it would "grow anime productions" through both partnerships with Japanese production houses but also through funding its own original series in light of a significantly growing global demand for the medium.[120] As part of this shift, Netflix is supporting the development of a variety of series that are produced entirely outside of Japan yet still broadcast under the 'anime' genre, including the American-produced *Castlevania* or an animated adaptation of Filipino 'komik' *Trese*.[121] The year 2020 saw 100 million households watch at least one anime title on the platform in a staggering increase of 50% on the previous years' figures and, observing this phenomenon, online anime publication The Canipa Effect argues that this indicates a shift from anime being "uniquely Japanese" to having an "inherent appeal as a storytelling medium".[122] These insights corroborate Napier, Fennel et al and Nocando's views that anime's appeal globally hinges on some elements of a distinct expressive capacity- for example in themes such as moral complexity and an emphasis on "struggle" or the fostering of "multiculturalism – in direct opposition to Heng, Akbas and Norris' focus on national representations and support for the Japanese state.

Most relevant to this study, however, is the centrality of Black actors and creatives to this globalising trend, of which the aforementioned *Afro Samurai* series is but one example. American-produced and anime-inspired series *the Boondocks* (whose producers, in conversation with Nocando and Jonathan Park, bestowed the title for this paper) entirely centres around providing commentary on African-American experience in America, with skits focussing on the trial of R. Kelly, O.J. Simpson and Oprah Winfrey, just to name a few. Tia Tyree and Adrian Krishnasamy argue that the series "speaks on resistance, liberation, peace and harmony, and does so in the language of African-Americans- Ebonics".[123] Moreover, this takes place through the manifestation of the distinct African-American concept of *'nommo'*– defined by Tyree and Krishnasamy as "the instrumental power of speech to bring forth African-American selfhood and the Black experience".[124] Similarly, as recently as April 2021 Netflix released the first entirely African-American produced anime series *Yasuke*, telling the highly romanticised story of the eponymous real-world 15th century African samurai. What this makes abundantly clear is that not only is there a significant resonance of anime storylines and themes, but that some Black creatives actively seek to use the medium to tell their own stories and experiences from within Western countries. In many ways, anime considered in this frame begins to emerge as one route through which to achieve the subaltern studies goal of telling "histor[ies] from below"[125] and Sharp's notion of "remaking… identities and possibilities of connection".[126] For these approaches to international reality, "to be heard" is "to be known"[127] and this discussion finds a potent alliance with the grafting of African American notions of '*nommo*' and Ebonics onto the medium of anime. Quite literally African-American creatives such as *the Boondocks'* Aaron McGruder have found a way to express Black lived experience and values through adopting the stylistic aesthetics and story tropes of anime. In essence, where Spivak poses the difficulty of 'letting the subaltern speak' when Western practices and forms of knowledge are obsessed with reproducing their own perspectives,[128] Black creators and audiences seem to have found one such voice in circumventing these forms of knowledge through the distinctly non-Western medium of anime, especially given that the power of storytelling and speech also has such deep roots in African-American traditions.

In this way, the globalisation of anime production, especially towards African American communities, adds an

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additional layer to this paper's critique of Nye's Soft Power framework. Where anime's a) complex cultural politics supports an understanding of the genre tangential to Soft Power at a domestic level and both its b) distinct moral content and c) starkly non-Western appearance support a critique of a Soft Power understanding the medium at a global level, the grafting of African-American traditions onto anime in series such as *Boondocks* takes this complex cultural politics to a whole new level. The fact that the medium is described as having an "inherent appeal"[129] further suggests that support for anime does not purely revolve around state power as Nye would argue but rather hinging on what is perceived to be a distinct expressive capacity. In Nocando's words, anime can indeed be seen to provide an "alternative" to "stories tinged by white privilege".[130] Altogether, these conclusions paint a picture of anime as, in the terms of subaltern studies and postcolonialism, a global voice for the Black communities that have been disenfranchised and subjugated within Western countries and that this relation can be best captured for its participants under a framework of UCD rather than a 'soft power' focus on national power politics and sovereign state boundaries. In this way, the 'soft power' framework itself can be read as an actively harmful Western language, censoring these voices in favour of a worldview that is of most use to Western policymakers (as discussed in section 2.2.) – in both a domestic Japanese and global context, 'soft power' frameworks completely disregard certain experiences and begin to appear as one such "practice used to describe the orient" through which Western "power emerged".[131] In the terms of bell hooks, from a Western policymaker perspective "[there] is no need to hear your native voice when I can talk about you better than you speak about yourself".[132] It is from here that the implications of this discussion for Nye's 'soft power' framework and wider IR can now be digested in Chapter 4.

4. 'The Soft' Outside of 'Soft Power'

4.1. 'The Soft' vs. 'Soft Power'

This paper has mobilised a two-fold critique of Nye's 'soft power' approach to cultural products and its pervasiveness within the discipline of IR. Firstly, at a domestic Japanese level, it misses a range of other means by which the cultural product of anime can be understood as relevant to IR studies, namely: embodying relations of UCD and accompanying paradigms of exchange based on individuals *beneath* institutional and national forces, expressing internal conflicts within Japanese society and not least of all the actual reality and intentions of consumers and producers of anime. This can be seen to arise primarily from the a) complex cultural politics both present within and surrounding the anime medium. At a second level, this paper has demonstrated that anime can globally act as a 'voice' for underrepresented groups, expressing experiences and values for Black communities in Western countries that are continuously silenced in the discipline of IR through a 'soft power' focus on fixed state boundaries and power politics. In line with the views expressed by Nocando, Brian Jones, Complex and many others, this capacity for expression has been located here in anime's b) distinct narrative content which focuses on morally complex storylines and, and, c) a default position as 'alternate' on Western TV screens in light of the nationalist co-opting of Western superhero stories. These insights have been yielded through an approach to IR that takes aesthetic and cultural content itself as significant in line with Bleiker's 'aesthetic turn' and the cultural studies concept of non-reductive materialism as opposed to a 'soft power' focus on state power relations.

In this way, this paper provides a critique of Akbas, Norris and Heng who interrogate the cultural content of anime yet ultimately reduce their insights back to paradigms of 'soft power' and state power more widely, missing both the active harms and blind-spots of the concept itself. In doing so, authors in this tradition neglect the potential for a much wider range of critical insights that studies looking at 'soft' elements of international reality can provide, amounting to an active censoring of underrepresented voices on the global stage. In contrast, this paper's analysis lends weight to the views expressed by Mckevitt, Napier, Lu and Fennel et al that anime's significance to IR cannot be reduced simply to 'soft power' and instead can be understood firstly in terms of the fostering of "multiculturalism" both domestically and abroad,[133] secondly that it does have a distinct lack of "cultural odour", and, lastly, that its appeal lies in the distinct expressive capacities of the medium. In doing so, this paper emphasises that these 'soft' elements can be mobilised in far more ways than Nye's framework suggests, undermining the traditional actors and referents so familiar to studies of IR. Much like Kyoungtaek's interventions, this paper sees a dualism emerging from a critique of 'soft power', both recognising where the concept may remain useful as well as where wider insights can be yielded from more critical and extra-disciplinary understandings of 'the soft'. These are explored further in Figure 5.

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Conceptualising both the continuing relevance of 'soft power' as well as the wider significance of 'the soft' in such a way can inadvertently compliment both Niall Ferguson's and Kyoungtaek's criticisms of the framework outlined at the onset of this paper. Where Kyoungtaek draws a distinction between active "soft POWER" and passive "SOFT power" to overcome the "conceptual ambiguity" within 'soft power',[134] this paper takes a broader approach to expand on how these aspects can coexist whilst also being completely divergent in the insights they can provide to studies of IR. Inbuilt in this debate is the assumption that IR should primarily be concerned with the competitive power relations (be it 'soft' or 'hard') between states and it is this assumption that gives rise equally to Nye's 'soft power' framework, Ferguson's criticism that it is "soft"[135] and Kyoungtaek's observation that it sometimes emerges "as an overly soft strategy and sometimes as propaganda".[136] This paper has instead followed the recent and diverse calls to undermine such an assumption, and through doing so, provides an entirely alternate view of the discipline that both circumvents the need to invoke 'soft power' models in relation to culture whilst also encompassing 'soft power' explanations alongside more expansive means of seeing disciplinary relevance in 'the soft'. It is in this capacity that 'soft power' can firstly be criticised as neglecting the plethora of other insights 'the soft' can generate and secondly actively harmful in its continuing persistence to view 'the soft' exclusively in relation to power. There is a crucial difference in methodology between these approaches: where essentialising cultural content for the sake of providing insights into objective material reality places 'soft power' firmly under a rationalist methodology, the more critical and non-IR understandings explored here fall under a reflectivist methodology in looking at how "human reflection" can be constitutive of world politics.[137]

4.2. Wider Insights from Digesting 'Soft Power'

In a broad sense, this research suggests that essentialising and leaving cultural content uninterrogated leads any view of the international miss the full significance of cultural products. This paper has highlighted Tosaka Jun's notion of 'moral reflection' (as described by Shimizu) and the potential to 'voice' underrepresented experience as potential routes for capturing this significance. Rather than a resource for one region or state's power, an interrogation of cultural content leads culture to emerge here as a language with which to articulate experiences and global complexity. In doing so, this paper aligns itself with the critical perspectives outlined at its onset: looking at the everyday consumption habits of individuals and particular groups falls alongside Bleiker's means of generating a "more direct encounter with the political"[138] whilst tracing the historically cross-pollinating and transnational journey of cultural products such as anime reveals a world that is persistently interconnected and porous, in line with that depicted by UCD and postcolonialism. Culture is not simply one way in which state power struggles are fought, but also perhaps the loudest voice with which these relations are expressed.

Similarly, by digesting the significance of 'soft power' in light of a more expansive view of 'the soft', this paper has demonstrated that studies of IR need not be exclusively concerned with fixed state sovereignty and narrow power relations. Globalisation has realised increasingly complex networks of lived reality and international encounters, the significance of which is recognised by more recent approaches to the discipline such as UCD and postcolonial theory. Perhaps, in some indirect way, it is certain aspects of this process that Nye was observing when he first wrote 'The Changing Nature of World Power' back in 1990.

Finally, this paper also weighs in on the '*mukokuseki*' debate surrounding anime in section 1.3. While by no means conclusive in this regard, this discussion has found that there is evidence of both regional-specific representations and expressions in anime such as Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* (see sections 2.1 and 2.2) as well as distinctly stateless representations in anime such as *Dragon Ball,* supporting the views of Lu and Iwabuchi that a prominent appeal of anime in Western contexts is its fostering of a multicultural worldview. This paper's discussion would seem to suggest that anime series that have particular resonance in Western countries are more likely to have less 'cultural odour'. Nonetheless, studies from Mckevitt and Kinsella come as a reminder that this relationship is not absolute and, ultimately, end up confirming Goncalves et al's conclusion that the genre is not "monolithic" and caution authors from treating anime as such.[139]

5. Conclusion

5.1. Concluding Remarks

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Myself having been a student of IR for the last five years at both SOAS University and the University of Sussex, I have been told countless times by lecturers (the critical tone that these institutions are known for notwithstanding) how the discipline was born in Aberystwyth University in 1919 out of a desire to avoid the atrocities of the First World War, and how this 'idealism' was shaken by the 'realism' of the second World War and ensuing uncertainty of the Cold War. Growing up in London, a city endlessly pervaded by global diversity, and faced with the War on Terror which told me to view with distrust the countries and regions that many of my childhood friends' family members called home, my desire to study IR was not driven by seeking to guarantee my nation's survival but to understand the countless overlapping layers of complexity that produced such a world. It is in this capacity that these IR origin stories came as somewhat of a disappointment to me. Seeking understanding and clarity, I was instead faced with yet more precarity and uncertainty. Having now, as of these last few moments of writing, completed my MA International Relations course, I begin to see that an understanding of these origin stories has been necessary, providing context on how such a field came to be where it is at today. However, it is the recent turn towards more critical and interpretive approaches – heralded by Bleiker, Guha, Rosenberg, Selbin and Nayek and many others – that seem to be what I was hoping for when I turned up to my first IR lecture, providing an understanding of the world I grew up (and am continuing to grow up) in. While by no means disregarding the need for an interrogation of state power relations – I have spent far too much time with postcolonial thinkers to make this mistake – these approaches open up a variety of avenues for the discipline that I dare say would not have been possible fifty years ago. It only seems fitting, then, that this point can be made through investigating a question that I first encountered wandering the corridors of my secondary school almost a decade ago. For this, I can now proudly say that I am a student of IR.

Appendices

Appendix A: 'Soft Power' vs. 'Studies of the Soft' (Figure 5)

ApproachFunctionTheoretical RelevanceMain Actors 'Soft Power'Looking at the limited way in which 'soft' elements are actively co-opted by state actors to serve nationalist goals.Primarily of use to theories following a rationalist methodologies, such as Nye's Neoliberalism which "essentialise" cultural content towards the end of making sense of international power relations exclusively. It is in this capacity that Ferguson criticises 'soft power' from a Realist perspective.Centred on Western voices and of particular use to Western policy makers' attempts to balance against emerging forms of power in the post-Cold War period. Has since been internalised by other regions, such as Japan's 2008 embracing of 'soft power'.**Studies of 'the Soft'**A more expansive recognition of the full variety of insights 'soft' elements such as anime can provide to the discipline of IR.Finds alliance with a range of critical and reflectivist perspectives both within and outside of IR, for instance this paper's mobilisation of subaltern studies, UCD and the cultural studies notion of 'non-reductive materialism'.Given that Western practices such as 'soft power' often reinforced power hierarchies, studies of 'the soft' can be read as uncovering "history[ies] from below",[140] listening to non-Western and underprivileged voices who have little other means to be heard.

Appendix B: Fiction

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- Cheng'en, Wu, *Journey to the West* (1592); Revised by Yu, Anthony C. (2012), University of Chicago Press
- Ellis, Warren, *Castlevania* (TV Series), (2017), Prod. Williams, Jason and Terashima-Furuta, Maki, Distr. Netflix Streaming Services
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- Kishimoto, Masashi, *Naruto,* (1997), Pub. Shueisha
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- LeSean, Thomas, *Yasuke* (TV Series) (2021), Pub. Shogakukan, Distr. Netflix Streaming Services
- McGruder, Aaron, *The Boondocks* (TV Series), Pub. Cartoon Network, Distr. Sony Pictures Television
- Miyazaki, Hayao, *Princess Mononoke*, (1997), Prod. Studio Ghibli, Distr. Toho
- Oda, Eiichiro, *One Piece* (1997-Present), Pub. Shueisha
- Okazaki, Takashi, *Afro Samurai*, (1998), Self-Funded, Distr. Nou Nou Hau
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- Siegel, Jerry and Shuster, Joe, *Superman* (1938), Pub. DC Comics
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- Tan, Budjette and Baldisimo, Kajo, *Trese* (TV Series), (2021), Prod. BASE Entertainment, Distr. Netflix Streaming Services.
- Tezuka, Osamu, *Astro Boy*, (1952), Pub. Kobunsha
- Tezuka, Osamu, *Kimba The White Lion* (1965), Pub. Gakudosha, Fuji TV
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- Toriyama, Akira, *Dragon Ball,* (1984), Bird Studio/ Shueisha

Appendix C: Viewership Statistics on Anime and Cartoons

- The Morning Consult National Tracking Poll #200158 January 23-24, 2020, Crosstabulation Results, [Web Link: https://morningconsult.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/200158_crosstabs_FOREIGN_FILMS_Adults_v2.pdf] [Last Accessed: 02/08/2021]
- YouGove' Favorite Cartoon Fieldwork Dates: 15th – 19th June 2018, [Web Link: https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/lm0qhd8eg5/Results%20for%20Editorial%20(Favorite%20Cartoon)%20136%2020.6.2018.pdf] [Last Accessed: 02/08/2021]

End Notes

[1] See: Fig. 2 and 3 or Appendix 2

[2] Fennell et al (2012) 'Consuming Anime' P.453

[3] Ibid. P.452

[4] Shimizu (2014) 'The Ambivalent Relationship of Japan's Soft Power Diplomacy and*Princess Mononoke: Tosaka Jun's Philosophy of Culture as Moral Reflection'* P.684

[5] Miyazaki (1988) 'About Japanese Animation'

[6] Park (2018) 'Carl Jones and Brian Ash (the Boondocks, Black Dynamite) – Fun With Dumb – Ep. 8 – ft. Nocando' [25:20-28:20] [Web Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSOXGrDZddE&t=2325s&ab_channel=DUMBFOUNDEAD] [Last Accessed 02/08/2021]

[7] Bleiker (2001) 'The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory' p.515

[8] Ibid. p.510

[9] Ibid. p.511

[10] Selbin and Nayak (2010) 'Chapter One / Introduction' in *Decentring International Relations*, p. 5

[11] Ibid. p.10

[12] Joseph Margolis (1978) 'Persons and Minds: The Prospects of Non-Reductive Materialism' p.3-10

[13] Chakrabarty (2000) 'Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography' p.22

[14] Ibid. p.15

[15] Guha (1983) 'Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India' p.5-6

[16] Spivak (1994) 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'

[17] Sharp (2009) 'Geographies of Postcolonialism' p.18

[18] Sharp (2011) 'Subaltern Geopolitics: Introduction' p.3

[19] As quoted by Mitchell (2007) 'Geographies of Identity: the Intimate Cosmopolitan' p.711

[20] Nye (1990). P.154

[21] Ibid. p.167

[22] Ibid. p.168

[23] Ibid. p.170

[24] Ibid. p.154

[25] Ibid. p.169-171

[26] Ferguson (2003) 'What Is Power?' para 28

[27] Kyoungtaek (2010) para 5

[28] Ibid. para 9

[29] Reeves (2004) 'Culture and International Relations' p.1-4

[30] Kyoungtaek (2010) para 24

[31] Ibid. para 26

[32] See Snow (2009) 'Rethinking Public Diplomacy' p.3-10

[33] Norris (2010) 'Exploring Japanese Popular Culture as a Soft Power Resource'

[34] Akbas (2018) 'A "Cool" Approach to Japanese Foreign Policy: Linking Anime to International Relations'

[35] Fennell et al (2012)'

[36] Lu (2008) 'The Many Faces of Internationalisation In Anime'

[37] Mckevitt (2010) '"You Are Not Alone!": Anime and the Globalising of America'

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