

## Heroism and Anti-Heroism Portrayed by Porco Rosso in Porco Rosso a Japanese Animated Film

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**Abstract:** Although the hero and anti-hero are on the same side of the story in which the protagonist side, both are fairly different from one another. The objectives of this study entitled, “Heroism and Anti-Heroism Portrayed by Porco Rosso in Porco Rosso a Japanese Animated Film” is to analyze what kind of hero and anti-hero a character named Porco is, and to analyze if it is possible for one character to possess both the quality of a hero and an anti-hero. This study used a descriptive qualitative method. Porco Rosso is a pig-like human who was a war hero turned bounty hunter. The hero side of Porco Rosso is portrayed in the flashbacks when he was in a war. The anti-hero side is portrayed in the main setting when he has retired from the military and becomes a bounty hunter.

**Keywords:** anti-hero, hero, Japanese movie, porco rosso

### RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The culture of heroes is a widely accepted culture that has emerged in society. The traditional definition of a hero is a person who is admired for their bravery in confronting the enemy. According to Ross (2019), “a hero; one who inspires, guides, and protects something precious—an ordinary extraordinary person, master of the self. Heroes exhibit the further reaches of human development by transforming into entirely new, resplendent individuals that demonstrate valuable capacities while still being mortal.” Thus, heroes are frequently portrayed as being ideal, possessing high moral standards, appealing features, and a long list of noteworthy accomplishments that help not only them personally but also society as a whole.

In addition to the evolving hero culture, there is also an anti-hero culture, which is a subtype of the hero culture. Many youngsters adore anti-hero figures because of how they vary from heroes in general. Heroes and anti-heroes differ significantly from one another. Anti-heroes are a mixture of heroes and villains; they have a tendency to be more spontaneous, ethically dubious, and behave however they please, like villains. These characters typically take actions that aren't really motivated by virtuous objectives like heroes. Even then, they are nonetheless making a hero-like impression on society with their deeds. Also, both heroes and anti-heroes have this similarity of will not stop working until they achieve their goal, as said by Wahyuningsih (2012) in her article titled *Ki Ga Sumanai Dalam Dunia Kerja*, “Rasa ketidakpuasan merupakan hasil dari persiapan budaya yang kuat untuk mengatasi rintangan apapun yang dihadapi dan untuk mencapai tujuan yang hendak dicapai.” That means that dissatisfaction is the outcome of a strong cultural readiness to overcome all challenges and accomplish objectives.

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However, while comparing and analyzing heroic and anti-heroic figures, two distinct characters will be used as examples. Superman from DC Comics and Captain America from Marvel Comics are two examples of a traditional hero character that is attractive and has high values. They are qualified to assume the role of heroes and work to protect the security and peace of common folk from all calamities because they are noble, courageous, powerful, outstanding leaders, and compassionate.

Ironman and Deadpool are two examples of anti-hero characters that are currently popular among adolescents. Both characters are narcissistic, selfish, irresponsible, and will stop at nothing to accomplish their objectives. Nonetheless, despite their bad character flaws, they still contribute positively to society. However, these flaws in them only serve to humanize them, drawing sympathy from and piquing the interest of the viewers. The common wisdom that heroes are pristine seems to be under scrutiny. Anti-heroes are confirmation that flawed individuals may also be heroes. Through this comparison, it becomes apparent that heroes and anti-heroes are frequently represented by various people, whose identities have been shaped since the beginning of the writing process to become heroes and anti-heroes.

The purpose of this article is to determine whether it is possible for one character to possess the qualities of a hero and an anti-hero. The Japanese animated film *Porco Rosso* is chosen to be the subject of the study about the topic of a hero and an anti-hero. *Porco Rosso* is a Japanese animated film by Hayao Miyazaki released in 1992 by Studio Ghibli. This film presents the tale of Marco Pagot, a former World War I warrior who became a bounty hunter and hunts down pirates for money. When Marco was a young man, he served in the military's air force and excelled as a fighter for his nation, specifically Italy. The war, however, claimed the lives of his friends. Moreover, Marco was subjected to an enigmatic curse that transformed him into a humanoid pig. He is known as Porco Rosso in his anthropomorphic pig form, a skillful bounty hunter with a recognizable red plane. After leaving the service, he became known as Porco Rosso, which is Italian for "Crimson Pig." The film was awarded the Best Feature-Length Film Award at the Annecy International Animated Film Festival in 1993.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

In this article, two previous research articles are used as a reference. First, an article titled "*Heroism: A Conceptual Analysis and Differentiation Between Heroic Action and Altruism*" written by Zeno E. Franco and Kathy Blau, Pacific Graduate School of Psychology, Palo Alto University; Philip G. Zimbardo (2011) from Pacific Graduate School of Psychology, Palo Alto University, Emeritus Professor, Stanford University, California. Their research focuses on theorizing and conducting empirical studies of the phenomena of heroism. According to this journal, heroism is the concept of citizens transforming civic virtue into the ultimate form of civic activity by accepting either physical peril or social sacrifice.

Second, a paper entitled "*Antiheroes in Modern Literature*" written by Lulu Marzan Salma (2008), from the Department of English and Humanities, BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. This paper contains several chapters that describe the characterizations of several anti-hero figures created by renowned authors in great detail. This paper aims to examine what an antihero is and the purpose that these types of characters serve in modern literature. This essay examines the characters of three novels and a play to demonstrate how antiheroes

develop in modern literature. The analysis of these works will highlight the motivations and traits of some of the most prominent antiheroes in English literature.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses descriptive qualitative as a method with the approach of heroism and anti-heroism theories to help analyze the problems of this research and to find the answers to the objectives.

The descriptive research design was chosen by the researcher because the study's fictional protagonist has a complicated personality and occasionally utilizes words and acts with nuanced meanings that call for description. The subject's actions, words, and decision-making are taken into consideration as the researcher evaluates the subject's personality in this situation. The circumstances are described, and the archetype is examined in relation to them. The heroism or heroic side was inspired by the theory of the twelve heroic subtypes and situations that call for heroic deeds by Franco, Blau, and Zimbardo (2011). The anti-heroism side was inspired by the theory and descriptions of anti-hero characters in famous writer's works by Lulu Marzan Salma (2008).

The heroism and anti-heroism facets of the character Porco Rosso serve as the analytical unit in this study. Primary data and secondary data were the two types of data used in this article. The main source of information for this study is the 93-minute Japanese animated film *Porco Rosso*, which was produced and directed by Hayao Miyazaki in 1992. The information gathered is in the form of visual data about the chosen research subject, which is presented as a video. The main character of this movie has a rather complex personality; once he started as a military hero, he was cursed to turn into a pig-like man, isolates himself, and becomes a bounty hunter. Secondary data from this study are data related to the object of study obtained and collected from the theses, articles, and journals from the internet.

There are procedures that will be followed in order to gather data that is appropriate and in line with the subject of study, ensuring that this research is of good quality. The first stage is to repeatedly watch the animated film by *Porco Rosso* in order to comprehend the personality of the lead character. Gather theoretical information for journals, articles, and thesis that will be used for analysis. Gather movie snapshots that highlight the characteristics of the main character that relate to the research unit. Transcribing the main character's and other characters' movie dialogue in relation to the study's subject. The theories that have been chosen will be used as secondary data to examine and understand the primary data that has been gathered. Drawing conclusions from the analysis comes after the next phase, which is to present the interpretation's findings.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **Porco's Heroism Based on Franco, Blau, Zimbardo's Twelve Heroic Subtypes and Situations That Call Forth Heroic Action**

Porco's heroic traits are portrayed in the era of war. The following are Porco's heroic traits:

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## 1. Physical Peril

### a. Military And Other Duty-Bound Physical Risk Heroes

He was a war hero in WWI.

Individuals involved in military or emergency response careers that involve repeated exposure to high-risk situations. Heroic acts must exceed the call of duty.



Figure 1 Porco recalled one of his battles in World War I (Source: Porco Rosso, 1992, minute 01:06:50-01:08:08)

Porco: “It was the last summer of the war. We were on our usual patrol over the Adriatic, heading for Istria. Berlini was my wingman. An old friend, who’d gotten married two days before. I was the best man at his wedding. But we couldn’t get leave, so we’d come straight back to the base. Planes were dropping like flies, ours and theirs. There were three on my tail. I had my hands full. Then I was the only one left on our side. The enemy kept on coming. They had blood in their eyes. I was numb, I couldn’t see. I thought I was a goner.”

Figure 1 shows the scene in which Fio requested that Porco tell her a story so she can fall asleep. Porco made the decision to tell Fio a tale about one of his World War I fight, and the movie displayed Porco's flashback memories. In this monologue, Porco described how he and his old friend Berlini, who had recently wed Gina, another old friend from the same group, were caught up in a fight when they were ambushed by the enemy while patrolling the area around their base.

The scene showed how Porco and Berlini flew side by side with the other Allied planes. When the enemy’s planes came, both sides started to fly around, trying to outdo one another. And then planes started to blow up one by one and fall down to the sea under them. Then suddenly Porco was the only one left from his side. But the enemies kept on coming and attacking him until he was to the point of exhaustion, he felt numb and couldn’t see anything. He was sure that it was the end of him.

Porco and his friends joined the army to serve his country Italy in the era of World War I. This action put them in battles with high-risk of physical injuries and or traumatic events. But the war didn’t stop at physical injuries, it took away the lives of Porco’s friends. It even almost took away his own life, but Porco managed to survive.

## **b. Civil Heroes–Nonduty Bound Physical Risk Heroes**

Willing to sacrifice self. Trade places with a dead friend.

Civilians who attempt to save others from physical harm or death while knowingly putting their own lives at risk.



Figure 2 Porco insisted to go away instead of his friend (Source: Porco Rosso, 1992, minute 01:09:36-01:10:04)

Porco: "Berlini, you're okay! Berlini, wait! Where are you going? Berlini, stop!  
What about Gina? I'll go instead!"

This scene showed the time when Porco seemed to be unconscious after a rough battle. When he came to, first he saw a world above the clouds, where it was just white clouds under him and clear blue sky above him, and a long contrail stretching out of sight. Then suddenly pilots in their planes, both allies and enemies, are showing up from under the white clouds under them and going up slowly to the contrail. He saw his old friend, Berlini, and his plane among those pilots. He shouted to Berlini, trying to talk to him from his own plane. But Berlini didn't respond to him and kept floating up to the contrail above.

Porco had a one-sided conversation with the ghost of Berlini who was his longtime friend. He asked him where he was going but then he didn't get an answer. He even tried to stop him to go away and offered him to switch and take his role to the afterlife, so he can stay alive and not leave his newly-wed wife alone. He wanted to save Berlini not because of the obligation to his duty, but because he wanted to save his friend. But of course, he couldn't do it. But he would, he was very willing and actually tried to start the engine of his own plane, so he could chase Berlini, but to no avail.

## **2. Social Sacrifice**

### **a. Good Samaritan**

He jumped off a cliff to rescue an enemy pilot.

Individuals who are first to step in to help others in need. Situation involves considerable disincentives for altruism. May/may not involve immediate physical risk.



Figure 3 Fio told Porco about her childhood memory (Source: Porco Rosso, 1992, minute 01:05:46-01:06:00)

Fio: "My father was in the same unit with Lieutenant Marco Paggot. I used to love the story of how he jumped off a cliff to rescue an enemy pilot."

In this scene, Fio told Porco a fraction about her past. She told him about how her father used to be in the same unit with Lieutenant Marco Paggot when joined the army. And one of her favorite stories from her father was about how Lieutenant Marco Paggot jumped from a cliff to save an enemy pilot. Even though Porco didn't confirm whether the story was true or not, he didn't deny it either.

Even in the harsh reality and cruelty of war, even when he wasn't ordered nor obliged to help, he respected everyone's lives. He took a risk and jumped off a cliff to save not an ally, but an enemy pilot. Even though he knew he wasn't going to gain anything from it, he still chose to do it.

### **Porco's Anti-heroism Based on Salma's Antiheroes in Modern Literature: Fyodor Dostoevsky's The Underground Man**

Porco's anti-heroism traits are portrayed in the era of post-war. The following are Porco's anti-heroism traits:

#### **1. Alienated**

He lives alone, in a secretive isolated small island.

His life is compared to a mouse hole, where he lives like a mouse, alienated from the ordinary people of the society – Salma, 2008: 4



Figure 4 Porco's living quarter from the inside (Source: Porco Rosso, 1992, minute 00:00:51-00:03:17)

In Figure 4, at the earliest, the movie showed us Porco's living space. There was no sight of other humans nor noise except the sound of the waves and music from Porco's radio that played quietly. There was only a humble tent, a boat, a small dock, his iconic red plane, and his



improvised relaxing space where he had a little table, a radio, a telephone, a deckchair, and a self-made canopy from a wooden stick and an umbrella. It showed how he lived very far from any crowd of humans and how alienated he was.



Figure 5 Porco's living quarter from the outside (Source: Porco Rosso, 1992, minutes 00:56:08-00:56:20)

Figure 5 showed the exterior of his hideout in full view when he brought Fio back to his private quarter. He lived on an unpopulated small island that was located in the middle of nowhere the sea. To enter his private spot of hideout on the island, he entered a secret tunnel at the side of the island with his plane.

Porco resides on a little island that is utterly cut off. As a bounty hunter, he has many enemies, therefore this is his hideout to keep him safe from the Italian police and military as well as any others. The only time anyone was aware of his hiding place was when he took Fio there after the test flight and they were ambushed by The Mama Aiutos, a band of sky pirates whom Porco had earlier fought and who had now established an alliance with an American ace flyer named Curtis, who was present as well.

## 2. Reclusive

He avoids people.

We meet the Underground Man when, at the age of forty he has retired from his civil service job and has secluded himself in a shabby apartment in St. Petersburg. By this point, he is a complete nihilist- he has no desire to interact with others and has total contempt for society along with everyone who is a part of it. – Salma, 2008: 4



Figure 6 Porco visited Hotel Adriano (Source: Porco Rosso, 1992, minutes 00:11:11-00:13:46)

When he went to see Gina, an old friend of his, perform a song at the Hotel Adriano, where everyone was seated with friends or other company and mingling, he avoided everyone and went straight to a quiet area of the room to eat. He never initiated conversation; instead, he mainly interacted with others who initiated discussion with him. He spoke as little as possible and only when he thought it was necessary. He lives alone and operates alone.

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### 3. Troublemaker

He works as a bounty hunter.

In order to feel that he has participated in life in some way, he often instigates conflict with others and subjects himself to profound humiliation. This humiliation actually gives the Underground Man a sense of satisfaction and power, as he has brought about the humiliation himself. As long as he can exercise his will, he does not care if the outcome is positive or negative. – Salma, 2008: 11



Figure 7 Porco ambushed The Mama Aiutos (Source: Porco Rosso, 1992, minutes 00:06:17-00:06:41)

Captive Girls: "Hey look! A red plane!"  
 The Mama Aiutos' crewmate: "Where? Where?"  
 Captive Girl 1: "We saw it, didn't we?"  
 Captive Girl 2: "Yes."  
 Porco Rosso: "That's as far as you go!"  
 Captive Girls: "Here he comes!"  
 The Mama Aiutos' Crewmate: "It's Porco Rosso!"

Because of his reputation as a bounty hunter, he is prone to getting into trouble or even becoming sucked into it. His biggest adversaries are sky pirates since he chases them down, depletes their resources, and then collects payment from the person who hired him. And occasionally, sky pirates with a grudge against him would attempt to engage him in combat or threaten to do so. In addition to sky pirates, the government will constantly be spying on him and trying to catch him because bounty hunting is an illegal occupation. They won't do it out in the open, though, because occasionally they use his services and benefit from them in order to fight off sky pirates, despite the fact that this is a criminal occupation.

### 4. Detached

He thought humanity is a waste.

The Underground Man lacks the feeling of belongingness and is completely detached from any sort of relationship, whatsoever. – Salma, 2008: 11





Figure 8 Fio offered her kiss to unbind Porco's Curse (Source: Porco Rosso, 1992, minutes 01:05:38-01:06:31)

His disdain for society is what led to his reclusive side. He regrets the loss of many fine people to a chaotic society and world conflicts. Because terrible people flourish in battle, and you can't be good and win the war, he thinks that the universe only keeps the bad people around and leaves the good people behind. He told Fio, a young engineer who helped him fix his jet in the film, that he believes that perhaps humanities isn't such a waste of time anymore after meeting her since he saw a goodness in Fio that he hadn't seen in people for a very long time.



Figure 9 Porco Went to the Bank (Source: Porco Rosso, 1992, minutes 00:15:55-00:16:19)

As he went to the bank to pay back his loan, the bank teller offered that he donates to those in need because the teller had seen how much money he had earned. But, Porco said "no" by asking the teller whether he appeared to be a person or a human. He was referring to his anthropomorphic pig appearance. This indicates that he considered himself as a non-human or a separate species. He didn't feel like he belonged to humanity, so he didn't think he should care enough to give.

## 5. Self-Loathing

He considered himself to be a bad person.

Like the existentialists who were to follow three-quarters of a century later, he is en marge; he is in revolt not only against society but also against himself, not once, not only today or tomorrow but eternally. – (Salma, 2008: 5)



Figure 10 Porco Received the News that Gina's Husband Died (Source: Porco Rosso, 1992, minutes 00:13:53-00:14:34)

When he visited Gina in Hotel Adriano, she told him that the body of her third husband had finally been found in Bengal after waiting for three years. Porco proceed to pour them both a drink to salute and pay respect to the deceased husband. Before they drank from their glass, Porco said a few words about how the good ones always get killed.

In this scene, we found out that Gina had lost all of her three husbands to the war. And we also found out that all of her deceased husbands were a group of very close friends of herself and Porco for a long time, even before they went to war. The war had taken away their loved ones, and Porco believed that God only took away good people and leave the rest on earth, which means he saw himself to be not of the good ones as he was still there and alive.



Figure 11 Porco Told Fio that He was not a Good Person (Source: Porco Rosso, 1992, minutes 00:06:17-00:06:41)01:10:59-01:11:12

Another similar scene came up much later in the movie. When Porco told Fio about the time when he witnessed the death of one of his old friends, Berliini, he saw his spirits and other pilot's spirits going up into the sky. He said to Fio that he thinks God told him to fly alone forever. And when Fio rejected his words and told him that he was a good person, he rejected Fio back and said to her that all the good ones are dead. Again, he did not and could not think of himself as anything more than a bad person whose fate was to always be alone.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research is that Porco Rosso has both traits of a hero and an anti-hero. In the war era, he showed sympathy and cared for other people's lives. Not only to those he knew personally, that was why he joined the military, because he cared about the lives of Italy's citizens, but he also cared for those he should had deem as an enemy. Whereas after the war is over, he lost too many precious close friends and he started to close himself and developed self-loathing. He believed that he was a bad person because he was able to survive the war but let his friends die in the process. That was the reason that he believed why he was cursed by God as a pig. He believed his outside will resemble his inside. Thus, concluded that the change happened because of severe trauma.

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