Disembodied Stars and the Cultural Meanings of *Princess Mononoke*'s Soundscape

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Roland Barthes has stated that the voice is an "intimate signature of the actor" (Pavis, 1998: 435). However, the voice in academic studies of stardom and acting is strangely silent. This is perhaps because the primacy accorded to the image in film studies has a long history. However, the image has attained such significance now that the importance of the voice in cinema has largely been lost to us. As Sarah Kozloff laments, spoken dialogue in the cinema is viewed most commonly as "just something we have to put up with" (Kozloff, 2000: 4). In terms of stardom then, Barthes's comments appear to have fallen on deaf ears, leading such prominent scholars as Mary Ann Doane to query "who can conceive of a voice without a body?" (Doane, 1985: 162) In other words, Doane feels that the body's physicality cannot be divorced from the voice, and in one respect she is correct. The voice is formed by the body and cannot be created without a bodily presence.

This is what Barthes intimates in his description of the grain of the voice. (Barthes, 1984: 179-189) In his conceptualisation of the operatic voice, it was those stars who utilised the whole of the body's vocal pathway -- from lungs to lips -- who were deemed most interesting. Though the idea of the "grain" in vocal performance is an alluring one it is also, however, a mask that slips all too easily over that which it describes. The voice is used by Barthes as a tool for taste formations, for preferencing the complex over the technically competent. This obfuscates Barthes's unusual and useful thinking about how the voice is formed, and his foregrounding of it above physical performance.

Even Richard Dyer, whose *Stars* introduced the pervasive idea of star "images," was not unaware of the importance of the voice. In conceiving of star image Dyer was not merely thinking of the visual traces of stardom formed across the media, but of "a complex configuration of visual, verbal and aural signs." (Dyer, 1998: 34) What has been subsequently lost from studies of stardom is just such a focus on the aural. This essay therefore is intended not to diminish the importance of the star image but rather to reincorporate the voice back into such discussions. In response to such disparate readings of the voice, I would like to ask rather how the star or actor is inscribed through the voice? Furthermore, I will consider how the voice in animation is juxtaposed with the other sound elements, such as music and effects, in order to show how a complex tapestry of sound is woven around dialogue in film. Considering the voice in isolation would be tantamount to denying the way films are structured, a balancing act of formal composition that relies not wholly on the voice to give character's meaning, but also on other elements of a film's aural diegesis. As I will show later, all the elements of a film's aural world can be used by filmmakers to aid characterisation and character development. Such inscriptions and contexts should help explain the voice's importance to the cinema in a balanced manner, and also may help to illuminate nuances of performance and stardom.

To this reincorporative end animation has been chosen as the medium for this discussion. Animation provides an extended outlet for the creation of vocal performance without the body. Whether, as Doane suggests, the voice triggers memory of the star's physical person, or indeed if it is as Barthes suggests and the actor or star's entire persona is carried in the "grain" of the voice, it remains the case that this aspect of performance has a significance beyond the attention it has received. Animation as a topic also opens other avenues of inquiry. Its reliance on star voices despite the lack of their corporeal presence is significant on various levels, the most obvious being its challenge to the physicality of the star image. It is hoped this investigation will illuminate the ways in which star performances in animated films significantly differ from performances in live action movies, while utilising aspects of the star's corporeal presence.

Mononokehime's (1997) dubbing into its English language incarnation, *Princess Mononoke*, takes this inquiry a stage further than a simple focus on an American animated feature might allow. This animated film by Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki was the first of his films to be released internationally by Disney subsidiary Miramax. As a fantasy-based tale of man against nature, the film began life as *Mononokehime* in Japan in 1997. It was, perhaps, culturally specific in numerous ways, for example, in its reliance on Japanese history and folklore for character and narrative elements. In the film, a young prince named Ashitaka (Billy Crudup) goes on a quest to find the source of a curse that has been put upon him. During this quest he meets with two warring parties, one based around an iron-smelting village and the other a group of animal gods that are attempting to protect their wooded home from deforestation. Ashitaka acts primarily as a negotiator between the title character (San played by Clare Danes) and the leader of the village, Lady Eboshi (Minnie Driver), in an attempt to stop them from undertaking an all-out war against one another.

As a part of their distribution agreement for this Japanese mythology-inflected tale, Miramax undertook what might be termed a project of indigenisation for *Princess Mononoke*'s American release, using a new name, a new marketing campaign and star voices to give a new identity to this Japanese film. Stars were particularly significant in terms of the American market for this film, because of the way star voices have been becoming increasingly prevalent in high budget American animation. To give a roughly contemporary example for *Princess Mononoke*, released in America in 1999, Disney's *Mulan* (1998) starred the voice of Eddie Murphy. However, this was one of the first Japanese animated films for which famous American stars were used to provide the voice talent, making it unusual within the American film market.

Princess Mononoke is an especially unusual case study even for animation as the "American" star performances in it were created after the completion of the film. Stars now regularly frequent animated films in America. Some, like John Goodman whose credits include *Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer: The Movie* (1998), *The Emperor's New Groove* (2000) and *Monster's Inc*. (2001), might be categorised as specialist voice actors or stars separate from their live-acting careers. However, most stars who appear in animation do so as a part of their general career. A recent star-studded animated feature like DreamWorks' *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas* (2003) provides a good example of this. In *Sinbad* Brad Pitt, Catherine Zeta-Jones and Michelle Pfeiffer appeared as voice talent leads. Their characters were drawn, however, after their performances were recorded and were designed to mimic certain of their visual traits. For example, Pitt's Sinbad is blonde and muscular, Zeta-Jones's Marina is dark-haired and Pfeiffer's Eris, Goddess of Chaos, is given angular elfin features

like that of the actress. Another good example of this trend from 3-D animation would be the lipstick cameras used in *Shrek* (2001) to record the actor's facial movements.

Thus, by comparison, such high profile actors as Gillian Anderson, Claire Danes and Billy Bob Thornton were restricted when performing in *Princess Mononoke*. Their delivery of lines was predicated on existing character movements; also, their performances had to be made to fit into a largely extant soundscape. In this case therefore the soundtrack was not as Gianluca Sergi claims is usual, "built around actor's voices." (Sergi, 1999: 134) What this essentially means is that *Princess Mononoke*'s dubbing presents us with a series of star voices in constrained and even distorted performances.

The difference in the recording and animating chronology does not, however, affect the overall hierarchy of sound in *Princess Mononoke*. There are two main ways of understanding the combinations of sounds in film: as the soundtrack or as the soundscape. The term "soundtrack" is usually, though not always critically, used to describe only musical elements of filmmaking and for this reason I have chosen to use soundscape to describe the way sounds are recorded in this instance (Rick Altman, 1992 or Kay Dickinson, 2003). Soundscape is a term borrowed from Sergi's "Actors and the Sound Gang," though it is also mentioned in Rick Altman's *Sound Theory and Sound Practice*, where Altman says it describes the "characteristic types of sound commonly heard in a given period or location." (Sergi, 1999: 131; Altman, 1992: 252) This general term for sound will be here applied to the diegetic world of *Princess Mononoke* and will be understood, contrary to Altman, as being applicable not to a generalised environment, but to a specific diegetic one.

This interpretation of the term soundscape sits more easily with the way Sergi uses the phrase in relation to actors' ability to respond to other aural signifiers within a given film scene. Broadly speaking these sound elements have been divided into three distinct components, all of which can appear in film in diegetic and non-diegetic forms. These elements are voice, sound effects and music. David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson further divide these aspects temporally noting that sounds can occur synchronously with images, or indeed asynchronously preceding or following them. (Bordwell and Thompson, 1985: 196-197) *Princess Mononoke*'s soundscape will be discussed in these terms in order discern the relative importance of star voices and indeed effects and music to the film's characterisations and narrative. Moreover, teasing out these aspects of sound should begin to redress the primacy of the image in film studies.

Understanding *Princess Mononoke* in terms of the soundscape is done here precisely to avoid over-stating the importance of any one of its sound elements, regardless of the fact that the voice is the main focus of this discussion. In order to balance this discussion, the importance of both the film's musical soundtrack and its sound effects will be considered first and in relation to the importance of star voices. The relevance of the "soundtrack" to the vocal performance of stars is that any diegetic or non-diegetic music within a film will both act upon vocal performances and may even provide a voice for otherwise mute elements of the film. Jeff Smith's work on the pop soundtrack emphasises the equivalence of the soundtrack with music, citing the importance of motion picture soundtrack albums as an "aesthetic and cultural phenomenon" (Smith, 1998: 1). The majority of Smith's argument is concerned with popular music in film, but he does branch out to discuss the orchestral soundtrack in some depth. Relevant in this instance is his insistence that the orchestral score "is especially common to the historical epic and science fiction film." (Smith, 1998: 216) *Princess Mononoke* spans both the historical epic and fantasy genres so the filmmaker's use of an

orchestral score would seem to fit Smith's schema. However, as will be demonstrated, the uses to which that soundtrack was put differed from the norms of American soundtrack practice.

Smith notes four kinds of soundtrack ranging from the orchestral to those composed entirely of pop songs. *Mononokehime*'s original soundtrack contained a theme song sung in a classical style by counter-tenor Yoshikazu Mera. Thus *Mononokehime*'s classical score should technically fit with Smith's first category, namely "leitmotiv-laden orchestral scores composed within neo-romantic or modernist styles." However, due to the theme song's popularity (it was released as a single in Japan), *Mononokehime*'s original soundtrack fits more comfortably with what Smith labels "orchestral scores that feature one or two popular songs" in his second category (Smith, 1998: 215).

In its American form *Princess Mononoke*'s soundtrack seems to shift back into the first of Smith's categories. The popular theme song was re-recorded by a relatively little known soprano singer called Sasha Lazard. Lazard specialises in a type of music called "Techno Opera" further blurring the lines between the orchestral and popular aspects of *Princess Mononoke*'s new soundtrack (http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Fuji/9270/sasha.html -- Accessed 11/10/02). Tellingly, Lazard's recording received relatively little recognition in the USA; it was not for example released as a single. The result of Lazard's translation and Miramax's lack of promotion for *Princess Mononoke*'s soundtrack in the USA seems to have been an effort to remove a layer of Japanese-ness from the film. Further it gives the score, by Japanese composer Jo Hisaishi, an American voice as the central theme song was overlaid onto important scenes and *Princess Mononoke*'s end credit sequence.

However, the soundtrack was also used in *Princess Mononoke* in a number of interesting ways that challenge the idea of its having been indigenised for America. Smith's conceptualisation of the leitmotiv as "the classical Hollywood score's basic formal unit…inspired by the particular characters, settings, and dramatic situations" works only partially when applied to *Princess Mononoke*. (Smith, 1998: 14) Hisaishi's score is sparingly utilised in this film and the leitmotivs appear under some unusual circumstances. Instead of central characters having their own themes or variations, it is instead bridging sequences, places and both dramatic and lower key narrative events that receive greatest musical recognition in *Princess Mononoke*. For example, the central theme swells as Ashitaka leaves his village, and again after his first meeting with the warrior-priest Jigo as he rides into the West.

The forest also has its own pizzicato leitmotiv played on violins and a glockenspiel. Tellingly the only character to warrant a leitmotiv is the Great Forest Spirit whose music often occurs in combination with scenes featuring the forest theme. A mute character, this repeated motif seems intended to add to the sense of awe and mystery surrounding the character, a factor borne out in Ashitaka's first encounter with it. Ashitaka spots the Spirit at a distance through the trees, and this is underscored through a silence followed by a short burst of the Forest Spirit's leitmotiv that follows directly on from the forest theme. Thus music gives voice to the Spirit and helps to position it vis-à-vis the other characters in the film. This clearly indicates that the soundtrack is used to shore up the film's dominant dialogue-based voice track but more significant are those moments in the film where neither music, nor dialogue is used.

Silence is occasionally left to speak for itself in *Princess Mononoke*, creating a distinctly un-Hollywood feel in the film. Although Bordwell and Thompson claim that silence is also used

in American filmmaking, their analysis of Akira Kurosawa's Japanese Golden Age film *Seven Samurai* (1954) is the one they choose to make their point about silence. (Bordwell and Thompson, 1985: 187-188) In *Princess Mononoke* relatively long sequences of stillness and quietness are used typically to build tension or create a sense of pathos within a given scene. As Ashitaka waits unconscious for the Great Forest Spirit to heal him there is a protracted moment of silence before the Spirit's arrival. In it we see the kodama tree spirits ascending the trees and a medium shot of Ashitaka and his elk-like steed Yakkle. Then as the Spirit arrives there is a further silent sequence in which the warrior monks approach and the Spirit kills a plant San has left for it. The absence of sound disrupts the narrative creating an eerie atmosphere, emphasising again the magical elements in the scene. This use of silence challenges the importance of star voices, but also acts to separate *Princess Mononoke* from its American animated brethren.

The primacy of voice acting in *Princess Mononoke* can also be questioned in relation to the film's sound effects. The central characters may not have their own musical leitmotivs, but audio director Kazuhiro Wakabayashi did design specific sounds to "voice" characters and objects of importance in the narrative. These sound effects are one of the most important aspects of *Princess Mononoke*'s soundscape as they provide voices for a variety of the film's silent characters, particularly the forest animals and gods much the same way as the Great Forest Spirit's leitmotiv acts as his voice. Among the most important of these sound effect "voices" are those given to San's earrings, Ashitaka's curse and the kodama tree spirits. San is a peculiarly silent heroine on her introduction. Her attack on Lady Eboshi's rice convoy signals her as a character of actions not words. Instead of speaking on her introduction to Ashitaka the only sounds San makes are when she spits out Moro's (Gillian Anderson) blood and when her earrings chime. This chime is subsequently repeated when, on her attack on the iron settlement, San is struck unconscious by Eboshi's guns. The chime is in a high register with a short sound envelope comprised of a quick, strong attack and lingering reverb sustain, unique within the film's soundscape and given priority over the film's score. (Altman, 1992: 18-19) The significance of this chime to the narrative lies in its uniqueness to San. Its metallic nature is out of place in the film's relatively naturalistic soundscape, just as San is displaced from human-kind in the film's narrative. That it is a quick, light sound also reflects San's lightning speed of movement. It therefore acts as an aural signifier of San's presence, and even of her personality, particularly at times when the character can not, or will not, speak.

Like San's chiming earrings, Ashitaka, the film's protagonist, has his own unique sound. Although one of the film's more vocal characters, Ashitaka's motivation for questing, his cursed arm, is also vocalised. A low frequency and register bubbling, gurgling sound is heard whenever Ashitaka's curse is activated and is often heard in conjunction with a writhing movement seen along his right arm. For instance, this gurgling sound is heard when he comes under attack by the samurai early in his quest, or when he is forced to separate San and Eboshi as they try to kill one another at the Iron Town. This sound, a lesser version of that introduced by the maddened boar god Nago, is one aimed at reminding the audience not just of Ashitaka's motivation but, more urgently, of his peril as Nago's curse threatens to kill him. However, it also serves to elevate the curse giving it an audible presence within the film's soundscape. Furthermore, this sound (and its concomitant imagery) serves to reinforce the fantasy elements of the film's narrative. Tellingly the curse is often activated around *Princess Mononoke*'s human characters, thereby acting as a reminder of the film's fantastical premise even as it adheres closely to its historical epic roots.

The fantasy leanings of *Princess Mononoke* are also reinforced in the soundscape through the sound effects granted to the film's animal characters. The screaming of the boar gods and the howling of the wolf gods are tame, however, when compared to the sound that accompanies the film's most outlandish deities. The kodama, tree spirits who act both as guides through the Great Forest Spirit's enchanted domain and as its most faithful followers (climbing to the tops of trees to greet his Nightwalker incarnation), have perhaps the most surprising sound in the film's soundscape. Rocking their heads from side to side the kodama sound like hundreds of baby rattles all being shaken at once. Given their sprite or child-like appearance and the pizzicato-based forest leitmotiv, this rattling is a wonderfully rhythmic addition to the forest soundscape, with the added significance that this is the only sound the kodama make. That it is an unusual sound, particularly in terms of their forest setting, heightens their impact within the film, and again helps to create tension around the idea of fantasy in this historical epic, principally in relation to the Great Forest Spirit. The importance of these sounds rests not only in their impact on characterisation though. They act in what Philip Brophy might term cacophonic rather than symphonic ways. (Wells, 1998: 13) The deep layering of their rattling, unmelodic tones creates, for example, an unsettling cacophonic welcome for the Great Forest Spirit as he returns to the forest near the film's climax. This sound also mimics, with what Bordwell and Thompson would call "fidelity," the movement of the kodama's heads, which they are able to twist and turn at alarming angles. (Bordwell and Thompson, 1985: 190-191)

But this is only a part of *Princess Mononoke*'s soundscape and the actual voices used in the translation of Miyazaki's film are vital to any understanding of how *Princess Mononoke* means to potential American audiences. The first important issue relating to voices is that these were not just any voices, they were voices belonging to stars. This begs a return to a concept of star images not as visual images but, as Barthes suggests, as aural signatures in concert with the visual. The second issue that requires clarification is the notion of stardom itself. In terms of film studies this concept has become so all-encompassing at times as to include virtually every actor about whom something has been written in the popular presses. (Tolson, 1991: 303)

To begin with the latter, studies of stardom have diverged far from Richard Dyer and others' initial conceptions of it in the 1980s. (Dyer, 1986; Dyer, 1993; Dyer, 1998; Gledhill, 1991; Naremore, 1988) Definitions seem to depend on what depth and in relation to which medium or star the idea of stardom is raised. Definitions therefore come in many guises from Paul MacDonald's in *The Star System*, at pains to produce an economics based reading of stars as capital, to Andrew Tolson's attempts to draw a distinction between film stars and television "personalities." (MacDonald, 2000; Tolson, 1996)

One of the most interesting and, for my purposes useful, discussions of stars can be found in Christine Geraghty's "Re-examining Stardom." In this article Geraghty makes a distinction between three kinds of film star: the star as celebrity, as professional and as performer. (Geraghty, 2000: 187) There is a sense in which these categories are similar to Dyer's conception of the image-role "fit" taken from his seminal text *Stars*. (Dyer, 1998: 142-149) For in discussing how stars can be placed within Geraghty's categories, reference must be made to the way the star circulates in society. The division (or overlap) between stars' public and private lives therefore tends to become the focus of star studies. In Geraghty's work however the conception of stardom is refined, allowing a refocusing of the discipline away from intertextuality towards performance.

The central difficulty in examining *Princess Mononoke*'s stars in terms of their voices lies not in finding a definition of stardom from which to work. It lies instead in attempting to conceptualise the star *through* the voice. Though some works on stardom have made reference to the voice, the qualities of the voice that might confer the star's image remain a neglected area. Martin Barker, considering the current uses of stars, broaches the subject of star voices in animation. He says that stars "can *voice* a character, and thus transfer to it some of the resonances of their established persona. But they cannot *own* it." (Barker, 2003: 20) As we have already seen, ownership of roles may be more plausible than Barker owns, due to the ways physical performances are often mimicked in American animation. However, there are limits to just how much a star's persona or image can be mapped onto an animated performance.

In her assessment of the functions of film dialogue, Kozloff speaks of dialogue as offering "opportunities for star turns" (Kozloff, 2000: 34). This speaks to the ability of the voice through dialogue to provide a space for stars to express not just the character they are playing but also their own personae. Radio theory provides the means for understanding how this expression is achieved. The formal properties of the voice are usually comprised of pitch, volume, texture, shape, rhythm and, pertinent to this case, what Sergi terms "ticks." (Branston and Stafford, 1996: 21; Sergi, 1999: 127-130) However, understanding a voice's formal properties may not explain how that voice expresses the "signature" of a star. To that end, *Princess Mononoke*'s star vocal turns will be compared with other performances by the stars in question in order to elucidate how their performance in animation relates to their vocal style elsewhere. However, due to the synchronic need to examine *Princess Mononoke*'s stars at the time of the film's re-recording, only those performances prior to *Princess Mononoke* will be considered herein. This should begin to provide a rounded understanding of how audiences are able to recognise, for example, Mel Gibson playing a rooster, or in this instance, Gillian Anderson as a wolf.

Indeed Anderson's role as Moro was pivotal to *Princess Mononoke* in America. Hers was perhaps the brightest star included in the cast and the priority given to her performance within *Princess Mononoke*'s soundscape reflects this. The bitter yet stoical nature of the wolf goddess Moro's character can be read in many scenes but perhaps the best example occurs when Moro speaks alone with Ashitaka before the final battle of the film. As the character begins to speak, Anderson intones her dialogue softly, almost whispering above the sound of *Princess Mononoke*'s theme song. Her natural lisp, sounding on "s" consonants, adds to the other worldliness of the character, suggesting it struggles with human speech. When Moro speaks angrily of wanting to "crush that gun woman's head in my jaws," Anderson increases the pace of her speech, not the volume. This is a technique that Sergi cites in relation to Morgan Freeman's performance in *Seven* (1995), in which he shows how pacing dialogue can help an actor attain dominance in a given scene. (Sergi, 1999: 130) In the example from *Princess Mononoke*, Anderson uses a similar acting technique to give her vocal authority, but also to increase the sense of menace her character required. By these various performance methods, Anderson's skills as an actor are brought to the foreground signifying her as a star-as-performer.

Two other elements of the soundscape ensure Anderson's dominance. The first is Neil Gaiman's script, in which Moro's dialogue is limited to a series of short, clipped sentences. The majority of these are statements, the veracity of which is assured by what the audience knows to be happening simultaneously in the narrative. The second factor that helps to bridge the gap between Gillian Anderson the persona and Gillian Anderson wolf goddess is the

growling distortion overlaid onto her dialogue. This is most obvious as Moro angers, when Anderson sharply says "Quiet boy!" an accompanying wolf growl emanates over the top of her voice. In fact the wolf rumbling precedes her first words in the scene, "You could always jump boy." Together this rumbling noise, the short (barked) sentence structure and Anderson's own deep-throated yet hushed performance act as aids to audiences attempting to see a favourite cult TV star as a wolf.

These elements also help emphasise Anderson's voice within the soundscape. The use of the theme song before her speech is an aural signal to audiences, denoting the importance of what is to follow. The fact that Anderson makes no attempt to disguise her voice also helps. Anderson has used her voice in several high profile circumstances: when playing Dana Scully in *The X-Files* she frequently makes voice-over case reports, and her other work narrating and presenting series such as *Future Fantastic* also make her an unusual and recognisable presence in *Princess Mononoke*'s soundscape.

The exact opposite is true of Billy Crudup who plays Ashitaka in *Princess Mononoke*. Crudup is a perennial star of independent American films, starring in Woody Allen's *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996), *Sleepers* (1996) and *Inventing the Abbots* (1997) before voicing Ashitaka. He tends to appear in this kind of mid-budget independent feature film in supporting roles rather than starring ones, which would tend to place him in Geraghty's performer category of star. This is not to suggest that Crudup's star status is in question, rather that as Geraghty claims:

> the concept of star-as-performer has become a way of re-establishing film star status through a route which makes its claim through the film text rather than appearances in newspapers. (Geraghty, 2000: 192)

This claim has a dual influence on ideas of stardom in that it acts to shift emphasis away from intertextuality back to performance, while concurrently raising a range of perhaps lesser-known but prolific actors like Crudup to the status of star. This star-as-performer category shares similarity with the kind of stardom marked by Martin Barker when discussing Kevin Spacey as an "archetypal star for the turn on the millenium" (Barker, 2003: 19). Crudup, like Spacey, denies access to his personal life and in doing so his entire star persona becomes the roles he plays. He therefore brought to the marketing of *Princess Mononoke* a credibility cache built around his performances and it is interesting that it is his voice that is most frequently heard in this film.

Crudup's voice would probably be less recognisable to fans than Anderson's. It contains no verbal ticks like her softening of the letter "s", nor is it a singularly unusual voice. In fact his somewhat cultured New York accent with its precise enunciation, mid-pitch and range, create in his Ashitaka a comparatively unremarkable performance of a hero. However, this could well be entirely intentional on his part. Crudup's performance of Ashitaka, in fact, rests on the blandness of his voice. It is through Crudup's unremarkable, average voice that Ashitaka is inscribed as that most American of heroic types: the average man achieving extraordinary things. In this way, the notion of heroism is appended by nationality: by performing Ashitaka as an average sounding American, the character's heroism becomes emblematic of American ideals creating an aural disjuncture, separating the character from his Japanese roots.

The story of Claire Danes's performance as San is a somewhat similar one. In terms of her star profile in America at the time, Danes was best known both for her performance as Juliet

in Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) and also for the television show *My So Called Life*, first broadcast in 1994, in which she played the protagonist Angela Chase. Her introduction to stardom through this TV role led to a number of starring roles again in mid-budget films like *Little Women* (1994), a fact that helps to position her in the star-as-performer category. Danes's vocal range in these roles varied somewhat, particularly in volume and tempo. Her emotionally charged teen in *My So Called Life* was occasionally bombastic and the tempo of her deliveries varied hugely marking the character's rapid emotional arcs. Comparatively, her mannered and accomplished performances in films like *Romeo + Juliet* and *Little Women* presented a more vocally measured Danes. In *Little Women* in particular her portrayal of Beth March was a restrained one: she speaks quietly and thus creates a performance with a vocal softness that mirrors Beth's quiet tragedy.

The choice of Danes to play San also worked for other reasons in the soundscape. Her Los Angeles accent contrasted with Crudup's New York intonation making her performance more noticeable. Compared to his clipped New York intonation, Danes's Californian accent appears less acculturated helping to mark San's wildness. Further to her geographically specific accent, San's dialogue, like Moro's, was kept comparatively short and clipped. To complement this Danes seems to have attempted to keep a sharp, growling edge to her words, often spitting them out. One scene demonstrates this quite well. As San regains consciousness after being rescued by Ashitaka (now bleeding to death from a bullet wound) she tries to kill him. Unsheathing his sword she growls (literally) "I should kill you for saving that evil woman and there is no one who can stop me from killing her!" Danes's harsh pronunciation of San's dialogue in which she spits out the words with harsh consonant sounds and uses an imperious tone is indicative of Danes's manipulation of her voice to performative ends in *Princess Mononoke*. That she makes these subtle changes to her voice means that she projects a rather different character in San than is evident in much of her earlier work. However, it is telling that the accent evident as early as *My So Called Life* is left unchanged, as are her usual vocal pitch and range. In these ways Danes is able to maintain her reputation as a performer while retaining a voice that is distinctive (through accent and pitch at least) as her own.

Billy Bob Thornton and Jada Pinkett Smith provide more variable and problematic performances than Crudup and Danes. Both Pinkett Smith and Thornton have had wide-ranging careers and portrayed disparate characters in terms of class and geography. Pinkett Smith has appeared in films as diverse as the Hughes brothers' *Menace II Society* (1993) and the Eddie Murphy-vehicle *The Nutty Professor* (1996), while Thornton's pre-*Mononoke* credits include *Indecent Proposal* (1993), *Armageddon* (1998) and his Oscar-winning *Sling Blade* (1996). Indeed, Thornton's ascendant star post-*Sling Blade* would have made him an attractive prospect for *Princess Mononoke*, lending as he did his Oscar-approved star-as-performer qualities to his role as the duplicitous monk, Jigo. Both of their vocal performance styles therefore have a wide range to them. For instance, Thornton's restrained, deep and educated speeches as bureaucrat Dan Truman in *Armageddon* are far less regionally marked than are his exaggerated, slow, southern-states drawl as Karl Children in *Sling Blade*.

By contrast, Pinkett Smith's performances tend to have a link to education of some description. She is differentiated from other ghettoised characters in *Menace II Society* through her dual roles as mother and as student. In *Menace II Society* she is vocally distinct from the rest of the cast due to her more polished, educated speech, the absence of swear-words and the calm with which she performs. In an interesting reversal, in *Scream 2* (1997) Pinkett Smith plays Maureen, a more voluble university student whose protracted speeches about African Americans and the horror movie presage her demise. In this role, Pinkett

Smith's language is coarser and more heavily laden with slang elements (she repeatedly tells her boyfriend to stop "playing"). Her accent is also more exaggerated in this role, with "don't do that" becoming a fast and rounded "don' do dat" for example. This is by comparison to the, again, educated doctor she plays in *The Nutty Professor* where her accent is played down and the character does not swear.

The colourful, or exaggerated, aspects of these two stars rest in their vocal performances in *Princess Mononoke*. Both have accents that inscribe them geographically and racially, be it Thornton's Arkansas accent or Pinkett Smith's use of a face-paced, rhythmically distinct and racialised one. She in particular plays up a mode of speaking that differentiates her from the rest of the cast. For example, when Koroku (John DeMita) is returned to Iron Town by Ashitaka, Pinkett Smith shouts her speeches as Toki, cutting off the ends of certain words ("all" is foreshortened). She uses a higher pitch and flat elongated vowel sounds, notably "a"s and "o"s, in a way that serves to indicate the character's lack of education and low social standing (she is in fact playing a reformed prostitute). Further to these techniques is her use of pace. Pinkett Smith's Toki speaks in a far more rhythmically patterned way, enunciating her dialogue almost to an almost metronome-like beat.

However, this exaggerated dialect could also be thought of as reinforcing Pinkett Smith's racial heritage, at least in terms of filmic representations, mimicking as it does stereotypical representations of the long-suffering African-American wife as seen in such American sitcoms as *The Cosbys*, *My Wife and Kids* (starring Damon Wayans and Tisha Campbell) or *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*. Pinkett Smith's voice stands out in *Princess Mononoke*'s soundscape because of its defiant, exaggerated tone. It is this tone that codes Toki's voice as the lone African-American voice in *Princess Mononoke*, and in turn which points to Pinkett Smith (the sole African-American cast member) as the creator of this performance despite the fact that her character's skin colour is the same as those around her.

Thornton's Jigo also stands out in the soundscape. In playing what Thornton himself referred to as a "chubby little Japanese guy" he makes no effort to hide his own strong American accent. Otherwise, his performance is a rather understated one during which he speaks softly, producing a mumbled texture for much of Jigo's dialogue. For example, when making food for himself and Ashitaka, Jigo delivers a fairly long speech about the fate of the world ("So you say you're under a curse? Well so what? So's the whole damned world."). His flat intonation, with its even pitch and gravel texture, runs along at a quick pace until Ashitaka questions him about the curse. Then there is a notable pause and Thornton slows his speech to match Crudup's. In this way the previous speech is undermined, marking the rambling tone as insincere and Jigo as less than trustworthy. Furthermore, that Thornton maintains his accent, with its vowel-based drawl and elongated "r" sounds, marks his Jigo as another outsider figure in *Princess Mononoke*'s narrative, perhaps never more strikingly than in the scene discussed above.

It is by such reliance on native, "natural" accents and dialects that both Thornton and Pinkett Smith add to the rich American vocal tapestry being overlaid onto this Japanese film. As can be deduced from the preceding analysis, the American accents used in *Princess Mononoke* were all representative of distinct dialect regions of the United States (New York, Los Angeles etc.). This meant that, in accordance with normal animation voice casting practices, each actor's voice was unique within the soundscape, occupying its own part of the complex tapestry of sound woven around Hayao Miyazaki's images, creating what Sergi refers to as "harmonisation" (Sergi, 1999: 134). This meant that each voice talent was easily

distinguishable within the film and that, because many of the actors retained much of their usual accents and dialects, that they too became easily recognisable for audiences. It also had the added bonus for the filmmakers of appealing to as broad a cross-section of American audiences as possible, greatly aiding Miramax's apparent efforts to indigenise this distinctly Japanese film.

The only aspect of the film's soundscape that augured a wider project than that of Americanisation was the inclusion of Minnie Driver. Driver is now a veteran voice artist, but *Princess Mononoke* was her first foray into the field. Driver, by the time she voiced Lady Eboshi in *Princess Mononoke*, had also starred in, among others, Miramax's *Good Will Hunting* (1997) and cult comedy hit *Grosse Pointe Blank* (1997). Driver's ability to mimic an American accent had by this time become an integral part of her star persona. In both of the examples above, Driver does perform with a variety of East-coast American accents. Therefore, the choice of the filmmakers to have her act with an upper-class, received pronunciation-style English accent was a deliberate one designed to mark her difference, both to her romantic roles in Hollywood films and within *Princess Mononoke*'s narrative.

Driver's cut-glass English accent had greater impact on *Princess Mononoke* than her conflicted voice persona might at first suggest. This kind of clipped, precise English has connotations that link it to forms of cultural authority. It is, for example, the usual accent of the Royal Shakespeare Company and film and theatre actors such as Lawrence Olivier. More obliquely it has become the perceived form of language for the British upper-class elite and thus has been applied through film and other media retroactively onto the idea of British cultural imperialism. Furthermore, this specific accent may have been utilised by Driver in her presentation of Eboshi as a leader of men by a further potential cultural link drawn between such cultural imperialist leaders but also more recent famous upper-class British women. Her accent thus differentiates her from the rest of the cast not simply in terms of regional difference, but gendered and national terms too.

Like Pinkett Smith's exaggeration of her own accent, Driver's English accent may have been utilised, according to Kozloff, because

> clichéd dialects are used onscreen to sketch in a character's part and cultural heritage, to locate each person in terms of his or her financial standing, education level, geographical background, or ethnic group. (Kozloff, 2000: 82)

Parts of this ring true in *Princess Mononoke*. As discussed, Pinkett Smith's accent helps place her character Toki educationally and Driver's Englishness may also connote ideas of upper-class English society. Therefore, Driver's accent may actually have been intended to contrast with Pinkett Smith's performance in financial and educational terms. The use of Driver's English accent may also have been intended to code Eboshi as the film's villain, reflecting a post-Cold War upsurge in the use of British actors as villains in American films. This concurs with Kozloff's assertion about dialect influencing audience conceptions of a character's cultural heritage, but in this case purports more to Eboshi's motivation than history. However, this theory falls apart somewhat due to the film's geography. If the work undertaken by Miramax to re-voice *Mononokehime* as *Princess Mononoke* is viewed as a project of American indigenisation, then at first glance at least, Driver is an incongruous inclusion in its cast. The film's dialogue makes no attempt to naturalise her "foreign" accent, which points to several possibilities for its inclusion.

Besides those factors listed above, Driver's accent carries with it certain additional possibilities. Its distinction in the soundscape marks Eboshi as a figure of difference, and may well have been intended to unsettle audiences, complicating her role within the film. It could also be thought of as an appeal to English audiences, who are now able to buy the film on DVD in Britain. This would mean that instead of project of indigenisation, what was actually taking place during *Princess Mononoke*'s re-voicing was a wider project of Anglicisation. More likely though, Miramax may have considered Driver herself as a naturalised figure. Her profile at the time in the United States, one of the most prolific among the cast, supports this interpretation. Driver was known for being "American" insofar as she had relocated there geographically, was working in American films like *Good Will Hunting* and was known in those films for being able to pass as American with her accent. By reinventing herself as an American in her performances and relocating in her private life, Driver becomes a sort of adoptive American, one who could certainly be considered as manipulating certain aspects of her public and private persona.

Through its voice talents, its soundtrack and its sound effects then, *Princess Mononoke*'s soundscape has a complicated relationship with any conception of it as having undergone a process of indigenisation for America. Through the combination of music and sound effects, we can see that "voice" in Miyazaki's film need not of necessity relate to human intoned dialogue. Thus, in *Princess Mononoke* characters speak without words, and places are given a voice through music. This detracts from the idea of the film as essentially Americanised, more so because so much of its soundscape was left unaltered from the original Japanese. Clearly, it was through the choice of specifically American actors for the voice track that *Princess Mononoke* was most changed. However, as the inclusion of Minnie Driver has shown, even this most obvious aspect of the film's indigenisation was not without qualification. Although this leads to a tempting idea of a project of Anglicisation, in fact the more likely answer is that Miramax's notions of "America" transgress normal conceptions of cultural and geographical boundaries. In the case of Driver, her involvement with the American film industry was probably enough of a link to explain her inclusion.

The voice, and within that category vocalisation, are, as shown in the above, the most privileged aspects of *Princess Mononoke*'s soundscape. They are prioritised over its musical score to the extent that important dialogue is even framed by *Princess Mononoke*'s theme music. If otherwise silent vocalised animal characters carry meaning or weight in *Princess Mononoke*'s narrative then it is through their sound effect "voices" as much as any animated presence that they do so. In the example of the kodama discussed previously it could even be argued that their bone or rattling voices ground them within the film's narrative, making the fantasy of them more believable.

Star voices as they appear in this fulfil a similar task. The range of American (and even British) accents employed detracts from any sense of this film as intrinsically "Other," or in this case, strips away any sense of this film as a Japanese film. The authority of the animated image could, in this manner, be thought of as undermined by the "American" voice that narrates it. Though the dress and history related by *Princess Mononoke* may well be Japanese in origin, this nationality is filtered through America, as the film's overall "voice" becomes nationally conflicted. The manner in which audiences hear *Princess Mononoke* therefore deeply impacts on their understanding of the film's cultural and national meanings.

Moreover, it is important to account for the presence of the particular star voices used in *Princess Mononoke* in terms of what they potentially mean to audiences. The appeals that can

be made through them are vary widely. Anderson's massive cult following from *The X-Files*, appeals to "serious" filmmaking through Crudup and Thornton and appeals to various national, youth and ethnic audiences through the presence of Driver, Danes and Pinkett Smith as discussed above. Thus, the re-recording of *Princess Mononoke* recreated the film not just for a non-specific American audience, but for a series of disparate potential audiences that happen to co-exist within American society. It is particularly telling that many of the actors employed in this film had accents that were native to the places where it was first exhibited, for example Crudup appealing to a "home" audience at the New York Film Festival where *Princess Mononoke* was screened in 1999. The voice within *Princess Mononoke*'s soundscape is therefore a complex issue that raises questions of performance, nationality and film marketing. That the voice has been the subject thus far of so little scrutiny in film studies belies its true cultural importance, an importance that needs to be repositioned as a central concern in not only star studies, but film studies more generally.

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