

In this essay I will be looking into how anthropomorphism is portrayed in anime and manga. By researching into the history and going into depths and details of a selection of different characters I hope to find the answer. For research I will find articles and essays on the history of both anime/manga and anthropomorphism as well as articles about anthropomorphism in animation in the hopes that they will be able to help give more context into the above thesis. I will also be looking more into different characters from anime that are all forms of anthropomorphism or moe anthropomorphism, and look at how they are portrayed in their respected anime and compare them with each other to see if there are any similarities or differences in how they are portrayed.

When we think of anthropomorphic cartoon characters the more popular ones that a majority of Western society will say are Looney Tunes, Tom and Jerry or a greater part of Disney movies, an obvious one being Beauty and the Beast with characters such as Cogsworth, Mrs Potts, etc. This is not new in Western society, the classic story by George Orwell, real name Eric Arthur Blair, 'Animal Farm' first published in 1945, uses anthropomorphism to portray people and power and the ordinary people during the Soviet Revolution, and to unveil the writer's feelings about it. But what about Eastern cartoons, to be more specific Japanese manga and anime. Even though anime and manga has been becoming increasingly popular in the West in more modern times, it is not really shown on television or sold only in specific shops so not many people in Western countries know much about Japanese manga or anime and sometimes if they do know they disregard it as not being proper animation. This may be because of media influence or that the cultures between Western countries and East Asia are different and people just don't understand it. There are many characters in anime that are forms of anthropomorphism, for example Happy from Fairy Tail or Koro Sensei from Assassination Classroom, but most characters vary in different types and styles. But how do Japanese manga and anime portray their characters using anthropomorphism or moe anthropomorphism? By looking more thoroughly into the history of manga and anime as well as the history of anthropomorphism we will be able to understand more about the different characters that anime has provided throughout the years and see how they are portrayed through their anthropomorphic traits.

Manga is the term used for Japanese comic books or graphic novels, typically aimed at adults as well as children; the term dates back to the late 18th century in Japan where the word was used to describe the picture book, *Shiji no yukikai* in 1798, this is believed to be the first time the word manga was used. The word was then used again in 1814 as the title of Aikawa Minwa's *Manga Hyakujo* and *Hokusai Manga*. These are woodblock printed books containing artwork by the artist Hokusai. However, modern manga developed more into what is seen in today's time from a rise of artistic creativity during the U.S occupation of Japan from 1945-1952. During which the American troops introduced Japan to American comics and cartoons, like Mickey Mouse and Betty Boop. These comics became inspirations to many Japanese artists to develop and create their own style of comics, one of which was Osamu Tezuka. Tezuka is a very famous Japanese cartoonist, especially in the manga community. He is labelled as "the god of manga" and "godfather of anime". He took these American comics and renovated them to create this new style, in time inventing the distinctive large eyes which are prominent in both modern manga and anime. Early *Tezuka characters had large eyes, inspired by their American counterparts Betty Boop and Disney's Bambi. Large eyes have since become a stylistic hallmark of the whole genre (The Guardian, science, 2010)*. One of Tezuka's most famous manga series is called Astro Boy, known in Japan as Tetsuwan Atomu or Mighty Atom, is a story about a robot boy with 100,000 horsepower created after the death of his inventor's son, this manga series became so popular that Tezuka turned it into a television series in 1963, becoming the first Japanese TV series to embody the aesthetic that later became known as anime. Astro Boy's popularity kept on increasing and by the 1960s was imported to the US and other western countries, thus gaining more awareness of manga outside of Japan. This gain in popularity led to many western films being influenced by anime, whether they admitted to being influenced or not, there have been a lot of critical comparisons between them. Some of these films include The Lion King which many compared to Kimba the White Lion, The Matrix is Ghost in the Shell, Black Swan has similarities to Perfect Blue and Pacific Rim: Uprising has elements from Naruto. In Fact there were so many similarities between The Lion King and Kimba the White Lion that many called it plagiarism, despite the filmmakers on Lion King claiming that they had never heard of Kimba before the allegations there is evidence that those claims could be false, starting from storyline plot similarities to characters appearance and their names as well Simba and Kimba, as well as the voice actor for Simba, Matthew Broderick, assuming he had taken up the role of the voice for Kimba (Plagiarism Today).

What is anthropomorphism? The *Definition is the showing or treating of animals, gods, and objects as if they are human in an appearance, character, or behaviour, (Cambridge Dictionary)*. Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human form or behaviour given to an animal or god, anthropomorphic comes from the late latin word

anthropomorphus which is derived from Ancient Greece where people would use the words *ánthrōpos* "human" and *morphē* "form" to describe their gods (*merriam-webster*). Why might people/writers use anthropomorphism to bring their characters to life: (a) To make a wider appeal to the readers. With objects or animals, the story can become visually appealing and non-threatening to readers, (b) It helps create vivid, imaginative characters that readers can relate to because they are more human, (c) It allows writers to imagine and tell different stories than they would be able to tell about humans.

However, by using anthropomorphism in cartoons they are more likely to be shown as an animal rather than a god, this is because viewers tend to relate more to an animal character than a human character. When these films use animals there is this sort of type casting on particular animals with given traits, a bear is mainly seen as this sort of fatherly character, cuddly and kind hearted such as Yogi bear or Baloo from the Jungle Book; or a snake is mainly seen as the cunning bad character for instance Kaa from Jungle Book or Sir Hiss from Robin Hood. A lot of the time in these cartoons the bad guy is mostly human, this can be seen in films like Fox and the Hound or 101

Dalmatians. This is because humans feel more empathy towards animals, mainly pets, than they do humans. There is even a website people can look at to see whether a dog dies in a film/TV series, Does the Dog Die. So why do humans empathize with animals more than humans? Well a study from 2017 gave 256 college students 1 of 4 different newspaper articles, each describing an attack on a victim by an unknown assailant with a baseball bat, the only difference being the victim. The victim could have been 1 of 2 human victims, a 1 year old baby or a 30 year old adult, or 1 of 2 dog victims, a puppy or a 6 year old adult. After reading the article each student then had to answer questions to measure their empathy and distress towards the victim, the results showed that empathy towards the baby, puppy and adult dog were equivalent to each other, whereas the empathy towards the 30 year old adult human was significantly lower. *"The fact that adult crime victims receive less empathy than do child, puppy, and full-grown dog victims suggest that adult dogs are regarded as dependent and vulnerable, not unlike their younger canine counterparts and kids"* (*Psychology Today* paragraph.8).

The earliest examples of anthropomorphism in cartoons can be seen in *'Mickey Mouse and Felix the Cat in the West, as well as the stop motion insects in The Cameraman's Revenge (1912) in the East'* (*wiredspace* pg.6 paragraph.2). The Cameraman's Revenge is a silent stop motion film from 1912 Russia where the characters are all real insects used like puppets to convey a story, and although it is silent the anthropomorphic style is still heavily involved by showing the characters interacting in a human like environment. The film is about infidelity, Mr Beetle goes to town where he meets a burlesque dancer dragonfly. The grasshopper also wanted the dragonfly so he followed them to a hotel where he films them together. However, back home Mrs Beetle is also having an affair with an artist and is caught by Mr Beetle who then goes on to

play the hurt but forgiving husband. He then takes her to the cinema, but the grasshopper is projecting his recording of Mr Beetle and the dragonfly. The film then ends with Mrs Beetle beating Mr Beetle and him running away (watch?v=U42) Probably the most famous anthropomorphic characters come from the likes of Disney or Warner Brothers, most noticeably Disney's Robin Hood, Zootropolis, Toy Story, and WB's Looney Tunes; these films all are based around animals or inanimate objects that are made to be very human like in a real world situation. But there are other films where the anthropomorphism isn't as prominent as the ones previously mentioned such as The Lion King, Lady and the Tramp, Bambi, Scooby-Doo, and 101 Dalmatians; in these movies the characters aren't as human like as the others but they do have some human like features that allows them to be classed as anthropomorphic. Disney has constantly used anthropomorphism to tell stories. By using anthropomorphism to portray the characters or some of the characters younger viewers who might find the topic or storyline frightening often are happy to watch and their parents happy for them to do so. One such story is Robin Hood, should the characters be people fighting or shooting at other humans children would be scared, using animals such as Foxes, bears, Wolves etc. means that children are not as frightened. Children are also drawn to these animal characters and are seen as non-threatening. This could be down to how they are drawn or how they are portrayed. Even some of the baddies are seen as immature or naive and portrayed as mislead as opposed to evil, such as King John in Robin Hood or Iago in Aladdin. The writers will use colourful characters, places or even worlds which will appeal to a wider audience. They can let their imagination run wild as these characters/worlds can draw the audience into the writer's world. In Beaststars the writers created a world where the characters that are human in character but portrayed as animals such as deer, wolf and rabbits. They wear clothes, walk upright on 2 feet and converse. Portraying humans as animals means the writer can give them personalities that the viewer can relate to but without the human that the viewer has encountered in real life. In the classic story Wind in the Willows, human personalities were seen, Toad was a very forceful character whereas Badger was aristocratic. Using anthropomorphism allows the writer to convey serious topics or subjects in a way that appeals to a wider audience or allows them to understand the meaning of the topic/subject more easily, especially for younger children. In the Disney film Zootropolis, one of the sheep which is portrayed, and seen in real life, as fluffy, sweet, innocent and vulnerable but turns out to be the bad character, showing the metaphor of a sheep in wolf's clothing. The story within the anime film 'The boy and the Beast' wouldn't be as appealing to the viewers if anthropomorphism wasn't used. The writer has set this anime movie within both a human world and an imaginary world, however like many books or films, it is only the human that can move between worlds. At any rate, these are all types of traditional anthropomorphism, but in Japanese anime there is also moe

anthropomorphism which is another form of anthropomorphism. Moeification is given to characters that are not normally “moe” or non living objects and is often called *Gijinka*, the Japanese word for anthropomorphism, this is slightly different to normal anthropomorphism because instead of just giving human traits to animals or objects, human characters are created to embody animals or personify objects; for example train stations, websites, hamburgers, etc, are created in human form and are given a personality to imitate what they are representing. So how does anime portray anthropomorphism in its characters, and are they traditional or moe; well there are many different characters in anime or manga that are forms of anthropomorphism or moe anthropomorphism. So let’s look at a few examples.

In the anime Danganronpa one of the main characters is a small stuffed robotic bear named Monokuma. He is half black and half white to represent the famous Yin-Yang symbol, this was done to show how the two different sides compliment each other, whilst the white side resembles the classic teddy bear look the black side shows a more evil look. In Danganronpa, Monokuma is first shown as the headmaster of the school Hope’s Peak Academy where the entire anime is set, but is later revealed as just a puppet for one of the human characters' plans. At first he appears to be easygoing and cheerful, however, as the anime progresses he soon reveals his evil nature, spurring the students to kill one another *I’ll give it to you straight, ‘cos I’ve still got a lot of drinking to do, I look out at you kids and do you know what I see? A bunch of teenagers who aren’t dead! Major bummer!”* (watch?v=70, 4:07-4:4:18). Throughout the anime viewers get to know how immature and childish he can be, as well as sarcastic *“I know what you’re all thinking, and no, i am not a high-tech Build A Bear reject”* (watch?v=70, 0:40-0:45). One way many viewers can tell Monokuma apart from the other characters is his higher pitched voice and sadistic laugh “upupupu”. Unlike Monokuma; Happy, from the anime Fairy Tail, is one of the protagonists whereas Monokuma is an antagonist in his anime. Happy is a small blue Exceed, which looks similar to a cat. However unlike normal cats Happy can walk erect on his two hind legs. But, even though Happy does not have thumbs he is still able to hold things in his hands as well as using his tail. What makes Happy an Exceed and not just a cat is that he uses magic, and whenever using magic he forms large feathered angels like wings which he uses to fly and carry other characters around. Happy is very loyal to his teammates especially Natsu, who has been around since birth. Similar to Monokuma, Happy tends to be quick witted and cheeky, notably to Lucy *“anyone ever told you that you kinda look like a crazy sunfish whenever you smile”* (watch?v=fm 1:44-1:54). But Happy can be jokingly mean to anyone *“You’re thinking, you never do that, be careful you might hurt yourself”* (watch?v=fm 2:51-2:59). Another anime similar to Fairy Tail is One Piece. In One Piece there is a character called Tony Tony Chopper, like Happy, Chopper is one of the main

team's good guys in the anime. Chopper is a reindeer that ate the Hito Hito No Mi, a devil fruit, that allows its user to transform into a human hybrid. This means that Chopper looks like a reindeer but can walk, act and talk like a human. He originates from Drum Island where he learned how to be a doctor, but joins Luffy's pirate crew, as the crew doctor, with whom he travels the world with in the hopes to accomplish his dream of becoming a doctor that can cure any disease. For most of the anime Chopper is a toddler size human/reindeer hybrid, but his devil fruit abilities allow him to change his appearance depending on the situation *"Chopper, don't get big like that"* (watch?v=9Q 0:31-0:56). Similar to Monokuma; Kon, from the anime Bleach, occupies the body of a stuffed toy. However, Kon is not a small robotic bear but in fact a small stuffed lion, which he occupies for most of the anime. Kon has a light tan body with seams running all over and a button placed in the center of his where his belly button would be, his arms and legs each have four white claws which serves as replacements for fingers and toes and a small tail on his lower back. Kon has a round head, which is flat when viewed from the side and a brown spiky mane, he has two beady black eyes and small ears. The reason Kon looks so hand made is because he is a handmade stuffed lion, this is just a body that he has borrowed. His original form is that of a Soul Candy pill, which Ichigo takes and thus lets Kon take charge of Ichigo's body. Kon is quite perverted, taking advantage of his stuffed animal form to get girls to hug him, especially girls with large breasts. In the anime Assassination Classroom, a story about a class that has to kill their alien teacher who is a threat to the planet, the teacher in question is Koro Sensei who is in the form of an anthropomorphic octopus type. Compared to the last four characters previously mentioned, Koro Sensei originally was human that then transformed into this alien octopus form, starting off as a human assassin, known as The Reaper, that then had a lot of tentacle experiments conducted on him to make him stronger, more powerful, more agile, the experiments worked and made him rampage on the doctors and scientists who conducted these experiments, resulting in the one he loved dying and him transforming into his final form (watch?v=0m5). Koro Sensei is a three metre tall yellow earthly octopus looking alien type with a large round head and a massive smile, that hardly ever changes or moves, and two small beady eyes. He has a lot of tentacles but only uses two as arms, the rest are for walking on. Because he has a constant smile on his face he has the ability to change the colour of his skin to show his emotions, such as yellow with green stripes is mockery, red is anger, orange with a red circle is correct answer, black is fury and so on. At the start of the anime Koro Sensei is seen as quite normal, despite his appearance, he could be childish and silly and then be serious in the blink of an eye, but every so often some of his old personality as a the Reaper would show especially when harm comes to his students resulting in him teaching through fear. However, as time went on he bonded with each of his students individually and truly and deeply cared for

them and he started teaching using compassion instead of fear *“and furthermore letting you die is not an option, believe in that for your next flying leap”* (funimation, Japanese dub, 19:00-20:12). Why would the writer choose an Octopus as the teacher role? One reason could be that they understand that a teacher is multi-faceted when it comes to role, they not only teach in the classroom they maintain discipline, planning and preparing the lessons for all abilities, providing feedback, meeting with other professional and organising and taking part in school events, amongst other roles (prospects teacher role) Showing that a teacher has many roles could be seen as why an Octopus represents the many roles of a teacher having eight tentacles. There are seven roles of a teacher, including pastoral and administrator, with the overarching role representing each of the eight tentacles (over Africa 7 roles). The above five are all examples of normal anthropomorphism in anime. The anime Hetalia: Axis Powers all the characters are personifications of countries, regions and micronations. Each character's personality is formed by positive and negative cultural stereotypes. Some examples of characters, Italy, or Northern Italy, has brown eyes and brown hair with a curl on the left side, this acts as his erogenous zone when touched. Italy is often seen wearing a blue WWII military uniform or a tan uniform in earlier episodes of the anime; in a section of the anime, chibitalia, it shows when Italy was younger he often wore dresses and was usually mistaken for a girl *“is this the painting of your little girlfriend or boyfriend or gender neutral chibi thing”* (watch?v=8zj 2:42-2:46). Italy is one of the main characters of the anime, Hetalia translates to useless Italy *‘Hetalia (ヘタリア) is a portmanteau combining hetare (ヘタレ, Japanese for “useless” or “pathetic” in a cute or endearing way) and “Italia” (イタリア, Itaria, Japanese for “Italy”)* (wikipedia, hetalia). Italy is cheerful and energetic as well as a crybaby with a love for pasta. Italy is really close with Germany *“We don’t have to kiss do we” “nope...unless you want to”* (watch?v=8zj 1:11-1:1:16), after starting off as his prisoner and then ally, these two, along with Japan, form the Axis Powers; it is hinted, however not confirmed, that Germany may be Italy’s long-lost childhood love, Holy Roman Empire. Federal Republic of Germany is tall and muscular, with slick back blond hair and blue eyes, which is a reference to WWII and Hitler’s image of a perfect German. Germany wears either a green Wehrmacht, or Waffen-SS officers uniform with an iron cross on the collar, again a reference to WWII. Germany is a neat freak, very serious and rule abiding *“...we’ll follow my rules from here on out, eight minutes each for speeches, no chit chat about side deals, and absolutely no going over the time limit. If you want to go, make sure you’re prepared and raise your hand, but do so in a way that does not mock any salute from my country’s past!”* (vimeo 556, 1:20-1:39). However, according to Italy in episode 8 Germany is also a fan of BDSM (vimeo 567, 3:50-4:30). Another character is State of Japan, who is short and slim with black hair and dark brown eyes. Japan often wears a white naval uniform with black and gold accents, similar to Germany this is a reference to WWII. Japan is a shy,

quiet and hard working man, he doesn't know much about the outside world and needs time adjusting to people *"why did you watch it? You didn't have to watch it, who am I talking to?"* ([watch?v=2ua](#), 10:55-11:00). United Kingdom, or as often referred to as just England, has messy short blond hair and green eyes. Like Germany and Japan, United Kingdom dresses in a military uniform with a Sam Browne belt. United Kingdom is an obstinate, former pirate, who used to torment Spain. United Kingdom claims to be a gentleman, however, he is cynical, sharp-tongued, prone to rough speech and yearns for the golden years. He has a strong rivalry with France but will team up when needed *"why are you always such a damn wanker!....What! he only came here to taunt me, bugger off! I'm not jealous of your shite hair, you snail slouper! Don't ever show your face around here again Rapunzel!"* ([watch?v=XfM](#), 6:47-7:30). Similar to Fairy Tail, the anime Kamisama Hajimemashita has different characters that come in all different forms, most noticeably Tomoe. Tomoe is a fox yokai, a supernatural spirit/demon in Japanese folklore, with "over-the-top good looks". Unlike normal humans, Yokai age slowly, so even though Tomoe is several hundred years old he appears to be in his late teens or early twenties. Tomoe has silver/white hair which he normally wears down and short but the manga and anime also occasionally shows him having it long as well. His eyes are angled similarly to that of a fox's, with violet fox-like pupils that can darken with strong emotion. On top of his head he has two large fox-like ears and on his lower back a very fluffy, full white tail. When the anime is showing the wild fox version of Tomoe, he dresses with considerable flare in a dramatic, flame patterned kimono with long hair and a long samurai sword. In contrast to that, as a shinshi he is more traditional and orthodox, wearing a primarily white yukata with a sombre-coloured haori in black or dark blue with his hair short, he also tends to go barefoot as much as possible. Just like a fox Tomoe tends to be cunning and sly and has a tendency to mock others due to him not being able to trust easily. *"..not my problem"* ([watch?v=UH 0:38-0:49](#)) *"believe me, i can understand it completely...so well that it hurts, which is why it will be my ultimate pleasure to burn it to sinders as payback for your foolish crimes"* ([watch?v=UH 4:51-5:09](#)). But as the anime proceeds viewers get a sense that Tomoe is a tsundere, meaning that a person is initially a cold before gradually showing a warmer or softer side, viewers see him let his walls fall, especially around Nanami *"may I seal the contract of the familiar with you?....from the heart"* ([watch?v=5- 1:22-1:37](#)). Both Tomoe and the Hetalia characters are forms of moe anthropomorphism.

From this research we can conclude that anthropomorphism has been used in many different formats since ancient times, most commonly in film, animation and books, so to have anthropomorphic characters in anime and manga isn't something new. However, what most noticeably makes anthropomorphism in anime different compared to that of any western films is that they have two different types; normal anthropomorphism and

moe anthropomorphism. After looking at the different characters and the way they represent anthropomorphism, it is clear to see that they are not only influenced by Japanese culture but also cultures from other countries. It would be easy to assume that the reason manga and anime creators use anthropomorphism in its characters is because it just works well with the plot, but it does also have its psychological underdepths as well, letting the viewers to relate and engage more with the characters. On reflection by choosing this method of research it was a lot harder than when first anticipated, this was because there were hardly any articles or reports about anthropomorphism in anime and manga or even in general animation so it was quite limited. This may be because it is not a topic many would think much into, when people watch an animated film viewers do not necessarily think much into why the anthropomorphic character is portrayed a certain way or why they were designed to be anthropomorphic in the first place. There are very few shops that stock manga magazines, there are graphic novels such as X-men, Superman and Tiger in the sun. The on-line magazine subscription sites such as Newsstand and WHSmith have very few options for Manga. On Newsstand there are Attack on Titan and Fairy Tail only under Manga, whereas there are thirteen on Marvel alone. WHSmith website has one manga magazine, NEO, to subscribe to. On the website Forbidden Planet there is still very little, showing 7 editions of the magazine Newtype only. This is a surprise as the Forbidden Planet shows holds shelves of Manga and Anime products such as books. These show that there is a little selection available in the UK. Blogger Chris Perkins says, in his history of Britain's first anime magazine, that in the early 1990s 'there was very little about Japanese animation in English at all, leading a group of early fans to get together and do it for themselves' he is speaking about Anime UK, initially a newsletter which has developed into a magazine which took its influence from Japanese magazines such as Newtype and Animage. The last issue was published in February 1996, over a period of six years 30 issues were published, he continues to say that it *'formed the foundation for much of the anime- and manga-related journalism that followed, supplying writers, attitude, resources and even vocabulary for successors such as Manga Max and NEO. In those few short years, it played a major part in the coverage of anime in the English language, and the growth of anime in the UK'* (Anime UK blog). However, in saying that it was definitely the better way to do research for this topic.

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