

Porco Rosso

Kurenai no buta, 1992, Japan

Film Overview



Set in a time when fighter aces and pirates still ruled the skies over the Adriatic Sea after World War I, *Porco Rosso* is a film celebrating the adventure and mischief one pilot can get into when he isn't looking for any. A tale about a fighter pilot with the curse of having his face look like that of a pig, this movie is an unabashed adventure film Hayao Miyazaki created, wrote, and directed to celebrate his unabashed love of planes. Not only is the film full of fun of the aerial variety, *Porco Rosso* is a film that deftly portrays the guilt and general feeling of misplaced purpose many soldiers probably felt after the end of the First World War. In so doing, *Porco Rosso* not only becomes a fun family film, but a candid look inside the cultural and societal shifts occurring between the first and second world wars and what that meant for all the characters involved during the film and after. Fascism, tradition, early 20th century technology, themes of grace and redemption – all of these and more are touched on in this Miyazaki film. Throughout it all, we accompany the main character Porco Rosso as he finds his way in a world that seems to be leaving him behind, all the while trying to do the right thing to correct the wrongs he may have committed during World War I. Learning to forgive himself and be the hero his friends need him to be, Porco becomes the aerial ace the world forgot he could be. Join Porco for a fun time in the air in Miyazaki's feel-good and fun movie!

Hayao Miyazaki is a prominent Japanese filmmaker of many popular animated feature films. He is also a co-founder of Studio Ghibli, an animation studio and production company. In 2006, Time Magazine voted Miyazaki one of the most influential Asians of the past 60 years. In 2005, he was named one of the Time 100 Most Influential People.

Cultural Notes

- **World War One Flying Boats** If not for the main character Porco Rosso, the protagonists of this film would have been the planes. Miyazaki adores planes, and he does his best to make the flying boats in his film as accurate as possible. Flying boats were some of the largest aircraft of the first half of the 20th century, dwarfed in size only by bombers developed during World War II. Their advantage lay in using water for take-offs and landings instead of expensive land-based runways. Several examples of flying boats could be transported and launched by the usage of specially designed separate wheeled carriages. A flying boat is a fixed-winged seaplane with a hull, allowing it to land on water. It differs from a float plane as it uses a purpose-designed fuselage which can both float, granting the aircraft buoyancy, and give aerodynamic sheath.
- **The Setting** Rather than a Japanese setting, *Porco Rosso* takes place in clearly defined historical and geographical parameters. The film takes place in the interwar period between World War I and World War II, with our hero Porco Rosso traveling to Italy, with most of the film's events taking place in the eastern Adriatic Sea between Dalmatian and Kvarner Islands.
- **Political Ideology** Miyazaki has always been an outspoken critic of certain ideologies and practices that he finds harmful to the earth and humankind, with one of his stances being an anti-war stance. As such, he puts a critical eye of Fascist Italy in his *Porco Rosso* film. Between World War I and World War II, Europe was coming under the sway of fascist, communist, and socialist ideologies, with fascists being on the far-right ideological spectrum. Fascism is often a dictatorial ideology focused on fostering nationalism and to some extent racism, arguing for the purity of the ethno-cultural identity that many people in a certain nation-state may possess in common. A fascist government is one that suppresses any opposition or criticism, seeking a unified vision for a country, with an appearance of a united ethnic front against any who may not be a part of the ethno-political collective. In Italy during the time the movie is set in, Italy is experiencing a transition into fascism under the influence of Benito Mussolini (1883-1945), an ousted socialist who came to believe national loyalty was of greater importance than class divisions. Miyazaki makes the character Porco Rosso highly critical of the burgeoning fascist movement in Italy.

