A Brief History of the *Journal of Anime and Manga Studies*

Billy Tringali

In 2017, I stood in front of the 'Welcome!' greeting at the Kyoto International Museum of Manga.

Amidst sketches, and several incredible notes about the value of this artform to society and the importance of its preservation, the museum's Executive Director Hiroshi Aramata wrote of his "sense of burning" when it came to the importance of manga – both in his life, and all around the world. I remember so clearly how he encouraged those reading his message, and visiting the museum, to 'do all they could' for manga.[1]

I enrolled at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign not long after that fateful trip to Kyoto, where I began attempting to research the scholarly side of anime. To my horror I discovered that, even in the third largest library in the United States, while pursuing a degree from the best library school in the United States, finding reputable resources was still all but impossible. Academic papers about anime lived across dozens of journals in as many subjects - education, travel, information science - and each of these journals required a paid subscription to a different database. Paywall after paywall sealed away crucial information from those who wanted to follow that 'burning' passion that Aramata described.

So, as part of my Master's in Library and Information Science, I pitched an open access journal to the Illinois Open Publishing Network. After a year-long notes process, JAMS was approved, and I launched our first 'Call for Papers' in June of 2019.

But the work didn't stop there. As part of building up my new project, I flew myself to an academic conference in Washington, D.C., where I was fortunate enough to share the idea of JAMS with Frenchy Lunning, the founder of *Mechademia*. While sitting together at the hotel bar, Frenchy connected me with dozens of scholars who would be eager to peer review for JAMS or submit work for consideration: her word lent trust and legitimacy to the hard work of a young scholar with no connections yet in the field. I will always be grateful to Frenchy for her kindness, and now her friendship, and I still feel so lucky she was willing to use her voice in the field to give JAMS a chance to find its footing in the world of anime and manga studies.
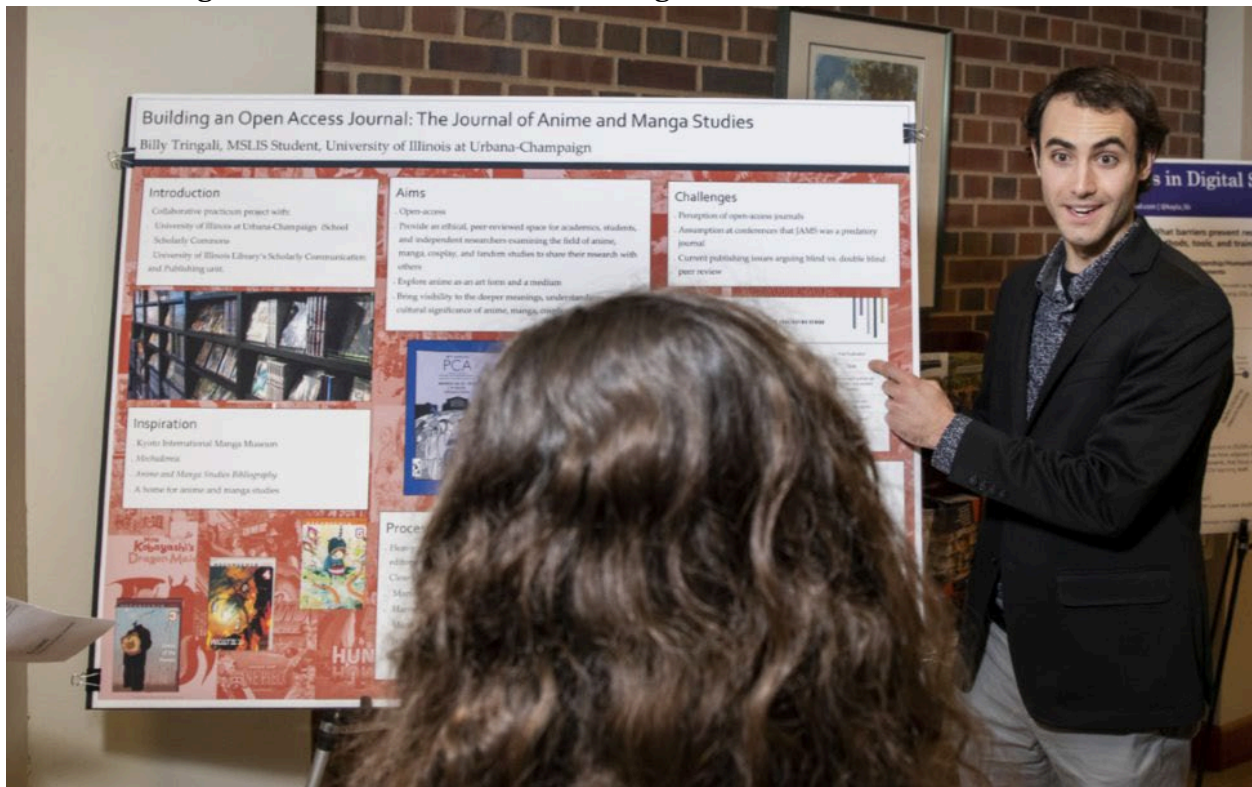

Figure 1 - Billy Tringali presenting the concept of JAMS to the University of Illinois iSchool in 2019

The inaugural volume of JAMS was launched in November of 2020, where it totaled 173 pages of open-access, free-to-read scholarship on anime and manga, ranging from discussions of Utopian Dystopia in *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* to media representations of the Ainu people and so much in between.

The volume you are about to read stands at 314 pages.

And JAMS has continued to expand over these last five years of existence. More big milestones included JAMS being added to the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) in 2022,[23] and then in 2024, being added to EBSCO's 'Academic Search Complete' – each of which increased JAMS' visibility across institutions of research and
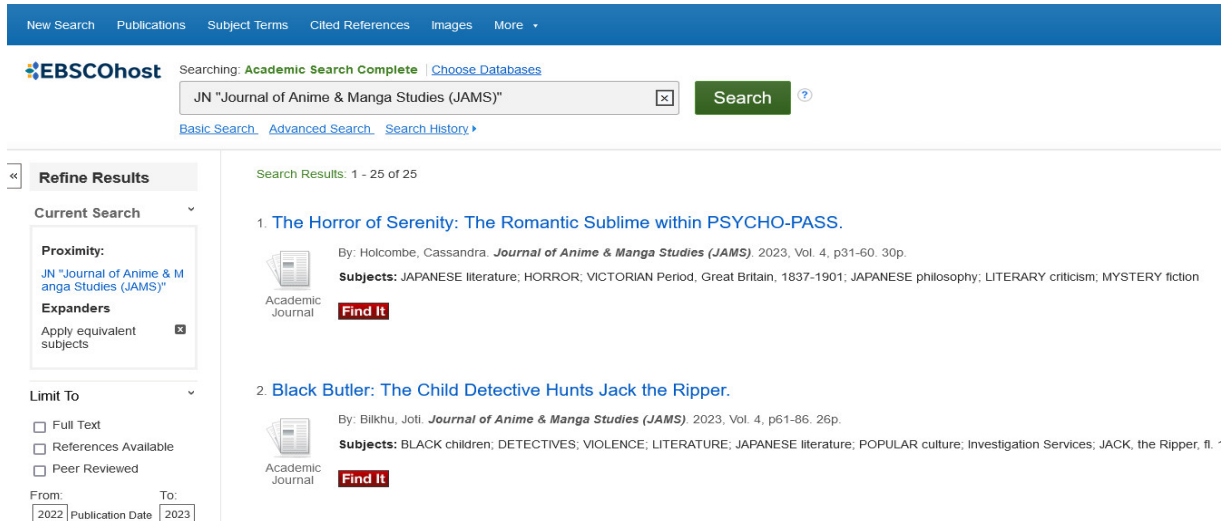

Figure 2 - JAMS in Academic Search Complete

learning all around the world.

Moreover, this journal's footprint has grown exponentially since that initial publication. In April of 2024 JAMS saw our highest download count to date, with 3,137
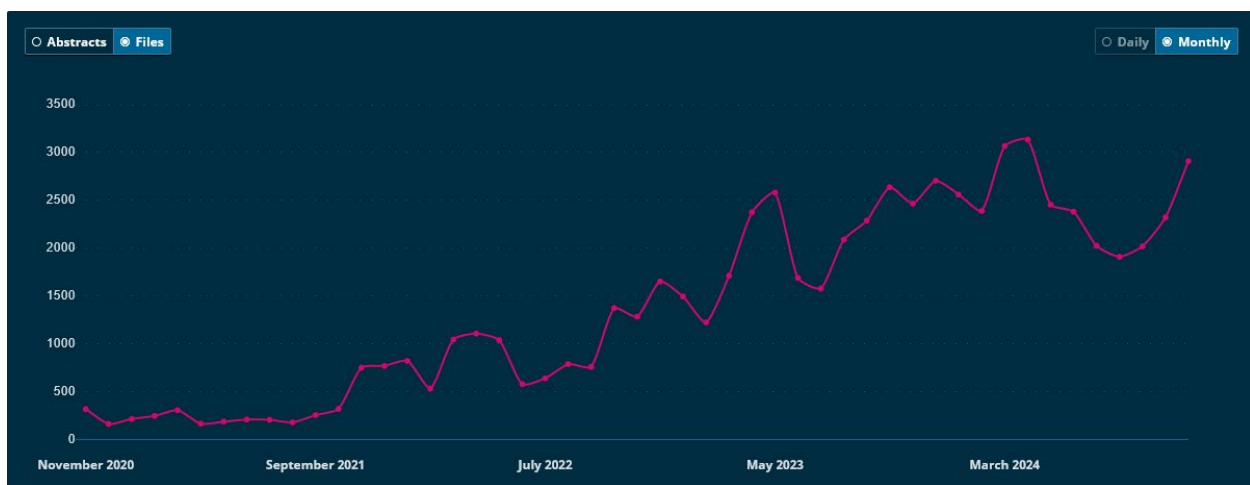

Figure 3 - JAMS Downloads from 11/20 - 11/24

unique downloads. And overall, since the publishing of our inaugural volume in November of 2020, articles in JAMS have been viewed and downloaded 136,241 times.

This steady growth has led to a necessary expansion of editors on JAMS, and I am extremely happy to announce and welcome Maria K. Alberto to the *Journal of Anime and Manga Studies* as Associate Editor. Maria has served as a reviewer and copyeditor for JAMS since its inception, and her expertise has helped the journal immeasurably over the past five years.

I first met Maria at that same 2019 conference in Washington, D.C., where she accepted one of the fliers I was handing out attempting to spread the word about what was then an upcoming, yet-to-be-released, open-access journal. In the years that followed, Maria has become a rock for the journal, a trusted colleague, and most importantly, a remarkably dear friend whom I truly cannot imagine my life without.

With that, I want to dedicate this volume of JAMS to:

Maria K. Alberto

Very special gratitude, and a warm welcome, must be given to JAMS' new Associate Editor. Thank you, Maria, for coming onboard officially! I am so excited to see what we will publish together in the future!

To close, I have one final note to share with you all. Founding and continuing to serve as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Anime and Manga Studies* has added so much to my life. For two years now, I have been fortunate enough to coordinate a conference at Anime Expo, where hours of lectures by anime researchers have been heard by thousands of people. I have presented at conventions like New York Comic Con and conferences like the Popular Culture Association. I have served on committees for

Japan Past & Present and *Mechademia,* and met with agencies like the Japan Foundation. Without JAMS, I never would have been given these incredible opportunities, and being able to meet with so many amazing people makes all the time poured into this open-access journal more than worth it. I am so grateful to serve as JAMS' Editor-in-Chief, and beyond honored to be able to share and publish the works of so many amazing scholars from all around the world.

As JAMS Editor-in-Chief, I have been able to speak with fans, journalists, academics, administrators, librarians, and government workers -- all of whom say the same thing, consistently.

They cannot find academic works about anime, even ass anime continues to skyrocket in popularity all around the world.

From its initial concept in my brain in 2017, to writing this paper in 2024, I have always believed that JAMS exists to be part of the solution to that problem.

For five years now, the *Journal of Anime and Manga Studies* has been dedicated to building a space where anyone, anywhere, all around the world, can read, download, share, and cite high-quality academic works about anime. And beyond the digital space where you're reading these words now, this journal is made up of people who donate their time, knowledge, and expertise to make JAMS a valuable resource for those who wish to learn more about, and explore the potential of, the medium they love.

I remain so grateful to you, the readers of our journal, for your enthusiasm for JAMS and the incredible work we are fortunate enough to publish.

Thank you for your readership, and with so much warmth,

Billy Tringali

Editor-in-Chief

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From Manipulative Masterminds to Flirtatious Fools: An Examination of Male Sweet Voice Archetypes in Anime

Finnigan Lewis

Abstract: In Japanese animation (anime), characters make use of many linguistic features, such as grammatical patterns, vocabulary, and vocal quality, to index specific character traits or archetypes. This includes both "role language", associated with membership in social groups, and "character language", associated with more abstract traits such as personality. This paper aims to expand upon the description of the archetypes conveyed through a traditionally feminine vocal quality called "sweet voice" and discusses how the use of this style in anime has broadened to encompass more masculine characters and archetypes as well. While women using sweet voice tend to be considered mature and genuine, interpretation of male sweet voice can range from gentlemanly, to morally questionable and manipulative, to something closer to flirtatious comic relief. Male sweet voice characters, similar to their female counterparts, have certain patterns in their word choice and grammatical speaking styles, although these stylistic patterns are less universal for male characters. Not only are the male sweet voice archetypes in anime different from those of female sweet voice characters, but these male characters are also able to freely swap styles, in vocal quality, vocabulary and grammar, where female characters cannot. Furthermore, the use of female sweet voice patterns by male voice actors can be used specifically to code characters as transgender women, something not possible with female sweet voice. These differences demonstrate that male sweet voice is not just female sweet voice overlaid onto male characters, but rather a specific evolution of the female styles specific to male characters.

Keywords: Linguistics, Sweet Voice, Voice Acting, Anime, Gender

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Introduction

        People can frequently make judgements about others based on the characteristics of their voices. While the stereotypes that people connect to different kinds of voices may not always be accurate in reality, they are used in media to guide people towards a particular perception of a character, simply by changing how they speak. For example, "Silencing Nonstandard Speakers: A Content Analysis of Accent Portrayals on American Primetime Television" by Dragojevic et al. discusses how media from the United States will often portray characters who speak with a nonstandard American English dialect as less intelligent than both standard American English and foreign Anglophone speakers,[1] as well as less physically attractive than speakers of any other dialect.[2] This sort of media portrayal can play a role in cementing those stereotypes, especially among consumers who have little real, non-media exposure to the minority group, and can have a noticeable social effect on the groups that use those dialects in real life.[3]

        Just as in English, Japanese media has many linguistic tools it uses to craft fictional characters. The use of specific kinds of language to convey information about characters is extremely prevalent in Japanese media, particularly anime. While the concept and term for Japanese role language ("yakuwarigo") were first introduced as referring to a set of linguistic features that are associated with particular character archetypes, a later work more specifically splits it into two separate categories: "role language" and "character speech." In Japanese, the term "yakuwarigo" more generally refers to a type of role-based language that is used in fictional settings, like anime and manga, to indicate various traits of characters, such as age, gender, or class.[4] In the aforementioned split framework, "role language" refers to linguistic features associated

specifically with social groups and stereotypes and must be broadly culturally recognizable. On the other hand, "character language" refers to linguistic features used more for expressing personality traits than social or cultural group membership.[5] For a more concrete example of the difference between the two, the character Hattori Heiji, from the anime *Case Closed* (1996-ongoing, *Meitantei Conan*) is from Osaka, part of the cultural group that would typically use Osaka dialect. He also displays personality stereotypes associated with the region, so this usage would be considered "role language." In contrast, the protagonist of the movie *Like Father, Like Son* (2013, *Soshite chichi ni naru*) is not from Osaka, but an approximation of Osaka dialect is intentionally used to draw a contrast between his parenting style and that of another father in the film.[6] This usage thus falls under "character language" instead. What this paper discusses as yakuwarigo would primarily be considered character language in this updated framework, as it is used to convey personality traits rather than any type of social membership.

While role and character language usage in media often reflects and reinforces real life stereotypes and ideologies, that is true even of anime protagonists' intentionally unmarked speech. For example, the choice between two different first-person pronouns, "ore" and "boku," for the male protagonists of shōnen anime[i] has been shown to be affected by the shifting of ideal Japanese masculinity brought about by the country's economic development.[7] Thus, even the most standard, unmarked form of a language can reflect dominant linguistic ideologies of the time period in which it was used.

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[i] Shows aimed towards an audience of young boys

This manipulation of how characters speak to fit recognizable archetypes is not limited only to word choice and speech style but also vocal quality. For example, when it comes to Japanese people's perception of heroic or villainous characters in their media, vocal quality factors such as the position of the larynx while speaking or the presence of breathy voice can influence the types of characteristics people will assign to characters.[8] One especially interesting concept in a similar vein to this is "sweet voice," a term coined by Rebecca Starr, and is described as a feminine vocal style in anime.[9]

Characters who use this sweet voice style are often female and fall into an established archetype of relatively older supporting women in traditionally feminine roles.[10] Therefore, most of the discourse around this vocal style is centered around women characters in anime. Starr addresses the male version of sweet voice briefly towards the end, where she primarily focuses on one character, Yagami Light,[ii] from the show *Death Note* (2006), who uses sweet voice, and discusses how the sweet voice's connections to a performance of femininity help shape the audience's perception of Light's character. Specifically, she brings up three main effects that the sweet voice has. Firstly, the relative rarity of sweet voice in male characters causes people to immediately feel as though something is amiss with Light. Secondly, the mismatch between his feminine vocal style and masculine presentation may serve to code him as gay in some manner. Finally, the connection to ideas of beauty and perfection that the sweet voice has in female characters is carried over to Light. Thus, the use of sweet voice can make his character feel somewhat fake or off to the audience.[11]

[ii] Voice actor: Miyano Mamoru

Starr's discussion of male sweet voice is still very closely tied into the idea of this voice as an exclusively female style. In other words, the male sweet voice here is not able to stand on its own; the analysis of how it conveys character information to the audience is based on either the pre-existing notions of what female sweet voice conveys, or the juxtaposition and novelty of a female vocal style being used by an otherwise male-presenting character. This is productive in the context of Starr's analysis being the intersection of sweet voice and Japanese ideologies of femininity. However, an alternate lens through which to view male sweet voice is as a vocal phenomenon that is related to, yet separate from, the female sweet voice. In this paper, I explore male sweet voice and propose that while it may have started out as a tool to code characters as inhuman, gender non-conforming, or gay through their unconventional vocal ties to femininity, the male sweet voice has come to index distinct character archetypes or traits that are not directly connected to the feminine qualities historically represented by sweet voice.

1. Methodology and Data

The dataset consists of twelve characters from anime that first released anywhere from 1995 to 2021. As sweet voice is a Japanese vocal style, performances from English dubbed versions of shows are not being examined here. All the characters are male and voiced by men, with the exception of Sohma Yuki from the 2001 version of *Fruits Basket*, who was voiced by a woman, something which will be addressed later on. Some actors, such as the aforementioned Miyano Mamoru, frequently use male sweet voice, but efforts were made to ensure a balanced list of actors utilizing the style. The included characters are chosen from fan discourse, looking at articles about voice actors,[12] as well

as looking through character role compilations on YouTube.[13] A couple characters, those being the characters from *Case Closed* as well as *Monthly Girl's Nozaki-kun*'s Mikoshiba Mikoto, were also chosen due to the author's background knowledge, having heard their voices in anime before beginning this project.

As this paper is not focused on the actual phonetic realization of the male sweet voice, but rather the patterns of its use in media, the choice of characters as users of sweet voice is based off of the perceptual "sweetness" of their voice. This was judged using the standards Starr listed in the perceptual qualities of sweet voice section of her paper, such as light timbre and tense resonance.[14] According to Starr's analysis, sweet voices sound high despite not being abnormally high in pitch and have a "smiling" quality to it.[15] Additionally, as Yagami Light (*Death Note*) was referenced by Starr as a textbook example of male sweet voice, other characters' voice clips were compared to those of Light from the first episode of *Death Note* to serve as a baseline.

Vocal performances were analyzed from the best source accessible for each series: official streams or video sharing websites. For the latter option, both Youtube and the Japanese site Niconico Douga were used. Following Teshigawara's example in *Voices in Japanese Animation: A Phonetic Study of Vocal Stereotypes of Heroes and Villains in Japanese Culture*, self-directed utterances[iii] were included as samples, due to the fact that such utterances in media are there for the benefit of the audience and therefore not truly self-directed.[16] In some cases, a compilation of every qualifying line said by a character was recorded. In other cases, especially when the character is the protagonist

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[iii] Dialogue of characters speaking to themselves

such as *Death Note'*s Yagami Light, a smaller sampling from the start, middle, and end of the show were examined to get a sense of general patterns.

After examining the shows and selected clips, the thirteen characters were split into two different types of sweet voice usage. The first category, which this paper will call "classic" sweet voice style, includes characters who consistently use sweet voice as their natural vocal style. The second category, "variable" sweet voice style, includes characters who use both sweet voice and non-sweet voice, with their sweet voice being of an affected style of speech.

The characters are then listed below and sorted into their sweet voice style categories, along with their voice actor, anime, and release year. Note that for characters who did not appear in the show starting from the first episode, the release year will be the year in which the first episode they appeared in came out rather than the release year of the show as a whole.

Table 1. Classic Sweet Voice Characters

Character	Voice Actor	Anime	Release Year
Nagisa Kaworu	Ishida Akira	*Neon Genesis Evangelion*	1996
Hakuba Saguru	Ishida Akira Miyano Mamoru	*Case Closed* *Magic Kaito 1412*	2001 2010
Sohma Yuki	Hisakawa Aya Shimazaki Nobunaga	*Fruits Basket*	2001 2019
Yagami Light	Miyano Mamoru	*Death Note*	2006
Akise Aru	Ishida Akira	*Future Diary*	2011
Akabane Karma	Okamoto Nobuhiko	*Assassination Classroom*	2015

Table 2. Variable Sweet Voice Characters

Character	Voice Actor	Source	Release Year
Kuroba Kaito/Kaitō KID	Yamaguchi Kappei	*Case Closed* *Magic Kaito 1412*	1997 2010
Lelouch Lamperouge	Fukuyama Jun	*Code Geass*	2006
Suoh Tamaki	Miyano Mamoru	*Ouran High School Host Club*	2006
Mikoshiba Mikoto	Okamoto Nobuhiko	*Monthly Girls' Nozaki-kun*	2014
Akechi Goro	Hoshi Sōichirō	*Persona 5 The Animation*	2018
Minamoto Teru	Uchida Yûma	*Toilet-bound Hanako-kun*	2020

2. General Timeline and Early Instances of Male Sweet Voice

As the point of this paper is to argue that the male sweet voice has diverged to some degree from the female sweet voice regarding both usage patterns and types of traits they index, it would be useful to look at the characters chronologically. The chronological order of characters is shown in the chart below, along with their classification. The *Magic Kaito 1412* versions of both Kuroba Kaito and Hakuba Saguru are left off this chart, as their vocal styles do not significantly change from their original debuts in *Case Closed*. In other words, any analysis of these two in one show can also be applied to the other.

Table 3. Characters in chronological order

Character	Classification	Release Year
Nagisa Kaworu	classic	1996
Kuroba Kaito/Kaitō KID (CC)	variable	1997
Hakuba Saguru (CC)	classic	2001
Sohma Yuki (original)	classic	2001
Yagami Light	classic/variable	2006
Lelouch Lamperouge	variable	2006
Suoh Tamaki	variable	2006

Akise Aru	classic	2011
Mikoshiba Mikoto	variable	2014
Akabane Karma	classic	2015
Akechi Goro	variable	2018
Sohma Yuki (remake)	classic	2019
Minamoto Teru	variable	2020

While it is hard to say for certain whether or not he was the first male character to utilize this consistent sweet voice style, Nagisa Kaworu (*Neon Genesis Evangelion*) is the earliest example that was found for this dataset. If it is assumed, as Starr seems to suggest, that female sweet voice is the default, with male sweet voice originally as an uncommon variation on that, then the early use of male sweet voice would naturally have connotations of femininity. As Starr discussed in her analysis of Yagami Light, this connection to femininity can shift to imply homosexuality for male characters. Kaworu is both inhuman and canonically gay, so Starr's argument that the use of male sweet voice indicates something is unnatural about a character and implies a queer sexuality through the vocal proximity to femininity holds true here.

Interestingly, the first example from this set of a character variably using sweet voice comes the year afterwards, from episode 76 of *Case Closed*,[17] in the form of the Arsène Lupin-esque phantom thief Kaitō Kid/KID, the alter ego of high schooler Kaito Kuroba. KID's sweet voice is not used consistently like Kaworu's is, but rather indexes his position as both a respectable gentleman thief and as the host of his magic show themed heists. According to Starr, female sweet voice characters are typically ladylike, mature, refined, and in roles of traditional female authority. It is possible that there is overlap between those ideas of maturity and refinement and KID's strategic use of male sweet voice here. When Kaito wants to portray himself as the professional, capable, and

chivalrous thief Kaitō Kid, he uses sweet voice, but when he's not filling that role, he has a pretty typical young male anime protagonist voice. This vocal code-switching is even more pronounced in the 2010 show *Magic Kaito 1412*, where Kaito/KID is the protagonist. This is likely due to *Magic Kaito 1412* showing him in more contexts than *Case Closed*, where he was merely a minor antagonist. By showing Kaito outside of his role as a phantom thief, we are able to see more of his style shifting between sweet and non-sweet voice in his day-to-day life.

As another example from early *Case Closed,*[18] the Japanese-British genius teen detective Hakuba Saguru represents a classic sweet voice character. His use of sweet voice may be in part to emphasize his foreignness or strangeness, similar to Kaworu. However, while his character is indeed foreign to a degree and certainly has some odd quirks, that is unlikely to be the primary reason sweet voice is employed here. It is more likely that sweet voice here is used for a similar reason as KID's: to emphasize Hakuba's "proper", mature, and collected character traits. Unlike KID, however, Hakuba speaks with sweet voice consistently, rather than it being an affectation. This vocal quality is carried over into his *Magic Kaito 1412* portrayal as well.

For the final early male sweet voice character, there is Sohma Yuki from the original 2001 version of the anime *Fruits Basket*. Yuki was originally voiced by a woman, Hisakawa Aya,[19] which is not unusual for younger or more feminine male characters in anime. What is more interesting is that Hisakawa seems to be using sweet voice in her performance, rather than the more typical young boy tone of voice that many women who voice male characters employ. Although he is supposed to be very feminine, being voiced by a woman performing a stereotypically female vocal style

makes his character come off as particularly dissonant and contributes to the idea that there is something amiss with him even beyond his feminine appearance. In Yuki's case, that implied "something" is his supernatural nature. In the 2019 remake, Yuki is instead voiced by a man,[20] who still uses sweet voice. It is possible that this shift to using a male voice actor in the more recent version indicates that the male sweet voice is a more recognizable phenomenon, and that it on its own can serve as an indication of Yuki's unnaturalness, rather than having to rely on using drastic gender non-conformity in his vocal style to accomplish this.

This analysis of sweet voice in the four earliest examples shows how they tended to be strongly linked to femininity either directly, through things such as looks or sexuality, or indirectly, through being in a mature, polite, responsible role more typically expected of female characters than young male ones. Additionally, three of these four early examples are classic sweet voice characters, which may suggest that the use of variable male sweet voice as a linguistic tool to convey character to the audience was much more limited in the earlier years of male sweet voice. If we assume that this was an era where male sweet voice had yet to properly become its own style and was instead still reliant on audience perceptions of the female sweet voice to index character traits, then this limited use of variable sweet voice makes perfect sense. As Starr noted, it is rare that female sweet voice is presented as an affected rather than natural style of speech. Thus, these early examples of male sweet voice merely seem to be following that pattern.

This changes if we look at the classic and variable sweet voice character numbers across all examples examined here. There are six classic characters and six variable

characters, a far more balanced number than found in Starr's female sweet voice collection. The fact that male sweet voice is being used in that variable manner rather commonly while the same cannot be said of the female sweet voice already serves to draw a clear line between the two. One cannot claim that the male sweet voice is just the female sweet voice with a male resonance, as the ways and strategies in which the two are employed differ, helping to cement the male sweet voice as its own phenomenon.

3. The Shift Towards Deception

While the connection to femininity and unusually feminine roles is the dominant association driving the perception of the early instances of male sweet voice in particular, there appears to be a subtle shift potentially starting in the mid to late 2000s towards a different sort of archetype being represented with the use of sweet voice. This paper proposes that this character archetype is presented as clever, mildly unhinged, and manipulative. This manipulator archetype appears to be evenly split between classic and variable types. The difference between the two types is interesting in that there are two different impressions of sweet voice being utilized.

Table 4. Manipulator Archetype Characters

Character	Classification	Release Year
Yagami Light	classic	2006
Lelouch Lamperouge	variable	2006
Akise Aru	classic	2011
Akabane Karma	classic	2015
Akechi Goro	variable	2018
Minamoto Teru	variable	2020

The primary difference between classic and variable manipulator characters is that while classic manipulator characters tend not to be hiding their nature, variable ones feel the need to hide their manipulative traits, resulting in sweet voice being used as a component of their social mask. Sweet voice for these characters is used as a front, while their internal or "true" voice is noticeably less sweet. The character, in-universe, is drawing upon the idea of sweet voice as something that marks a person as well-mannered, mature, and genuine due to the unfalsifiable nature of the more common female sweet voice. On a meta level, however, this is subverted as the audience is shown that this supposedly unfalsifiable voice of innocence is in fact a farce, which then contextualizes the characters' use of sweet voice as something inherently fake and deceitful.

Code Geass's Lelouch Lamperouge and *Persona 5 The Animation*'s Akechi Goro both use sweet voice to hide criminal activity behind the façade of a good, proper, law-abiding high school student. Lelouch actively plots a rebellion to overthrow the occupying Holy Britannian Empire and oust them from Japan, while Akechi acts as an assassin for a corrupt politician. Lelouch primarily uses sweet voice while in a school setting with classmates,[21] using mostly non-sweet voice in his thoughts[22] and while acting in his capacity as a leader of the rebellion.[23] Akechi, on the other hand, seems to only drop his sweet voice once he turns on the protagonist.[24] This difference can likely be attributed to the fact that Lelouch is the viewpoint character for the audience, while Akechi is not.

Toilet-bound Hanako-kun's Minamoto Teru is the other manipulator character on this list who appears to use variable sweet voice. He is considered extremely

handsome, kind, and popular at his school, sometimes referred to as the school's prince. While Teru does not reach the same level of highly questionable morals as the literal serial killers discussed above, he is shown to have a very black and white view on the lives of supernatural beings. In contrast to how the show itself humanizes the ghost characters, Teru considers them all to be inherently evil monsters that deserve to be killed. His sweet voice is generally used for lines reflecting his public-facing princely image,[25] while non-sweet voice tends to be used for lines reflecting his stance on the supernatural.[26]

On the other hand, classic manipulator characters such as Akise Aru (*Future Diary*) and Akabane Karma (*Assassination Classroom*) do not appear to be hiding their true nature. Both are extremely intelligent, capable, and have unique ways of thinking and solving problems. Karma leans heavily towards the psychotic side with how skilled he is at fighting and assassination strategies, plus his unbridled excitement at being tasked with killing his teacher. Akise is an aspiring detective, and more conventionally normal. While he is more than willing to lie, commit crimes, and use others to achieve his goals, he also comes across as fairly open and shameless about it. It is also worth noting that Akise is canonically in love with the show's protagonist, another boy,[27] thus continuing the trend that Starr discussed of male sweet voice being used as a tool for indexing a character's homosexuality.

Both of the characters mentioned in the previous paragraph are explicitly noted by the characters around them as strange,[28, 29] showing that they make no attempt to hide the less socially acceptable parts of their personalities, unlike what is seen with the variable sweet voice characters, who are more often seen as perfect to those around

them. As such, the impressions of sweet voice with these types of characters are more straightforward, since they lack the layer of deception inherent to their variable counterparts.

Characters around a variable character will perceive the sweet voice as indicative of things such as maturity and politeness, while those around a classic character will more often perceive the sweet voice as indicative of things such as strangeness and disregard for social conventions. As such, it appears that the impression that sweet voice gives off in-universe is fluid, allowing the use of this vocal quality to be more freely used as a tool to convey information to the audience without being limited to one particular interpretation.

The semantic shift discussed in this section is not a very large leap from the sweet voice's roots in femininity, as Starr noted that some of the qualities originally indexed through the use of sweet voice by male characters is unnaturalness, foreignness, or a sense that something is off. Here, this sense of wrongness is reinterpreted—where in older characters such as Nagisa Kaworu (*Neon Genesis Evangelion*) and Sohma Yuki (*Fruits Basket*), it appears to emphasize the presence of literal inhuman qualities, in more recent characters, it seems to distance them from other people in a more social sense. In other words, these characters are typically not literally inhuman or alien, but they often have a significant disconnect from people as a whole. This could be an afterimage of the connotations of literal inhumanness that the male sweet voice historically conveyed. This can be something as dramatic as Yagami Light's (*Death Note*) god complex and willingness to personally act as judge, jury, and executioner for

the world, or as relatively normal like Akabane Karma (*Assassination Classroom*) distancing himself from others after a betrayal.

4. Parody Use: Dramatic Comedic Relief

This section will be addressing a pattern that emerges when we look at sweet voice used in parody anime, specifically of shōjo.[iv] The characters discussed in this section are able to, on a situational basis, be confident and shamelessly charismatic, but outside of that tend to be caring, easily shaken, and crave attention. In other words, they put all their points into charisma and absolutely none into constitution. They are often dramatic and can come across as naïve or childish regardless of their actual intelligence. The two examples listed here both use the variable rather than classic form of sweet voice.

Table 5. Dramatic Comic Relief Characters

Character	Classification	Release Year
Suoh Tamaki	variable	2006
Mikoshiba Mikoto	variable	2014

Suoh Tamaki (*Ouran High School Host Club*) and Mikoshiba Mikoto (*Monthly Girls' Nozaki-kun*) are generally perceived by their peers as being popular, charismatic flirts and, while in the midst of said shameless flirting, they both slip into a sweet voice register.[30, 31] Both characters are sensitive to the opinions of and crave the attention and approval of those around them. This is shown through things like Tamaki's incessant need for his host club to see themselves as a family with himself as the father figure and

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[iv] Anime marketed toward young girls

Mikoto's need for one of his clubmates to acknowledge him as her senpai, or more experienced member. In these sorts of everyday, less flirty situations characters do not tend to use sweet voices.[32, 33]

If the manipulator archetype evolved from the use of sweet voice by inhuman or alien characters, this dramatic idiot archetype has stronger connections to the sort of performative sweet voice that Kaitō KID (*Case Closed; Magic Kaito 1412*) employs. While it seems that Tamaki at least aligns quite well with that idea of sweet voice being used to convey a more gentlemanly, mature persona, Mikoto's use conveys something more of a playboy image. Considering the two characters are from media with an eight-year gap, the latter may be a slight expansion of how more flirtatious gentlemanly characters like Tamaki use variable sweet voice.

5. Patterns in Yakuwarigo Usage

5.1. Overview

As mentioned earlier, the term "yakuwarigo" refers to patterns of language primarily used in media in order to indicate to the audience various character traits such as age, gender, or class.[34] Starr writes that female sweet voice is very closely connected to the use of hyper-feminine styles of yakuwarigo and typically indicates characters fit into mature and ladylike female archetypes.[35] These associations are typically fairly inseparable. That is, if a character uses female sweet voice, they can be reliably assumed to also use feminine yakuwarigo. However, Starr also notes that this relationship is one-way, as the use of feminine yakuwarigo does not always mean a character will also have a sweet voice.

Unlike the female sweet voice, there does not appear to be any one particular style of speech associated with male sweet voice. From the characters observed, male sweet voice characters seem to have more flexibility in their speaking styles than female ones. There is a broad range of styles used across the group, even when keeping in mind that a character's way of speaking may change contextually. Some characters, such as Kaitō KID (*Case Closed; Magic Kaito 1412*) tend to speak in keigo, or honorific language. Others, the two in this set being Akabane Karma (*Assassination Classroom*) and Mikoshiba Mikoto (*Monthly Girls' Nozaki-kun*), are on the opposite end of the formality spectrum. They both use rougher or more masculine forms of speech alongside sweet voice, some examples of which are shown below with samples of Akabane Karma's speech taken from the third episode of *Assassination Classroom*.[36]

Table 6. Samples of the character Akabane Karma's dialogue

kudara**nee** koto kangaeta	kaerou **ze**	**ore**
"I had a silly idea"	"Let's head home"	"I"
kaeri **meshi kutte** kou yo	oshie**te yaru** yo	**anta**
"We'll eat on the way home"	"I'll show/teach you"	"you"

While some of the above ("ore," "anta") are generally rough, impolite speech, and are thus frequently considered to be appropriate speech styles for men, some of these can be approached as distinct elements of yakuwarigo. Japanese has a rich collection of first and second person pronouns. The primary ones relevant to these dialogue examples are the first-person "ore" and "boku," as well as the second person "anta" and "anata" pronouns. In contrast to "boku" having the impression of a softer, more educated form of masculinity, "ore" has more of an image of aggressive, hot-blooded masculinity.[37] In modern anime, the pronoun "ore" is frequently used by male protagonists, as the most

unmarked form of speech to convey modern-day ideals of masculinity.[38] While the second person "anata" is the most general of the second-person pronouns in Japanese and considered more polite than most others, "anta", a modified and shortened version of it, is rougher and more familiar, typically being used to refer to others whom the speaker sees as equal or lower in status. It is generally used as part of a masculine speech style, for both younger and older male characters.[39]

In addition to pronouns, Japanese uses variation in sentence final particles and copula as an important part of role language. In this particular case, "ze" is used. When used as yakuwarigo, this particle gives characters a somewhat affected impression, as if they're trying to come across as cool. It is also a part of masculine speech and sounds more crude or vulgar than other particles with similar meanings.[40]

Finally, there are elements of word choice that can be considered to have role language implications, with "kuu"[v] being the relevant one here. This verb, meaning "to eat," is a rough, impolite version of the typical Japanese verb "taberu." As a part of role language, "kuu" is used overwhelmingly by male characters. There are a variety of different character archetypes that may use this, including, but not limited to, naive young boys, hardboiled lone wolves, rural characters speaking dialect, and supernatural beings.[41] As such, the use of "kuu" alone cannot firmly pinpoint which sort of archetype a character is supposed to be representing and must be taken into consideration with the rest of the character's speech characteristics.

As one of the defining characteristics of female sweet voice is the ubiquitous use of specific yakuwarigo, it is notable that there is no such universal speaking style for the

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[v] Conjugated in the example as the connecting form "kutte"

male sweet voice. The primary speaking style used by the characters looked at in this paper, which will be discussed in the following section, does not get close to how ubiquitous the use of feminine language is to female sweet voice characters.

5.2. Foreign Masculinity and The Yaa Speech Style

As the use of such rough language is relatively rare among male sweet voice characters, it is certainly not the most noticeable pattern that exists. In work on informal non-Japanese masculinity in Japanese media, Nakamura discusses the construction of a type of fictionalized speech that conveys a sort of casual and cool foreign masculinity.[42] She calls this yaa style after its most distinctive feature: the use of the phrase "yaa" as a greeting. This style has overlap with unmarked varieties of casual masculine speech, such as them both using either first-person pronoun "ore" or "boku" with second-person pronouns "kimi" or "omae", but some of the more distinctive features to the yaa style are shown below. This does not mean the below features cannot overlap with normal masculine styles, it is just less common.

Table 7. Characteristics of yaa speech style

yaa	sa	kai; dai
"hey" (greeting)	sentence final particle	interrogative particles

This sort of speech style is quite common among the sweet voice characters collected in this paper, as approximately half of them use it in some form or another, listed below. As a note, for the variable characters, the use of yaa style generally appears to be relatively contained to just when they are putting on a sweet voice and not as often used when that is dropped.

Table 8. Yaa style characters

Character	Classification	Source	Release Year
Nagisa Kaworu	classic	*Neon Genesis Evangelion*	1996
Hakuba Saguru	classic	*Case Closed* *Magic Kaito 1412*	2001 2010
Lelouch Lamperouge	variable	*Code Geass*	2006
Akise Aru	classic	*Future Diary*	2011
Akechi Goro	variable	*Persona 5: The Animation*	2016
Minamoto Teru	variable	*Toilet-bound Hanako-kun*	2020

There are a couple of things to note regarding the characters' use of this style of speech. Firstly, despite Nakamura's paper describing how yaa style is used to index a particular type of foreign or non-Japanese masculinity, only three of these characters are not entirely Japanese: Nagisa Kaworu, not even human; Hakuba Saguru, half-British; and Lelouch Lamperouge, British royalty. Aside from these three, where their literal foreignness could well be a factor in their use of yaa style, the use of this marked foreign style by characters who are supposed to be regarded as Japanese may serve to emphasize those characters' more metaphorical foreignness already suggested by their use of sweet voice.

Following from that, these are all characters who would be most comfortably categorized as the manipulator archetype. Though admittedly Hakuba is something of an edge case. The main thing that sets Hakuba apart from the other two detectives is that they fall into a moral gray zone, as expected of manipulator characters, while he is a typical morally upstanding detective. This very specific type of detective character aside, the fact that neither of the shōjo examples use this yaa style of speaking seems potentially significant. Primarily because *Ouran High School Host Club*'s Suoh Tamaki

is, similarly to Hakuba, portrayed as foreign, being half-French, and yet doesn't use yaa style. This also supports the idea introduced above that that yaa speech may be used with sweet voice to emphasize the characters' figurative rather than literal foreignness.

It is worth noting that Nakamura's study specifically looks at the use of yaa speech styles in English to Japanese translations, so the dynamics of yaa speech could very well be different when talking about characters in works that are written in Japanese originally.

5.3. Indexing Transgender Identities

While the vast majority of characters who use male sweet voice do also identify as men or boys, there are various instances of male sweet voice being used as a tool to convey a transgender identity, in this case meaning specifically transgender women and girls. As the main phonetic distinction this paper makes between female and male sweet voice is the resonance or timbre that gives listeners hints to the probable gender of the speaker, these characters will be considered to be using male sweet voice despite being women and girls. That said, the way that they use sweet voice often seems to line up better with that of female sweet voice. Specifically, they tend to use it as their natural speaking voice, as well as frequently make use of hyper-feminine yakuwarigo. Due to the rather complicated position these characters are in, being female characters who use male sweet voice in a feminine manner, the example characters for this phenomenon are excluded from the other portions of the paper, and are only discussed here, listed below.

Table 9. Transgender Women Characters

Character	Voice Actor	Source	Release Year
Kanamori	Kishio Daisuke	*Heaven's Design Team*	2021
Nagi Arisuin ('Alice')	Asanuma Shintarou	*Chivalry of a Failed Knight*	2015

As mentioned earlier, these characters use sweet voice in a way which patterns after the female usage (consistent sweet voice quality across contexts, highly feminine speaking style) rather than what this paper considers the male usage.[vi] This presents the characters as inherently feminine in the same nigh unfalsifiable way that female characters who use sweet voice are, as discussed in an earlier section. This use of male sweet voice can be distinguished primarily by its use with feminine yakuwarigo, as it is quite rare to find male-identifying characters who use both of these linguistic tools at the same time in their speech. Johann, from the 2021 anime *The Case Study of Vanitas*,[vii] is a character who does fit those particular criteria, but he is further set apart from the transgender characters by the fact that he uses variable sweet voice. He mostly speaks with male sweet voice[viii] and feminine language but will drop the sweet voice in moments where he turns serious. Interestingly, he continues to use feminine language during those moments. One notable example being his line shown below.

watashi no kazoku ni te wo dashitara, korosu **wa yo**
"If you lay a hand on my family, I'll kill you"[43]

In the anime, he delivers this line without sweet voice, yet still uses that stereotypically feminine "wa yo" sentence final particle combination. Interesting though

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[vi] potentially variable sweet voice quality, neutral to masculine speaking style
[vii] Voice actor: Yusa Kōji
[viii] Sweet voice quality produced by a male voice actor

this is, characters like Johann seem to be the exception to the tendency of male sweet voice in combination with feminine language to index a transgender identity.

This transgender usage also indicates how the male sweet voice is distinct from the female sweet voice. Specifically, that it is doing something here that the female sweet voice cannot, displaying again how the archetypes associated with male sweet voice have diverged.

6. Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

As has been demonstrated throughout this paper, while the male sweet voice may have started out as simply a gender-swapped version of the female sweet voice use to connect male characters to various aspects of femininity, its ability to index character traits has since extended beyond that. The most notable being a semantic shift towards marking characters as a very particular type of morally gray, clever, and manipulative character. In addition to that, however, there are also instances of it being used in types of parody to index a type of dramatic and flirtatious performance by characters. The different usage patterns of male sweet voice as compared to female sweet voice also serve to support the argument that the former is its own distinct phenomenon. For example, female sweet voice is rarely used in a situational manner and is inextricably linked with the use of hyper-feminine forms of yakuwarigo, but male sweet voice is frequently used variably and has a much broader range of acceptable speaking styles available to use. Yaa style is one of the more frequently occurring patterns.

The analysis has brought up aspects of male characters' use of sweet voice that could be examined more in the future. One in particular is patterns of male sweet voice

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in *anime* aimed towards an audience of young girls,[ix] as most of the examples come from shows generally aimed towards a male audience.[x] Would there be a difference in how male sweet voice characters are presented in female-directed versus male-directed media, and if so, could that show a difference in how gender non-conformity in men is perceived by the target audiences? Another future direction for research would be the use of yaa style as used in native, rather than translated, Japanese media, which could potentially shed some light on the purpose of the style when used by sweet voice male characters. Additionally, do some non-personality characteristics predispose a character to be likely use sweet voice? For example, a quarter of the characters listed are detectives, so are detective characters more likely to utilize this style? Or is it less direct, that detective characters are more likely to have personality traits that are indexed by this style?

Male sweet voice started out being used to characterize men by their proximity to "feminine" characteristics, whether that be politeness, attraction to men, androgyny, or other such traits. Part of the point of using the style was likely to make the characters stand out due to how odd it would be to see a male character so directly linked to femininity. However, nowadays there is no shortage of male characters who use some form of sweet voice, with some voice actors, such as Akira Ishida and Mamoru Miyano, even getting a reputation for specializing in the style. Overall, charting the way that male sweet voice has evolved over time may be able to shed some light on the development of acceptable portrayals of masculinity outside of the constraints of both hegemonic masculinity and comparisons to traditional femininity.

[ix] shōjo

[x] shōnen or seinen

[1] Dragojevic, Marko, Dana Mastro, Howard Giles, and Alexander Sink. "Silencing Nonstandard Speakers: A Content Analysis of Accent Portrayals on American Primetime Television." Language in Society 45, no. 1 (2016): 59–85. doi:10.1017/S0047404515000743.

[2] Dragojevic et al.

[3] Dragojevic et al.

[4] Kinsui, Satoshi & YAMAKIDO, Hiroko. (2015). Role Language and Character Language. Acta Linguistica Asiatica. 5. 29. 10.4312/ala.5.2.29-42.

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[15] Starr, Rebecca L.

[16] Teshigawara

[17] Kodama, Kenji, dir. *Case Closed*. Episode 76, "Conan vs Kaitou Kid." (Nippon Television Network System, 1997).

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[22] Taniguchi, Goro. *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion*. Season 1, Episode 3, "The False Classmate." 6:12-6:16.

[23] Taniguchi, Goro. *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion*. Season 1, Episode 4, "His Name is Zero." 10:01-10:12.

[24] Ishihama, Masashi, dir. *Persona 5: The Animation*. Season 1, Episode 26, "I won't let it end here." (Tokyo MX, April 8, 2018.) 21:09-21:15.

[25] Ando, Masaomi, dir. *Toilet-Bound Hanako-Kun*. Season 1, Episode 5, "Apparition 5: The Confession Tree." (Japan News Network, January 10, 2020.) 16:21-16:25.

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[28] Hosoda, Naoto, dir. *Future Diary*. Season 1, Episode 8, "New Model."

[29] Kishi, Seiji, dir. *Assassination Classroom*. Season 1, Episode 3, "Karma Time." (Fuji Network System, January 9, 2015.)

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浩史、福山潤...多彩な甘々ボイス集結♪＜21 年版＞['Who Is the Voice Actor with the

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The Eye of the Dragon: Ecological Thinking in *Delicious in Dungeon*

Daniel Ambord

Abstract: Studio Trigger's 2024 series *Delicious in Dungeon* stands as a remarkable example of ecological fiction. The series' focus on eating and being eaten, on relationships between living things and the land that they inhabit, and on shared vulnerability provides viewers with useful and novel mechanisms for reconfiguring their thinking with respect to their relationship to the more-than-human world. By examining *Delicious in Dungeon* through the lens of Valerie Plumwood's ecological philosophy, we shall consider how this innovative series models an ecological thinking which emphasizes embeddedness in complex networks of relationality.

Keywords: *Delicious in Dungeon*, ecology, Valerie Plumwood, predation, food

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We should open our inquiry with the following image: a brave and brilliant woman ventures into the unknown, only to fall prey to a large predatory reptile.[1] This describes Falin Touden, from Studio Trigger's 2024 *Delicious in Dungeon*, based on the eponymous manga by Ryōko Kui. In the first episode of this series, Falin, a tall-man magic-user and member of an adventuring party, is devoured by a red dragon during the exploration of a dungeon. This opening example of violent predation sets in motion the events of the later series. Her party, consisting of her brother Laios, elven mage Marcille Donato, and half-foot Chilchuck Tims, but later joined by dwarven explorer Senshi and beast-person Izutsumi, mounts a rescue mission. Unable to provision themselves for the expedition, they are obliged to subsist by eating the dungeon monsters that they find during their hunt for dragon. This premise produces a unique hybrid of fantasy adventure, culinary experimentation, and, as we shall see, ecological speculation.

To return again to our opening scenario, we find it leads us to a shared resonance: Falin's tale holds marked similarities to the story of Australian philosopher Valerie Plumwood who, in 1985, survived an attack by a saltwater crocodile while on a kayaking trip to Kakadu National Park in Australia's Northern Territory. Plumwood gives us a poetic description of the incident:

> The eye of the crocodile—the giant estuarine crocodile of northern Australia— is golden flecked, reptilian, beautiful. It has three eyelids. It appraises you coolly it seems, as if seldom impressed, as one who knows your measure. But it can also light up with an unexpectedly intense glint if you manage to engage its interest. This was the mistake I made on that day in February 1985 paddling a canoe on the backwaters.[2]

In the aftermath of the attack, Plumwood articulated a new vision of ecological philosophy; one in which we think from the perspective of both predator and prey:

> Since [the attack] I have come to understand that the eye of the crocodile, along with the voice of the prey of the crocodile—and one cannot be understood without the other—is also a position to speak from, to think from. It is one I have found illuminating in building a philosophy that can celebrate the world in which we live with joy and understand our current relationship to the biosphere.[3]

This perspective found its most complete and detailed articulation in Plumwood's posthumously published work *Eye of the Crocodile*. This work, published in 2012 in a sadly incomplete form, describes Plumwood's encounter with the crocodile and the resulting reorientation of her perspective regarding her relationship with the more-than-human world. Plumwood, after the experience of being prey to another living thing, crafts a vision of ecological thinking in which the human perspective becomes split between our self-perception as thinking, autonomous, and self-determined beings concerned mainly with the establishment of functional relationships with others of our kind and our recognition of ourselves as part of a network of relationships with our fellow beings and with the environment that we share with them. In this paper, we will read Netflix's *Delicious in Dungeon* through the lens of Plumwood's encounter with the crocodile and through ecological philosophy more broadly in order to consider what this series has to teach us about thinking and living in an ecological way.

    Delicious in Dungeon draws heavily from the tradition of post-Tolkien Western fantasy literature and, perhaps more directly, can be seen as an offshoot from the various tabletop and electronic fantasy roleplaying games that arose in its wake. The world of *Delicious in Dungeon* is populated by sapient, humanoid fantasy races[4] like elves, dwarves, gnomes, orcs and the like, the story follows the activity of an adventuring party (as in Tolkien's novels) and the dungeon holds such gaming staples as mimics[5], ambulatory mushrooms, basilisks, and the plot-central red dragon. The story embraces that most familiar scenario of fantasy gaming, the dungeon crawl. In a dungeon crawl, a

party of adventurers, venture into a delimited space separated from the wider world and often divided into levels or zones, often with radically different layouts and environments. They encounter traps, obstacles, and, of course, monsters.[6] The party may be motivated by treasure, curiosity, the desire to vanquish a threat, or even by the simple need to move from point "A" to point "B." [7] In the traditional dungeon crawl, the narrative focus is on the adventurers; the monsters within the dungeon have minimal agency, existing only in relation to the adventuring party.[8] In the context of fantasy gaming from which *Delicious in Dungeon* draws most directly, monsters represent challenges to overcome[9] and can be converted, through violence, into appropriable resources for the party in the form of dropped items, treasure, experience points[10] and body parts useable for crafting.[11]

From its initial premise, *Delicious in Dungeon* appears to follow the pattern of a traditional fantasy gaming dungeon crawl in which monsters exist as readily-to-hand objects for consumption by the main characters. The harvesting of treasure from the dungeon and useable body parts from its denizens is referenced at various points in the series. However, from the very first episode, differences are introduced. The consumption of monsters as food, in place of more traditional foodstuffs harvested from terrestrial sources and brought into the dungeon for consumption, takes the relationship of exploitation between dungeon-delver and dungeon to a new and often uncomfortable level. Marcille reacts to Laios' initial suggestion that the party consume monsters with disgust and horror (conceding only because the party lacks other sources of food) and her ongoing squeamishness at the various dishes prepared by the party is something of a running gag in the series. Even when the dwarven culinarian Senshi joins

the party and proves that the dungeon's monsters are not only edible but, well, *delicious*
when properly prepared, Laios' zeal for consuming monster's remains a subject of
discomfort even within his party. Outsiders are even more hostile to the group's choice
of diet, viewing them with outright suspicion.

To understand the transgression represented by Laios' party's decision to
consume dungeon monsters as food, one must consider the status of the dungeon and
its occupants. The dungeon is explicitly construed as a transgressive space within the
setting, repeatedly contrasted with the quotidian, cultivated world of towns and farms.
The dungeon is a seething, shifting, menace, always threatening to burst violently out
into the world above. This chaotic and transgressive character is tied to a sort of
primeval and unrestrained vitality. The dungeon is saturated with mana, an ambient
magical energy that effects the functioning of spells, and traps the souls of those demi-
humans who die there, allowing them to be easily resurrected. In Episode 3, Senshi
observes that dungeon monsters taste better than their terrestrial counterparts and it is
difficult not to find in even this small observation a nod to the fearsome and
unrestrained vitality of the dungeon as a space.[12] This unruly liveliness prompts a
predictably violent response from demi-humans: adventurers harvest the dungeon for
goods but, in their wanderings, also serve to cull the dungeons creatures and so prevent
their emerging onto the surface. The Canaries, elven operative charged with taking
charge of especially dangerous dungeons, take this to particularly dramatic extremes
later in the show's first season.[13]

Correspondingly, the creatures that live in the dungeon are classified, not as
animals, but as *monsters*, erecting a strict dichotomy between these creatures and their

terrestrial counterparts. The designation "monster" serves a narrative role in that it ties

the creatures in question to similar entities in the fantasy literature and games from

which *Delicious in Dungeon* draws so heavily, establishing the series' position within a

literary tradition and establishing expectations (some to be confirmed, others

subverted) on the part of the viewer.[14] This should not cause us to neglect the

importance of the in-universe reasons for the designation, however. Dungeon monsters

are transgressive, not only because of the unusual space that they occupy but also

because their physiologies and behaviors tend to be poorly understood by the demi-

human explorers that encounter them. Most distressing of all, of course, is the unusual

dangers that these creatures pose to demi-humans, the sapient races such as tall-men,

half-foots, elves, and dwarves who exploit the dungeon for resources. In our own world,

an animal's capacity to prey upon a human being is enough to turn it into the subject of

horror. As Plumwood puts it,

> Modernist liberal individualism teaches us that we own our lives and bodies: politically as an enterprise we are running and experientially as a drama we are variously narrating, writing, acting and/or reading. As hyper-individuals, we owe nothing to anybody, not to our own mothers, let alone to any nebulous earth community. Exceptionalised as both species and individuals, we humans cannot be positioned in the food chain in the same way as other animals. Predation on humans is *monstrous*, exceptionalised and subject to extreme retaliation.

Adventurers are a tough bunch, armed and armored or possessed of magical firepower,

and yet they routinely fall prey to the predations of dungeon-dwelling monsters. In the

world of *Delicious in Dungeon*, demi-humans remain explicitly and visibly vulnerable to

the creatures with whom they share the world, whereas in our own world, this

vulnerability is violently eradicated where possible and pushed out of sight otherwise.

As the narrator puts it in the finale of season one "Eat or be eaten… There is no

hierarchy here."[15] In this sense, the fantastic space created by the work allows us to

reacquaint ourselves with a reality to which we humans have become progressively blind, namely, that of our own status as prey for other beings.

The unsettling character of the dungeon and its denizens confronts demi-humans and demands a response, much as the more-than-human world makes a similar demand upon us. In the world of *Delicious in Dungeon*, as in our own, the unfortunate answer to this provocation for many is an imposition of silence upon the more-than-(demi)human world. The dungeon and its creatures are not allowed to speak with their own voice but rather are reconfigured to serve the play of (demi)human, all too (demi)human social and cultural anxieties. This, predictably, produces both ecologically and socially destructive outcomes: "Make the unfathomable your fear" writes ecotheologian Catherine Keller, "and your suicide can become omnicide…Make the untamed universe your enemy-it will blankly oblige."[16] The dungeon becomes a home for displaced refugee populations such as the Orcs introduced in Episode 4, a source of resources, and a contested site for larger disputes between the long-[17] and short-lived[18] races[19] At least some of the danger that a dungeon poses to the inhabitants of nearby demi-human surface settlements seems to be the result of irresponsible demi-human activity: adventurers can displace monsters or disrupt food chains, causing monsters to spill out into the surface world in search of food or shelter, or, by bringing in an excess of foodstuffs and causing populations of dungeon monsters to spike, producing a similar result.[20]

The distinction between monsters and other animals erodes progressively as Laios' party ventures further into the dungeon. At length, it also becomes clear that the dungeon is no simple artificial or aberrant space but is a functioning, balanced

ecosystem, in which living things (and a few non-living, if animate, ones) depend upon each other for mutual survival through a complex network of relations. In Episode 4, magically-animated earth golems are revealed as instrumental to Senshi's gardening projects; the soil, no less than the animals and plants that occupy the dungeon, is recognized as vital part of a functioning food web and is thus ascribed agency and dignity.[21] In Episode 21, the party encounters a community for whom dungeon monsters serve as livestock in much the same fashion as terrestrial cows, pigs, and sheep.[22] In both of these episodes, we find that the dungeon is subject to responsible cultivation and harvesting of organic resources and thus that dungeoneers have a responsibility (articulated by Senshi or, occasionally, Laios) to be respectful stewards. The dungeon, no less than a forest, farm, or fishery, should be responsibly managed out of respect for those who subsist on its bounty, rather than thoughtlessly hollowed out. The otherness of the dungeon and of the beings that dwell within its confines are called into question by the party's decision to participate, actively and consciously, in the dungeon ecosystem.

Interestingly, in some ways, the party's decision to eat dungeon monsters instead of the more traditional foodstuffs favored by other parties facilitates this kind of ecological thinking. In order to hunt and eat a dungeon monster, one must understand it, its anatomy, habitat, behavior. Likewise, the difficulty inherent in obtaining food in this way encourages care and sustainability, for one's own sake as well as that of the dungeon's other residents. If Senshi and Laios decide to cook a basilisk, the creature is encountered in all of its fearsome vitality, slain (with effort), prepared (with care) and thus not subject to the easy abstraction of salted meat purchased from a stall vendor

back in the demi-human world, whose origin and connection to a shared lifeworld is, so to speak, hidden from view by the processes of production. Senshi's dictation of the steps of preparation for each meal, culminating in the triumphant announcement of "It's ready!" marks for the viewer the deliberate approach taken by the party to the food that they consume and its relationship to their mission and to the shared world that they occupy with other living things.

A stewardship approach to environmental resources is nothing new. Resource management has, in some form or other, been practiced as policy for centuries, albeit with markedly greater urgency in the last 150 years or so.[23] We should note with concern that the outcome of this approach to our relationship with the more-than-human world has been progressively more severe devastation of the planet, culminating in the concurrent environmental crises which today face our shared world. The reason for this would seem to rest with the ends to which resource management of this kind is put: where it is envisioned as a tool of economic or national development, it falls foul of the capitalist requirement of endless growth; a requirement which eventually will lead to environmentally unsustainable policies,[24] while where it is envisioned as a religious imperative, as it occasionally has been within the Abrahamic faith traditions, it must contend with the impulse of those traditions to look to a world-to-come, often at the expense of the shared lifeworld occupied by their adherents and their fellow beings.[25] Furthermore, there has arisen in the last century an increasing cultural and philosophical concern for the ethical status of non-human animals, plants, and the land itself. Taken together, these concerns show that merely relating to the more-than-

human world in an instrumental way is no longer sufficient. We need, instead, a more radical change in our thinking.

Here we come to another parallel with Plumwood's story: In Episode 7, Senshi introduces the group to a kelpie (whom he names Anne), an aquatic monster which takes the shape of a horse. Thinking that he has befriended the creature, Senshi climbs on its back with the intention of riding across a body of water, only to be violently attacked. In this dramatic scene, with Senshi plunged into the water, with the kelpie, barring previously hidden jaws, poised for a killing strike, we see an echo of Plumwood's nearly fatal encounter with the crocodile:

> This was a strong sense, at the moment of being grabbed by those powerful jaws, that there was something profoundly and incredibly wrong in what was happening, *some sort of mistaken identity*. My disbelief was not just existential but ethical—this wasn't happening, couldn't be happening. The world was not like that! The creature was breaking the rules, was totally mistaken, utterly wrong to think I could be reduced to food. As a human being, I was so *much more than food*. It was a denial of, an insult to all I was to reduce me to food. Were all the other facets of my being to be sacrificed to this utterly undiscriminating use, was my complex organisation to be destroyed so I could be reassembled as part of this other being? With indignation as well as disbelief, I rejected this event. It was an illusion! It was not only unjust but unreal! *It couldn't be happening.*[26]

Up to this point in the series, he has played the role of the enlightened steward of the dungeon ecosystem, standing above and apart from the monsters that he depends on as sources of food. In Senshi's startled expression, we find the shattering of this illusion of being protector (hence, apart from) the natural order. The more-than-(demi)human world has broken violently in upon his conceptions. This moment of experiencing oneself as prey, as material for appropriation by other living things and by the ecosystem more broadly, allows for a new kind of thinking, what Plumwood calls "the wisdom of the balanced rock" in which we simultaneously recognize ourselves as self-

interested, culturally-embedded beings who seek after our own flourishing and as parts

of an ecosystem within which we exist as food for others.[27]

It is worth exploring what Plumwood means by the "wisdom of the balanced

rock". Plumwood uses the term as the title of the third chapter of *Eye of the Crocodile*

that, unfortunately, remained unfinished at the time of her death in 2008. We humans

are used to negotiating, however imperfectly, our self-assertion in balance with that of

others of our kind who, through shared language, can make claims upon us and whose

self-assertions we can, via abstraction, infer from our own. In this way, we occupy what

Plumwood calls the "individual justice framework." In addition to this realm, we

likewise occupy a broader and deeper shared world of interconnection, "a very radical

egalitarian framework in which you have your little piece of life force for just so long as

it's not wanted by another."[28] This is not to say that these two realms are dichotomous,

still less mutually exclusive. In the closing lines of the unfinished chapter, Plumwood

instead offers the following hopeful note:

> It is a fallacy to assume that we cannot mix realms. What is crucial is to do so in
> non-appropriative ways. It is possible to make different rules that we will care
> about and consider individuals where it is appropriate.[29]

In other words, the "wisdom of the balanced rock" is not merely that of balancing our

position within an uncaring ecosystem in which we exist as resources with our position

within a (human) society in which we seek justice, but also in balancing our self-

assertions against those of the beings with whom we share this more-than-human

world, in daring, even, to care about the self-assertions of those beings.

Not only does this incident show that Senshi is himself a part of that ecosystem,

no less subject to predation than any other creature, but also that monsters too have

their own agency, their own instincts and desires and goals, which often remain hidden

from the demi-human adventurers with whom they interact. No less a philosopher of

ecology and kinship than Donna Haraway notes the difficulty in letting the more-than-

human speak with its own voice, noting an episode from her own life worth recounting

in its entirety:

> With high spirits, if little zoological erudition, we began talking about some ducks across the lake. We could see very little, and we knew less. In instant solidarity, my friend and her husband narrated that the four ducks in view were in two reproductive, heterosexual pairs. It quickly sounded like they had a modest mortgage on the wetlands around that section of the lake and were about to send their ducklings to a good school to consolidate their reproductive investment. I demurred, mumbling something about the complexity and specificity of animal behavior and society. Meanwhile, I, of course, held that the ducks were into queer communities. **I knew better; I knew they were ducks, even though I was embarrassed not to know their species. I knew ducks deserved our recognition of their non- human cultures, subjectivities, histories and material lives. They had enough problems with all the heavy metals and organic solvents in those lakes without having to take sides in our ideological struggles too.** Forced to live in our ethno-specific constructions of nature, the birds could ill afford the luxury of getting embroiled in what counts as natural for the nearby community.[30]

No less than Haraway with her ducks, Senshi's effort at kinship is doomed, not because

of the differences between monster's and demi-humans but because of his failure to

recognize those differences, his inability to resist incorporating the kelpie into his

(demi)human, all too (demi)human narratives. If the scene begins with Senshi's shock

at finding himself the subject of predation, it ends on a more nuanced note: Laios,

seeing Senshi in danger, dives into the water and kills the kelpie. Senshi is saved but,

recognizing that he created the situations through his ignorance, mourns the kelpie's

death. Senshi allowed his anthropomorphism of the kelpie, his perception that he had

befriended or tamed it in some way, blind him to the kelpie's own self-assertion, its need

to deceive, catch, and eat prey. Viewing monsters as resources for consumption is

certainly a sort of appropriation, a denial of their dignity and agency, but so too is the

thoughtless incorporation of monsters into demi-human narratives which deny their particularity.

In Senshi's encounter with the kelpie, we have a role-reversal that is at once dramatic and philosophically instructive. Senshi, wise steward of the more-than-(demi)human world, confronts (tragically, painfully) the limits of his own understanding of that world and, in that experience of non-comprehension, learns, is impacted by the (never-entirely-)Other and so finds a path forward towards greater comprehension. We see in this revelation the disorientation and reorientation that Plumwood speaks of (the coming, that is, to see from a different perspective) but also the hermeneutic insight that it is precisely through the *failures* of communication, the barriers to kinship, that one is forced to carefully consider the *nature* of communication and of one's relationship with other beings. As Gadamer puts it, "Only [when communication fails] does the effort of understanding become aware of the individuality of the Thou and take account of his uniqueness."[31] Put another way, the failure of comprehension is precisely what prompts us to do the difficult critical work of actively and compassionately relating to others in a way that does justice to their uniqueness and agency.

Of all the characters in *Delicious in Dungeon*, none embody the wisdom of the balanced rock more than Laios. For Laios, dungeon cuisine is a natural extension of his lifelong fascination with monsters. As the party's frontline fighter and strategist, he appreciates the threat posed by monsters, even as he seeks to understand as fully as possible their inner lives and roles within the dungeon's ecosystem. For Laios, the consumption of monsters as food represents a direct way of incorporating himself into that ecosystem, an incorporation that entails the recognition that, in turn, he too will

someday be consumed by other living things and that this is an appropriate and natural outcome for his life.[32] We should not mistake this for a mere abstract commitment to ecology. On the contrary, the emotional core of Laios' fascination with monsters consists, in the language of eco-theologian Lisa Dahill, of "a desire to be completely, wildly inside our biological connection to other species and this whole beleaguered planet and the [demi-humans] who urgently need our care along the way—so far inside all those relationships, physically and emotionally and intimately—that loving this life and these creatures, and humbly eating them and feeding them in turn" becomes a vital component of it.[33]

Laios' eccentric attitudes towards and relationships with monsters extends beyond the culinary focus which defines the series. His antics, indeed, are played for both comedy and drama at various points in the series. Laios is, at one moment, soberly cautioning Senshi as to the difficulties inherent in predicting the behavior of monsters (as in Episode 7) and, in the next, imitating animal threat-displays to intimidate an adversary (for, instance, in Episode 18).[34] For Laios, there is no contradiction between a recognition of the opaqueness of the Other and between these imitative behaviors; when he mirrors an animal's behavior, he is not presuming perfect knowledge of that animal's inner life but rather, seeking points of connection, engaging in a speculative reaching-out-to another living thing. The caution against impressing (demi)human conceptions upon monsters is not a denial of connection but rather, its precondition, insofar as it allows a monster to speak with its own voice. The self-assertion and (mysterious and hazardous) interior life of monsters, in turn, allows for points of behavioral intersection, not least being an understanding of the connections between beings (eating and being eaten, of course, but also alliances and kinships) and our conditions of shared

vulnerability and privation (that is, of the need to eat and the desire to avoid being eaten).

Correspondingly, Laios is uniquely willing to form strange and tentative, if bizarre-seeming, kinships with the monsters that he encounters. His sword, Kensuke, is itself a mollusk-like monster with whom he has struck a guarded alliance. Kensuke's instincts, specifically, its ability to sense other dangerous monsters that a demi-human might miss or mistake or something else, repeatedly help Laios and the party avoid danger but also make the creature unreliable as a weapon. Kensuke's status as a tentacled monster provides us with an evocative image for kinship, again explored by Haraway:

> The tentacular are not disembodied figures; they are cnidarians, spiders, fingery beings like humans and raccoons, squid, jellyfish, neural extravaganzas, fibrous entities, flagellated beings, myofibril braids, matted and felted microbial and fungal tangles, probing creepers, swelling roots, reaching and climbing tendrilled ones. The tentacular are also nets and networks, it critters, in and out of clouds. Tentacularity is about life lived along lines—and such a wealth of lines—not at points, not in spheres.[35]

We note here that the kinship between Kensuke and Laios is not unidirectional but rather, entails a reaching out, a trying-of-new-things,[36] on Kensuke's part. Both Kensuke and Laios are taking a risk in trusting each other and are acting against the typical fashion of their kinds and it is precisely this sort of experimental behavior that is capable of giving rise to such unexpected and fruitful collaborations between species as exist in our own world. In the world of *Delicious in Dungeon*, as in our own world, the mutual receptivity of we humans and the beings with whom we share the world is not limited to relationships of violence and exploitation but also entails alliances, even friendships.

Laios embodies an ecological hermeneutic, a willingness to acknowledge the narratives of the more-than-human world and to incorporate himself, however uneasily, into those narratives. We term this a hermeneutic in deference to the mutual receptivity that his approach to communication entails. His is a willingness to speak, but also to listen to the speaking of the creatures with whom he shares the world, to impact but also to be impacted upon, to assert himself but not to begrudge the self-assertions of others. As Gadamer puts it,

> If, by entering foreign language-worlds, we overcome the prejudices and limitations of our own previous experiences of the world, this does not mean that we leave and negate our own world. Like travelers, we return home with new experiences. Even if we emigrate and never return, we still can never wholly forget.[37]

While, for Gadamer, the mutual constitution embodied in our encounter with these foreign lifeways (which, we might observe with Plumwood, are perhaps not so foreign after all) is linguistically and culturally mediated, hence, a human-all-too-human enterprise, our own subsequent generation of philosophy is more inclined to extend this reasoning to the more-than-human world. This manifests, not just in positive assertions of how humans should relate to other creatures and to the land, but also in the observation of how the beings with whom we share the world already do so:

> In this context, the term 'appropriation' takes on another meaning, since here it is also a matter of transforming the chosen space not so much into something the animal 'owns', something that belongs to it, as into the animal itself: the distinction between 'self' and 'non-self' is even less clearly defined, in that many mammals not only mark locations and objects, but they also mark their own bodies with their own secretions, transferring these onto different parts of the body. More astonishingly still, many of them also steep themselves in the smell of objects found within the area of the territory: soil, grass, rotting carcasses, tree bark. The animal then becomes appropriated both *by* and *into* the space which it appropriates as its own by marking it, thus creating a physical bond with that place which renders the 'self' and 'non-self' indistinguishable.[38]

If we call Laios' approach to the complex, interrelated lifeworld "hermeneutics," we should step back and acknowledge that this human, all too human term represents the tragically, painfully late arrival of humans to an ongoing project of living beings upon which our mutual survival may yet depend. A call to an ecological hermeneutics must not be allowed to become a call to still more abstract thinking. On the contrary, the ecological call of *Delicious in Dungeon* is precisely not to deny our embeddedness in the messy, sensuous, interrelated materiality of things but to embrace it because it is precisely in that chaotic intimacy with the world that knowledge lies.

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[1] A version of this paper was presented at the Journal of Anime and Manga Studies Conference in Los Angeles, California on 7/6/24. I am indebted to the feedback of the attendees and participants and, in particular, to that of Billy Tringali, Frenchy Lunning, and Edmund Hoff.

[2] Valerie Plumwood, *Eye of the Crocodile* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2012), 16.

[3] Valerie Plumwood *Eye of the* Crocodile, 16.

[4] These are called demi-humans in the context of the series.

[5] Hermit crab-like ambush predators who imitate treasure chests in order to snare their prey.

[6] Greg Gillespie, "Remember the Good Old Days?: Nostalgia, Retroscapes, and the Dungeon Crawl Classics", *Loading…: The Journal of the Canadian Game Studies Association*, Vol 6, No. 10, (2012), 4.

[7] Zachary Selman Palmer, *The Living Dungeon: Space, Convention, and Reinvention in Dungeon Games*, University of Alberta, 2019, 4.

[8] Jaroslav Švelch, *Player Vs. Monster: The Making and Breaking of Video Game Monstrosity*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2023), 45.

[9] Sarah Stang and Aaron Trammell, "The Ludic Bestiary: Misogynistic Tropes of Female Monstrosity in Dungeons & Dragons", *Games and Culture,* Vol. 16, No. 6, (2020), 731.

[10] Called "XP" in games, experience points are necessary for the advancement of character levels and abilities.

[11] Ilan Mitchell-Smith, "Racial Determinism and Interlocking Economies of Power and Violence in *Dungeons and Dragons*," in *Co-Opting Culture,* ed. B. Garrick Harden and Robert Carley (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 214-215.

[12] *Delicious in Dungeon,* Season 1, Episode 3, Directed by Yoshihiro Miyajima (2024), Available on Netflix. Accessed 6/20/24.

[13] *Delicious in Dungeon,* Season 1, Episode 21, Directed by Yoshihiro Miyajima (2024), Available on Netflix. Accessed 6/23/24.

[14] Jaroslav Švelch, *Player Vs. Monster*, 45.

[15] *Delicious in Dungeon,* Season 1, Episode 24, Directed by Yoshihiro Miyajima (2024), Available on Netflix. Accessed 6/23/24.

[16] Catherine Keller, *Faces of the Deep*: *A Theology of Becoming* (London: Routledge, 2003), 154.

[17] Elves and Dwarves.

[18] Tall-men and half-foots.

[19] *Delicious in Dungeon,* Season 1, Episode 4, Directed by Yoshihiro Miyajima (2024), Available on Netflix. Accessed 6/20/24.

[20] *Delicious in Dungeon,* Season 1, Episode 21, Directed by Yoshihiro Miyajima (2024), Available on Netflix. Accessed 6/23/24.

[21] *Delicious in Dungeon,* Season 1, Episode 4, Directed by Yoshihiro Miyajima (2024), Available on Netflix. Accessed 6/20/24.

[22] *Delicious in Dungeon,* Season 1, Episode 21, Directed by Yoshihiro Miyajima (2024), Available on Netflix. Accessed 6/23/24.

[23] Stephen Brain, *Song of the Forest: Russian Forestry and Stalinist Environmentalism, 1905 to 1953*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 12-15.

[24] Brian M. Napoletano and Brett Clark, "An Ecological-Marxist Response to the Half-Earth Project", *Conservation and Society*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (2020), 42.

[25] Paul Maltby, "Fundamentalist Dominion, Postmodern Ecology," *Ethics & the Environment* Vol. 13, no. 2 (2008): 120.

[26] Valerie Plumwood, Eye of the Crocodile, 11-12.

[27] Valerie Plumwood, *Eye of the Crocodile*, 35.

[28] Valerie Plumwood, *Eye of the Crocodile*, 45.

[29] Valerie Plumwood, *Eye of the Crocodile*, 45.

[30] Donna Haraway, *The Haraway Reader*, 1st Edition, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 129 Emphasis Mine.

[31] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), 180-181.

[32] Ryōko Kui*, Delicious in Dungeon World Guide: The Adventurer's Bible Complete Edition*, (Tokyo, Kakodawa, 2024), 217. I am indebted to users _glaucus_atlanticus_ and Savao of the /DungeonMeshi Discord server for referring me to this source and for providing an English language translation, respectively.

[33] Lisa Dahill, "Eating and Being Eaten: Interspecies Vulnerability as Eucharist," *Religions* 11, no. 4 (2020): 212.

[34] *Delicious in Dungeon,* Season 1, episodes 7 and 18, Directed by Yoshihiro Miyajima (2024), Available on Netflix. Accessed 6/23/24.

[35] Donna Haraway, "Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulhucene", *E-Flux* no. 75 (September 2016), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67125/tentacular-thinking-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene/.

[36] This evokes the Latin verb *tentare* from whence we derive "tentacle"

[37] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 445.

[38] Vinciane Despret, *Living as a Bird*, 1st Edition, Translated by Hellen Morrison, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), 26.

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Using Anime in Teaching and Understanding Major International Relations

(IR) Theories: A Case Study of How a *Realist Hero* Rebuilt the Kingdom

Nathaniel Punongbayan Candelaria

Abstract: The literature on Political Science education has already established the use of popular culture in teaching International Relations (IR) theories. However, the same recognition does not extend to anime despite its documented potential as an educational tool in the literature. This paper argues that anime contributes to IR and Political Science literature both as an object of study and as a tool in teaching and understanding major IR theories. Using the case of *How a Realist Hero Rebuilt the Kingdom* (*Realist Hero*), this paper demonstrates how major IR theories can also be illustrated through this series. Though earlier analyses of the series focused on realism, this paper builds on those analyses and, at the same time, utilizes other major theories, such as liberalism and constructivism. These three major IR theories were then used to analyze the international politics of the *Realist Hero* series by focusing on the significant events that transpired in the two-season anime series by J.C. Staff, Co., Ltd., as well as the continuation of its story in the light novel format, written by Dojyamaru.

Keywords: Political Science Education, International Relations, Popular Culture, Anime, How a *Realist Hero* Rebuilt the Kingdom

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Introduction

International Relations (IR) literature considers the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 as the start of the modern state system due to the recognition of the sovereignty of states in domestic affairs.[1] IR literature also considers major developments such as the Industrial Revolution, the First World War, the Second World War, and the Cold War as important historical epochs that helped shape IR as an academic discipline.[2] Although author Francis Fukuyama, an International Relations scholar, argued that the post-Cold War period marked the end of history due to the victory of liberalism,[3] ongoing global conflicts still necessitate reviewing such a conclusion.

However, IR theories extend beyond the analysis of real-world events. As the literature recognizes, popular culture references, including anime, can also be used as a tool for education.[4] This paper, therefore, attempts to use the case of *How a Realist Hero Rebuilt the Kingdom* (*Realist Hero*) to understand IR theories from an anime perspective. Apart from understanding these theories, this paper will also offer insights into how *Realist Hero* can be used to teach IR theories. While there are other recognized theories, such as post-structuralism, Marxism, and feminism,[5] the discussion will focus on the major IR theories: realism, liberalism, and constructivism.[6]

While some essays cover information about the series using IR theories like realism and liberalism,[7] as well as King Souma's practice of realpolitik in the earlier parts of *Realist Hero*,[8] *there are more* events in the *Realist Hero* storyline that can be used in understanding state behavior. Students and instructors can use *Realist Hero* to explain the behavior of the Kingdom of Friedonia (formerly Elfrieden; hereafter referred to as Friedonia) and other major powers in the series, primarily through realism. Apart from

realism, other major theories such as liberalism and constructivism, which were identified earlier, were also applied to explain Friedonia's behavior.

Using Popular Culture as a Tool in Teaching and Understanding International Relations Theories, and Why Anime Can Also Be Utilized

In political science, there is a growing literature on the use of popular culture references in their teaching pedagogies. For instance, media forms such as novels and films were used in conjunction with nonfiction texts in teaching an introduction to politics and government class.[9] Meanwhile, other scholars have utilized newer popular culture references, such as HBO's *House of the Dragon*, in teaching American Politics and Comparative Politics concepts.[10]

This shift is also reflected in IR studies, where literature recognizes that popular culture is now being used to explore IR concepts.[11] For example, films were used to discuss IR concepts and theories.[12] In addition to films, political science scholars have also utilized games,[13] spy novels,[14] and simulations using HBO's *Game of Thrones* series[15] in their class discussions.

Although scholars acknowledge the effectiveness of popular culture references in their respective class discussions, some of them have also recognized its pitfalls. For instance, Jacob Stump has encountered problems using popular culture references in his class, such as "skepticism among the students" and "the balance between entertainment and education."[16] Since using popular culture references may require independent learning from students, it is required to provide scaffolding and to reiterate the "learning goals for the course throughout the semester."[17] Regardless of individual views on the use of popular culture references in classes, they remain relevant, especially since the

American Political Science Association has acknowledged their importance through its "'Politics, Literature, and Film' Section."[18]

Unlike mainstream popular culture references, there is sparse literature on anime as a possible tool to study those theories. According to Jaqueline Berndt, scholars have examined anime from foreign policy and nationalism angles.[19] For example, Japan is known for implementing a program called "Cool Japan," which uses anime as an export product in East Asia and Southeast Asia.[20] In terms of its domestic significance, studies such as Takayoshi Yamamura's have explored the use of anime such as *Gate: Jieitai Kanochi nite, Kaku Tatakaeri*, to help change the image of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF).[21]

However, anime is not only relevant in these areas. As the literature states, anime is also used in education. For instance, Berndt discusses that in academia, anime can also be studied in areas such as Japanese studies and media studies.[22] Meanwhile, Brent Allison presents the possibility of using anime as a pedagogical tool in teaching by incorporating anime in educating aspiring teachers, with mixed results.[23] Therefore, this paper seeks to bridge this gap by using anime to study IR theories.

Realist Hero can be incorporated into class discussions to supplement primary IR textbooks for teaching major IR theories. This paper also recognizes the need to balance things out, as pointed out by Brandon Valeriano,[24] as well as Shawna Brandle,[25] in their experience of using popular culture references in teaching IR courses. In terms of class activities and assessment, apart from traditional assessments, this paper echoes the suggestions of other scholars such as a paper connecting IR with the series,[26] meme-making and reflection pieces,[27] and group discussions,[28] to name a few. However, these

are only suggestions, and instructors can utilize different pedagogies and activities to integrate anime series like *Realist Hero* in discussing major IR concepts and theories.

Realist Hero: The Story Leading to the Friedonia's Establishment

This paper will briefly outline the plot of Realist Hero to contextualize its relevance in teaching major IR theories. Initially a light novel series, *Realist Hero* was eventually animated by J.C. Staff.[29] The story follows Souma Kazuya, who is unexpectedly summoned to the Kingdom of Elfrieden (Elfrieden) and appointed king by the previous ruler, Albert.[30] This abrupt change sparks a rebellion among some nobles.[31] Meanwhile, the Principality of Amidonia (Amidonia), led by Gaius VIII, seeks to reclaim its lost territory by attacking Elfrieden during its internal conflict. However, Souma successfully suppresses the insurrection,[32] and defeats Amidonia's military force.[33]

In the anime, Julius Amidonia, the new prince of Amidonia, eventually involved the Gran Chaos Empire in the conflict against Elfrieden, as Amidonia was a party to the Declaration of Mankind.[34] While the city of Van was returned to Amidonia, of the entire region of Amidonia was annexed by Elfrieden due to two key factors: 1) the dissatisfaction of the citizens of Van under Amidonia's control,[35] and 2) the involvement of Princess Roroa Amidonia, who played a role in having Amidonia annexed by Elfrieden.[36]

Eventually, the merger of these two states created Friedonia.[37] To solidify the claim of the new monarch, Souma Kazuya eventually renamed himself as Souma A. Elfrieden, and married royals such as Liscia Elfrieden and Roroa Amidonia, to further solidify his claim to the throne.[38]

Friedonia's Relations with Other Major Powers in *Realist Hero*

Since IR theories recognize the importance of states as "the dominant actor of IR,"[39] this paper will discuss Friedonia's relations with the other major states. This will also help students and instructors understand power dynamics in *Realist Hero*. However, to limit the paper's discussion, it will only cover Friedonia's relations with the following major states: the Gran Chaos Empire, the Republic of Turgis, the Nine-Headed Dragon Archipelago, and the Great Tiger Kingdom of Haan.

Friedonia's Relations with the Gran Chaos Empire

In the light novel, it was established that the Gran Chaos Empire (Empire) was the largest power in the Continent of Landia before the rise of Friedonia, as it headed the Mankind Declaration.[40] Volume four clarifies its provisions:

> First, the acquisition of territory by force between the nations of mankind would be deemed inadmissible. Second, the right of all peoples to equality and self-determination would be respected. Third, countries that were distant from the Demon Lord's Domain would provide support to those nations which were adjacent to it and were acting as a defensive wall.[41]

The entry of the Empire in the anime, as previously mentioned, initially created tension in its relationship with Elfrieden, as the Empire acted as a mediator on behalf of Amidonia. Despite King Souma's apprehension towards the Mankind Declaration, he nevertheless entered a secret alliance between his kingdom and the Empire.[42]

In volume seven, the Empire joined the meeting between Friedonia and the Republic of Turgis.[43] The goal of the meeting was to establish a medical alliance between Friedonia, the Republic of Turgis, and the Empire. By the fifteenth volume, the Empire also participated in the Balm Summit with other major states in the continent.[44]

The relationship between the Kingdom and the Empire essentially flourished. However, the 16th volume of the light novel revealed that relations were dissolved when the Empire disbanded due to overstretching and the attack of the Great Tiger Kingdom of Haan on its territory.[45] The Empire eventually become the Kingdom of Euphoria (Euphoria), with Empress Maria being succeeded by her sister, Jeanne Euphoria. The new Queen eventually ended up marrying Friedonia's Prime Minister, Hakuya Kwonmin, and the former Empress ended up marrying King Souma, thereby becoming Friedonia's informal vassal state to their shared relations.[46] Euphoria also joined the maritime alliance afterwards.[47]

Friedonia's Relations with the Republic of Turgis

In volume six, King Souma expressed his intent to visit the Republic of Turgis (Turgis), by asking Hakuya Kwonmin to arrange the details for a possible state visit.[48] His state visit to Turgis happened in volume seven.[49] During this visit, King Souma met with the head of states of the Empire and Turgis, which ended with the establishment of a medical alliance between the three states. Turgis eventually joined the Maritime Alliance, together with Friedonia, the Nine-Headed Dragon Archipelago[50], and Euphoria in volume 16.[51]

Friedonia's Relations with the Nine-Headed Dragon Archipelago

In volume 12, Friedonia's initial impression of the Nine-Headed Dragon Archipelago (Dragon Archipelago) was that it threatens its own territorial waters.[52] As early as volume nine, it was established that ships from the Dragon Archipelago has been attacking Friedonia's fishing vessels.[53] In volume 13, the reason behind the intrusion is attributed to a sea monster called Ooyamizuchi.[54] This paved the way for the Friedonian and the Dragon Archipelago fleets to cooperate in slaying the monster. After, allowed Friedonia and the Dragon Archipelago fostered good bilateral relations, which including the betrothal of future monarchs and the exchange of naval bases. Their good bilateral relations also led to the establishment of a maritime alliance, which Turgis and Euphoria also joined.

Friedonia's Relations with the Great Tiger Kingdom of Haan

Volume nine introduced the nation of Malmkhitan, a member state of the Union of Eastern Nations that is ruled by Fuuga Haan.[55] In volume ten, Malmkhitan had unified after eliminating internal opposition.[56] By volume 13, Malmkhitan is the largest country in the Union of Eastern Nations and was able to reclaim land from the Demon Lord's Domain, a feat that the Empire was not able to do.[57] By volume 14, Malmkhitan was able to consolidate as a single state in the Union of East Nations by decimating smaller states, such as the Kingdom of Lastania and the Duchy of Chima, and was renamed the Great Tiger Kingdom of Haan (Tiger Kingdom).[58]

As the Tiger Kingdom expanded, the Lunarian Orthodox Papal State (Papal State) also recognized Fuuga Haan as Holy King, establishing an alliance between the two states. King Souma has previously rejected the title of Holy King and acted against the spread of

the influence of the Papal State in Friedonia.[59] By volume 15, its power is considered equal to the Empire's Mankind Declaration and the Maritime Alliance.[60] By volume 16, the Tiger Kingdom further expanded by incorporating the Mercenary State of Zem (Zem) and some vassal states of the Empire under its territory, which eventually led to the dissolution of the Empire and the creation of Euphoria.[61]

Despite its imperialistic goals, the Tiger Kingdom cooperated with the other states in the continent. It worked with Friedonia to treat diseases in the Spirit Kingdom of Garlan[62] and participated in the Balm Summit.[63] The two nations also collaborated militarily to free territories from the Demon Lord's Domain.[64] By volume 18, the tension between Friedonia, its allies, and the Tiger Kingdom escalated into open conflict, resembling a "hot war" between two opposing camps, unlike the Cold War dynamic between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.[65]

Using *Realist Hero* as an Example in Teaching and Understanding Major International Relations Theories

As discussed earlier, popular culture is useful for introducing IR concepts and theories, though the focus has predominantly been on Western references. This paper argues that anime can also be useful for teaching and understanding IR theories. To accomplish this goal, this paper adopts Zach Lang and Ronnie Olesker's use of content analysis approach, previously applied to the context of *House of the Dragon*.[66] However, unlike their focus on American Politics and Comparative Politics,[67] this paper will focus on major IR theories. Before applying *Realist Hero* to these theories, this paper will discuss their origins, tenets, and types, followed by an analysis of *Realist Hero* through the lens of different IR theories.

Realism and its Application in Realist Hero

Before realism became a formal IR theory, scholars associated thinkers such as Kautilya, Ibn Khaldun, Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes with the realist idea.[68] These thinkers viewed politics as a struggle for power deeply rooted in human nature. While these thinkers were essential in understanding realism, its rise as an IR theory is credited to the conditions leading to World War II, which "diametrically opposed to the Wilsonian liberal idealist approach."[69] As Or Rosenboim points out, "'realist' approaches have influenced both the practice of international relations and the academic study of world politics."[70]

Realism is based on two main tenets: the existence of egotistical human nature reflected on state actions, and an anarchical international system.[71] IR scholars also recognize additional realist tenets beyond human nature and anarchy: the state as the central actor, the concept of power, and the idea of survival and self-help under an anarchic international system.[72] Realist IR have several strands: classical realism, neorealism or structural realism, and neoclassical realism.

Classical realism, whose main proponents are E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau, argues that under conditions of anarchy, state behavior is a reflection of human nature.[73] Structural realism, or neorealism, challenges classical realism by arguing that anarchy is structural and that states must be able to help themselves to ensure their security.[74] The proponent of structural realism, Kenneth Waltz, further argues that "competition and conflict among states stem directly from the twin facts of life under conditions of anarchy: States in an anarchic order must provide for their own security, and threats or seeming threats to their security abound."[75] Neorealism is divided into offensive and defensive realism, which differ on the relevance of zero-sum game politics and the necessity of

conflict in international politics.[76] Lastly, the literature also discusses neoclassical realism, which believes that "understanding the links between power and policy requires close examination of the contexts within which foreign policies are formulated and implemented."[77] Neoclassical realism combines classical and neorealist assumptions, emphasizing that leaders play a role in managing the affairs of the state and that even if a state is strong, a weak leader can jeopardize a state's security.[78]

Given the dominance of realism as an IR theory, it is only apt that this paper applies realist IR theory extensively in discussing the dynamics in *Realist Hero*. Even if there have already been analyses on this topic, as mentioned earlier, this paper also supports and builds on those assertions. While using Friedonia as the focal point, it will also discuss the view from the Tiger Kingdom in applying realist IR theory in *Realist Hero*.

A good example of realism in *Realist Hero* is the situation with Amidonia before its annexation by Elfrieden. It exemplifies King Souma's acknowledgment of an anarchical international system by occupying the capital of Amidonia, Van, and forcing them to pay reparations to weaken the other state for Elfrieden's survival.[79] Although Amidonia involved the Empire to counterbalance Friedonia and demand Van's return, the effort was short-lived, and Amidonia was eventually annexed by Elfrieden. Additionally, King Souma dealt with the threat of the Papal State, a minor country with widespread religious influence, by simply cutting the adherents of his state and appointing a bishop to steer away the adherents from the Papal State's influence.[80]

Apart from an anarchical international system, *Realist Hero* also shows how the balance of powers works. For instance, King Souma also showed his aptitude with it by creating his own bloc, i.e., the maritime alliance, which aims to address any threats at sea, whether natural or artificial.[81] The maritime alliance, established by Friedonia, was joined

by the Dragon Archipelago and Turgis in volume 13 and Euphoria by volume 16. The maritime bloc, as an alliance, was tested when the Tiger Kingdom attacked Friedonia in volume 18.

Another concept that realist IR scholars highlight is self-help. In *Realist Hero*, King Souma ensured Friedonia's survival through significant investments in research and technology. In terms of research, he supported educational institutions[82] and funded research projects suited for the battlefield.[83] In terms of technology, he gave Genia Maxwell more funding after she invented the Susumu V propulsion device.[84] King Souma also commissioned the Hiryuu, an aircraft carrier, which also includes the dratroopers (*Realist Hero*'s version of paratroopers), which are wyverns equipped with the Susumu V propulsion device.[85]

Realism can also be used to explain the actions of the Tiger Kingdom. Starting as a small state in volume nine, it expanded its territory by uniting the Union of Eastern Nations under its control by volume 14. To expand its territory further, strategist Hashim Chima advised Fuuga Haan to accept an alliance with the Papal State.[86] Hashim Chima also orchestrated the Tiger Kingdom's influence over the Spirit Kingdom of Garlan by volume 15.[87] By volume 16, the Tiger Kingdom incorporated Zem and parts of the former Empire's territory. According to the series, Tiger Kingdom expanded to gather more human resources to sustain its day-to-day operations.[88] In volume 18, the Tiger Kingdom went to war against Friedonia. Fuuga Haan claimed the attack was vital for the kingdom's survival, stating, "It sounds like Souma and his gang are plotting something. If they pull off whatever it is, we'll stand no chance...."[89] Whether this analysis was correct or not, the Tiger Kingdom's rationale is also rooted in realism, as it seeks to survive and continue

existing as a major state under the condition of self-help in an anarchical international system.

While realism plays a significant role in *Realist Hero*, it is not enough to fully appreciate the diverse IR theories depicted in the series. As demonstrated, King Souma is also capable of forging alliances and cooperating for the welfare of the state, which is an example of liberal IR theory. In addition, *Realist Hero* series emphasizes the creation of different ideas and values, reflecting constructivism. These examples will be explored in more detail in subsequent sections.

Liberalism and its Application in Realist Hero

Before liberalism emerged as a formal IR theory, several philosophers laid its foundation. For instance, the literature recognizes St. Thomas Aquinas and his idea of "just war" as one of the thinkers that influenced liberalism's development.[90] Enlightenment thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham, and J.S. Mill are also credited as the founding fathers of liberal IR.[91] They advanced the idea of transcending state boundaries. However, it was the League of Nations and Woodrow Wilson that focused attention on international building.[92] Although largely sidelined after World War II, liberalism became the dominant IR theory following the Cold War due to the rise of globalization and democratization.[93]

Unlike realism's emphasis on competition, liberal IR theory emphasizes the "notion of harmony or balance amongst competing interests. Individual, groups, and for that matter, states may pursue self-interest but a natural equilibrium will tend to assert itself."[94] Andrew Moravcsik argues that liberal IR theory focuses on preferences as defined by domestic and international social contexts, rather than capabilities and

institutions.[95] He also notes that state behavior is subsumed to societal interests and, simultaneously, is capable of interdependence in the international system. Liberalism also contributed to the "Democratic Peace Thesis," which argues "that wars do not occur between constitutionally liberal democratic states."[96] This idea was tested by Michael R. Tomz and Jessica L. P. Weeks in their study *Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace.* They found that a war between democracies is less likely to happen due to the importance given to public opinion by democratic regimes, whose views are shaped by morality.[97]

Like realism, liberalism has several strands. One is neoliberal institutionalism, which is described as "a school of thought within liberalism that emphasizes the scope of cooperative behaviour within the international system while not denying its anarchic character."[98] Jervis argues that "establishing an institution can increase cooperation."[99] Another strand of liberal IR theory is complex interdependence, developed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, which distinguishes between "high politics," such as traditional security, and "low politics," such as non-traditional security issues.[100]

While this paper supports the realist assertions on *Realist Hero*, given the title of the series, this paper also argues that liberalism can also explain Friedonia's behavior. For example, King Souma formed partnerships and alliances in the series. To showcase how liberalism can be used to analyze *Realist Hero*, this section will explore the different bilateral and multilateral relations established by Friedonia. Lastly, this section will also discuss how King Souma's application of liberalism exemplifies what liberal IR scholars argue regarding the formation of the idea of "democratic peace."

In terms of cooperation, the series demonstrates Friedonia's ability to establish strong bilateral relations with the Empire, Turgis, and the Dragon Archipelago. It also

managed its relations with the Tiger Kingdom until the latter decided to attack in volume 18.

In addition to bilateral relations, King Souma led Friedonia in forming a non-military alliance and organizing a continent-wide summit. A medical alliance, composed of countries such as Friedonia, Turgis, and the Empire, was formed to address medical threats. In volume 15, a Balm Summit was convened, including Friedonia's traditional allies and the Tiger Kingdom.

Beyond bilateral relations and alliances, *Realist Hero* exemplifies the liberals' theory regarding "democratic peace." The medical alliance led to the growth of the medical field. In particular, King Souma suggested that it should not be a competition between countries but rather a shared aspiration to protect everyone, as diseases do not discriminate in terms of citizenship.[101] The maritime alliance also added the formal recognition of the laws of the sea as a value that alliance members should share.[102] In this case, King Souma achieved relative peace, with conflict arising only between Friedonia and the Tiger Kingdom, another superpower in the series.

Constructivism and its Application in Realist Hero

As an IR theory, constructivism achieved "a 'mainstream' status comparable to the realist and liberal traditions."[103] It challenges both realist and liberal IR theories by emphasizing the importance of "ideas and norms" in international politics.[104] Alexander Wendt, a pioneer of constructivism, aimed to advance the study of international politics "by developing a constructive argument, drawn from structurationist and symbolic interactionist sociology, on behalf of the liberal claim that international institutions can transform state identities and interests."[105]

Wendt explains that "a fundamental principle of constructivist social theory is that people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them."[106] Ted Hopf identifies four key themes in constructivism: 1) the relevance of both actors and structures in global politics, 2) anarchy as a social construct, 3) the importance of identity in global politics, and 4) the recognition of discourse as power.[107] Essentially, constructivism argues that international processes are outcomes of interactions.[108]

Hopf identifies two strands of constructivism: conventional and critical.[109] While both share similar goals, they differ in terms of approach, as well as in analyzing how identities are formed in the international system. However, the literature suggests that these differences have compromised the position of constructivism as a major IR theory, thereby necessitating its recalibration.[110]

Although *Realist Hero* clearly emphasizes one IR theory, as seen in its title, this paper contends that constructivism can also be applied in explaining Friedonia's behavior. Friedonia and its monarch, King Souma, demonstrate adaptability in terms of state-to-state relations. Additionally, Friedonia and King Souma have undergone identity shifts. Lastly, the changes brought upon by King Souma's leadership have ramifications for the discourse in *Realist Hero*.

Regarding Friedonia's relations with other countries, this paper notes a positive shift in how the series portrays its interactions with the Empire, Turgis, and the Dragon Archipelago. Despite King Souma's apprehension about the Declaration of Mankind agreement, Friedonia and the Empire overcame King Souma's apprehensions by fostering good bilateral relations. Friedonia's improved relations with Turgis and the Dragon Archipelago enabled them to establish the maritime alliance.

The paper also notes the souring of Friedonia's relations with another major power, the Tiger Kingdom. While there were periods when both countries were able to cooperate, such as the Balm Summit in volume 15 and the military operation to liberate territories in the Demon Lord's domain in volume 17, hostilities arose when the Tiger Kingdom launched a military campaign against Friedonia in volume 18.

In addition to shifts in bilateral relations, the paper also highlights the need for Friedonia and King Souma to forge new identities. As depicted in the light novel, Friedonia was born out of the union of Elfrieden and Amidonia. This new identity was crucial for uniting the people, given the conflictual history between the two regions. At the same time, to further solidify his rule, Souma Kazuya adopted the name Souma A. Elfrieden in volume ten.

However, the most significant constructivist development in the anime is the focus on discursive change, particularly in non-military issues. For example, throughout the series, King Souma recognized the need to improve social service delivery, such as healthcare[111] and education.[112] Moreover, given his adverse reaction to the institution of slavery, King Souma made significant changes that rendered slavery legal in name only, while granting more rights to slaves in Friedonia.[113]

Conclusion

IR theories can be studied not only through academic texts but also by using popular culture. While Western popular culture has been well-documented in academia, the same cannot be said for anime. Therefore, this paper explored the use of anime as a tool for studying major IR theories.

As an isekai anime, *Realist Hero* provides a valuable example of how major IR theories can be applied to international politics. This paper applied the three major IR theories—realism, liberalism and constructivism—with an emphasis on realism, to explain Friedonia's relations with other major powers in the series. By using these major IR theories to explain *Realist Hero*'s dynamics, this paper presents an opportunity for instructors to integrate anime into their discussions of anime theories, and students a new way to learn these concepts.

Despite its strengths, there are also limitations that this paper can cite. Other IR theories can also be used to discuss the politics of *Realist Hero*. In addition to IR theories, *Realist Hero* can also be used to understand political philosophy as the series references the works of Niccolo Machiavelli and other realist thinkers. While this paper demonstrated the potential of using anime to teach major IR theories, the ideas shared are suggestions for how *Realist Hero* can be used in classroom discussions. Further research is needed to assess the efficacy of using anime references in discussing IR theories.

Notes

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Hong Kong's Anime:

A Cultural History of Anime in Hong Kong's Last Decade

Mateja Kovacic

Abstract

In 2019 and 2020, Hong Kong experienced waves of anti-government protests, with millions participating both online and offline. The semiotic of transnational popular culture references, including film and music, played a crucial role in these protests. Japanese animation and manga were especially prominent in online and offline communication, in the form of memes, slogans, videos, and activist art produced mostly by people under 29 years of age. Namely, anime and manga became not only the primary audio-visual language of the protests but also a transnational pop digital anarchist network between Hong Kong and the rest of the world. This article refers to this phenomenon as "Hong Kong's anime" due to its unique transformation, adaptation, and sociocultural and political significance during these protests. Anime has a heterogeneous history as both institutional soft power and non-institutionalized fandom. While acknowledging the heterogeneous landscape of anime, this article focuses on its potential as a "transnational pop digital anarchist network" by analyzing its role in shaping people's transnational cultural history and in writing people's historiography. Based on interviews with the creators of protest art and the analysis of online and offline content, Hong Kong's anime is revealed to be a new form of transnational historiography, emerging from transnational pop digital anarchist networks and connecting ordinary people in Hong Kong and worldwide through anime.

Keywords: Anime, Hong Kong, transnational history, digital activism, popular

culture

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Being Otaku: Transnational Pop Digital Anarchist Networks

From March 2019 to May 2020, public protests in Hong Kong centered around the "Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019," or simply the "Bill." The Bill included mainland China, Macau and Taiwan in Hong Kong's extradition laws, with the Chief Executive, appointed by the State Council of the People's Republic of China (PRC), having the authority over extraditions. The protesters were concerned primarily with how the Bill will affect the freedom of speech, as well as pro-democracy and pro-independence activism in Hong Kong.

Figure 1 Artwork of Sailor Moon wearing a gas mask.

During this time, Japanese animation emerged as an essential and privileged form of communication thanks to its rich cultural history in Hong Kong, and it continues to play an integral role in everyday life (see Figure 1).

A key aspect of the 2019 protests was not solely its transcultural verbiage of popular media references—including Bruce Lee and *The Hunger Games* (2012)—but also its transnational nature, which becomes evident in its plethora of examples relating to anime. For example, Agnes Chow Ting, one of the faces of Hong Kong protests, active in the

Japanese media throughout the protests, appealing to the public in Japan for support (see Figure 2), emphasized her love for Japanese animation and popular culture and was praised by the media and the public in Japan for speaking fluent self-taught Japanese during interviews.

A second example is visible in the way that anime directors in Japan used social media, including Reddit, to support the protests (see Figures 3–4).

The idea of Agnes Chow as the true Mulan is showing up in all sorts of ways (in varied languages and Tweets from varied places) on the Internet (see this image); the latest in a string of fascinating Hong Kong meets Hollywood protest angles

Figure 2: Agnes Chow on social media, often compared with Mulan from Disney's Mulan (1998).

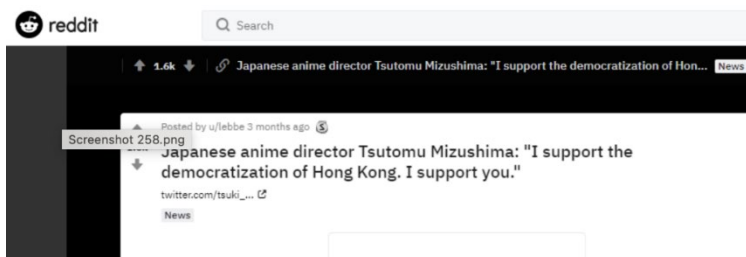*Figure 4 Anime director Tsutomu Mizushima, known for Girls und Panzer (2012–2023) and xxxHOLiC (2005–2011), voicing support for the Hong Kong protests on Reddit. (Left)*
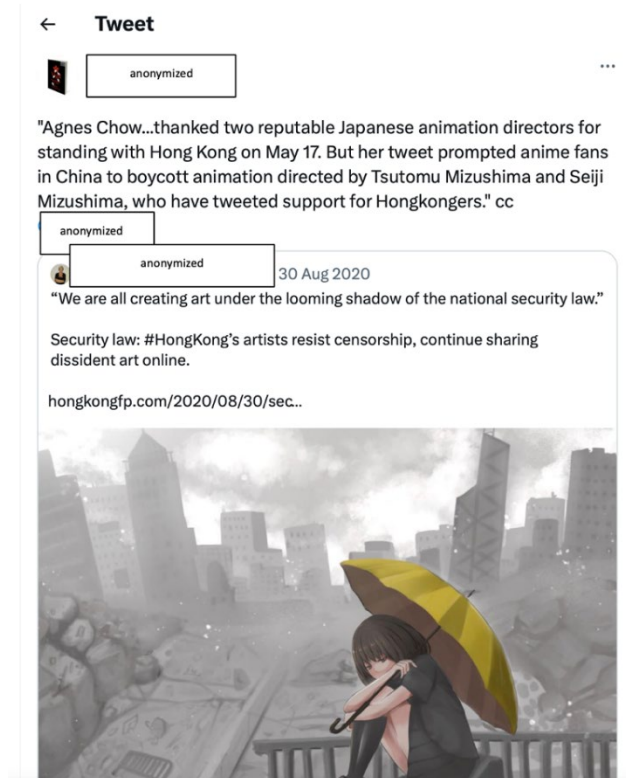
Figure 3 Agnes Chow thanks anime directors Tsutomu Mizushima and Seiji Mizushima in a Tweet for supporting the Hong Kong protests. (Right)

Similar examples abound: adult manga creators in Japan added slogans from Hong Kong protests and references to the contested history of protests in China into their work (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 Japanese adult manga artists inserted the slogans "Add oil, Hong Kong" and "Tiananmen 64" in The Dream of Red Mansions on [18+].

Then at the world's largest *dôjin* annual event in Tokyo, Comic Market 97, held in 2019, a self-publishing group Muyûbyôsha Byôtô ("Hong Kong Dream Walker") published a manga book in Japanese titled *Honkon sensen kiroku* ("The Hongkongers Resist Documentary") (see Figures 6–7). It was handed out for free and was available for free download on the Internet.[1] Likewise, ordinary people in

Figure 6 Announcement for Honkon sensen kiroku (The Hongkongers Resist Documentary) at Comic Market 97 by Hong Kong Dream Walker group.

Japan showed their support through blog articles, social network posts, and visual

art, complementing user discussions and generating transnational connections.

Figure 7 Honkon sensen kiroku at Comiket 97.

A highly compelling aspect of the protests was its fantasy-reality dynamic of

action grounded in a shared transnational popular culture. Anime was seen as a

universal humanitarian language. As manga artists and creators of protest art Rei

and Ryoji explained during an interview:

> Japanese people perceive anime and manga as far from politics, but in Hong
> Kong, we connect and refer the political situation to things that happen in
> manga. It makes us realize that the things in anime and manga have entered
> real life, or at least draw a parallel with real life, so we think that manga and
> politics are not separated that much.[2]

Based on digital and physical surveys, interactions with protesters, and

interviews with the creators of protest art, this article analyzes and interprets the

cultural history of Hong Kong's anime, particularly in recent lights. It also explores new forms of historiography arising from its transnational pop digital anarchist networks, because the voices from the creators of Hong Kong's anime and manga, like those of Rei and Ryoji, suggest a new kind of historiography—one that is transnational and cultural, as opposed to state-produced and institutional. They share the idea that the people's history needs to be narrated and preserved through transnational visual language.

Anime has enabled the creation of transnational pop digital anarchist networks: the decentralized, non-institutional online networks of anime fandoms and cultures shared by ordinary people beyond geographical and national borders and across multiple languages and cultural contexts. "Transnational" refers to informal, non-institutional cultural flows. "Anarchism" refers to mutual aid and cooperatism, not the Western idea of violently abolishing the government. This is not political so much as a view of life grounded in decentralized relations aimed at survival and coexistence in which digital popular culture is now crucial.[3] Based on scientific studies of multispecies symbioses,[4] the term describes both the nature and potential of digital networks. "Cooperatism" is a term translated from the Japanese "kyōryoku," which has been used by the anarchists in Japan as an epistemological means, derived from the scientific study of nature, to highlight that cooperation, not competition was the basis of life and evolution.[5]

Additionally, the protests in Hong Kong were characterized by a lack of hierarchy or centralized leadership, as digital technology and media enabled new forms of social connections. Throughout, digital practices and online DIY culture changed how people interact both with and through anime.

Digital technology and global interconnectedness through the Internet have contributed to the ways popular culture – Hong Kong's anime included – is

produced, consumed, communicated, and used beyond traditional institutional frameworks. For instance, the global popularity of anime arose thanks not only to anime exports, but also to fans' offline and online networks. Before the 1990s, fans shared illegal copies of anime on VHS; later, they used CDs, DVDs, torrents, and streaming websites. This illegally circulated anime was also subbed, mostly in English, for free by fans. Before the Internet made content more accessible and shareable, anime was exchanged through postal mail and at anime-and-manga-related events, shaping and solidifying fandom communities. In other words, the non-institutional cultural history of anime reveals the existence of cooperatist networks and transnational communities that must be considered beyond national frameworks such as Cool Japan.

The connectivity between the Hong Kong public, the Japanese public, and the rest of the world created through anime are also highlighted, as anime became a transnational network for cooperatism, mutual aid, coexistence, and survival. As a shared culture, anime enabled interaction and closeness with people outside Hong Kong. It also became an informative media, fulfilling the role of the people's news not curated by the institutional media but by the people, as noted by an artist-activist and creator of protest artwork:

> Of course, classic or traditional media have occupied TV, while we had our choice to use the Internet to spread what we saw and what we trusted. Another version of the news, the true version of the news. Also, it wasn't just me drawing: there were many Hong Kong people trying to draw a lot of works related to Hong Kong, so it's kind of like a gathering together to create and express what we saw on a larger scale. People internationally would get more chances to know various versions of the news instead of only pro-Beijing media. It was important for people like us, who are not politicians, who are just regular citizens, to try and create something that doesn't align with the pro-Beijing media.[6]

Asuka concluded: "If the efficiency of manga was that I could use a more abstract and easy way to express [Hong Kong's situation], even people without knowing the

context could easily access the situation in Hong Kong."[7]. However, with the
increasing government-corporate control over digital content, there was a noticeable
return to the analog publishing form:

> We finished our *dôjinshi* project last year (…) with the aim to publish in the
> Japanese market. Japan has a rule that a published book can enter the
> public library collection in the national archive of Japan so the publication
> can be preserved permanently. Our group's original goal was to get it
> published and get it into the public libraries.[8]

Asuka similarly noted:

> The Internet is becoming more powerful, which is why the Hong Kong
> government and police have arrested many people who were active online. It
> sounds like the Internet is losing [against the authorities]. I guess I foresaw
> this situation when I decided to print my [comic] books. Digital format is
> easier to erase. When it's gone, it's gone forever. But printed comic books are
> more difficult to delete suddenly. Even if they sell in other countries, they [the
> government] have no right to ban it or delete it over there.[9]

Enabled by digital platforms and phone apps, the Hong Kong protests were
decentralized and leaderless. They demonstrate the anarchist character of digital
media and illustrate how various apps, social networks, and platforms were
deployed as nodal points in a rhizomatic breakdown of "the national history."
While its practical outcome was the alignment of online and offline activism and
the dismantling of hierarchies, the theoretical consequences lie in demonstrating
the anarchist potential and character of digital media in historiography. This shift
also has significant implications for public participation and marks a notable
change in the understanding of history. The potential anarchist nature of digital
networks and transnational popular culture realized a new consciousness of who
writes history and how history is made outside logocentric frameworks (Derrida,
1982). Physical manga protest books published overseas are anarchist in the sense
that the people did not rely on institutional and academic history writing. Such
use of digital media and popular culture is not unique to Hong Kong. What makes

it distinctive, however, is the generative force with which protesters and activists used cultural content over the last decade to produce new meanings, maintain transnational social networks, and actively intervene in the reality, history, and historiography of Hong Kong through transnational popular culture.

Hong Kong's Anime as Transnational Cultural History

   "Hong Kong's anime" is not solely about animation, protests, or even visual language. Rather, it is a cultural history shaped since the 1950s, when manga—and later anime—first appeared in Hong Kong. This transnational history is experienced through the ordinary lives of protesters, its historiography recorded in people's transnational pop semiotics shared by both the people in Hong Kong and a global audience, facilitated by the everyday practices of the otaku community.[10]

   Anime has been regularly broadcast on television in Hong Kong since the 1980s. *Dragon Ball* started airing on TVB in 1988, followed by *Sailor Moon* (1992–1997), *Pokémon* (1997–present), *Digimon* (1999–2000), and many more. A major related cultural influence was manga. Locally produced martial arts comic books and live-action films, popular in the 1970s and 1980s, often incorporated visual elements from anime and manga,[11] as did Hong Kong animation. Since the first TV-broadcasted anime in the 1960s, it has become an integral part of Hong Kong's culture and society, continuously impacting the stylistic development of Hong Kong's creative content. For instance, contemporary Hong Kong animator Tommy Ng (*Another World*, 2019) cites Miyazaki Hayao and Studio Ghibli as inspiration, while KongKee (*Dragon's Delusion*, 2019) was influenced by Katushiro Otomo's *Akira* (1988) and Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* (1995).

   Public engagement is crucial in the formation of social and political change, and Hong Kong's anime became a primary conduit for such engagement, particularly

among school and university students following the Umbrella Movement in 2014. While the protesters in Hong Kong used Japanese animation to communicate, they also used it to participate in public life. Anime and manga played an important role in history-writing and history-making here, culminating with the 2019 protests. Toji, an activist artist, found manga such as *One Piece* especially suitable as historiography because of the feeling of loss and, consequently, the lack of interest in "real" history: "After 2019, people started to lose interest in Hong Kong history (…) I think people are now less concerned with the real history because of 2019."[12] Therefore, Toji decided to combine *One Piece* with the history of Hong Kong to foster new engagements. They specifically stated that they are interested in the people's history and are writing from that perspective, as opposed to the institutionalized focus on "important" national and international events, using manga as their medium.

As the examples above just begin to demonstrate, Japanese animation has had a significant impact on global popular culture.[13] In East Asia, Hong Kong has been the largest importer of Japanese music between 1988 and 2005, particularly through Cantonese cover songs, karaoke bars, and TV shows.[14] Japan's cultural influence stems partly from its cultural and geographical proximity, the commercial scale of anime and manga in Japan, and the proactive exportation of its cultural products, but also from the global fandom that grew from circulating pirated fansubbed copies. Its popularity, both institutionalized and non-institutionalized, is often attributed to those transnational aesthetics that Susan Napier has identified as anime's global appeal.[15] However, other scholars have criticized the "cultural proximity" and "statelessness" of anime, as another way of understanding its popularity in East Asia.[16]

Paradoxically, this "stateless" anime is one of Japan's most recognizable cultural exports precisely because anime embeds the local conventions of Japanese culture and anime-making in its visual style and storytelling.

With the rise of the internet and streaming services such as Netflix (est. 1997), viewers have gained increasing access to more diverse genres of Japanese animation. Since the 1980s, *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979–1980), *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (*EVA,* 1995–1996), *One Piece* (1999–present), *Naruto* (2002–2007), the films of Hayao Miyazaki and Makoto Shinkai, *Attack on Titan* (2013–present), and *Demon Slayer* (2019–present), have all maintained a large, dedicated audience in Hong Kong. Physical hotspots across Hong Kong, such as Sino Center in Mong Kok, offer anime, manga, music, video games, figurines, and other Japanese merchandise. Moreover, Japanese animation became a part of Hong Kong's youth culture in other ways. In the contemporary digital culture of memes, GIFs, digital art, and other forms of digital visual communication, anime and manga serve as a common everyday language beyond simply being entertainment displayed on smart devices. Anime images are regularly circulated and shared online, often accompanied by messages in Cantonese. Sometimes humorous and other times serving as social commentary, these images have become part of the everyday life of Hong Kong people. For example Pikachu, the cute yellow creature from *Pokémon* (1997–present), is currently associated with Hong Kong's top politician, whom it symbolizes without verbalization. As such, Pikachu will incite subdued giggles but not comments. Part of this reaction stems from the political situation following 2019, when Hong Kong's anime became the language of protest, rebellion, and resistance against Hong Kong and Chinese government.

Figure 8 A protester dressed in a Doraemon costume.

Characters such as Doraemon, Sailor Moon, and various Pokémon and
Digimon became the mascots of the protests. (see figures 8–9).
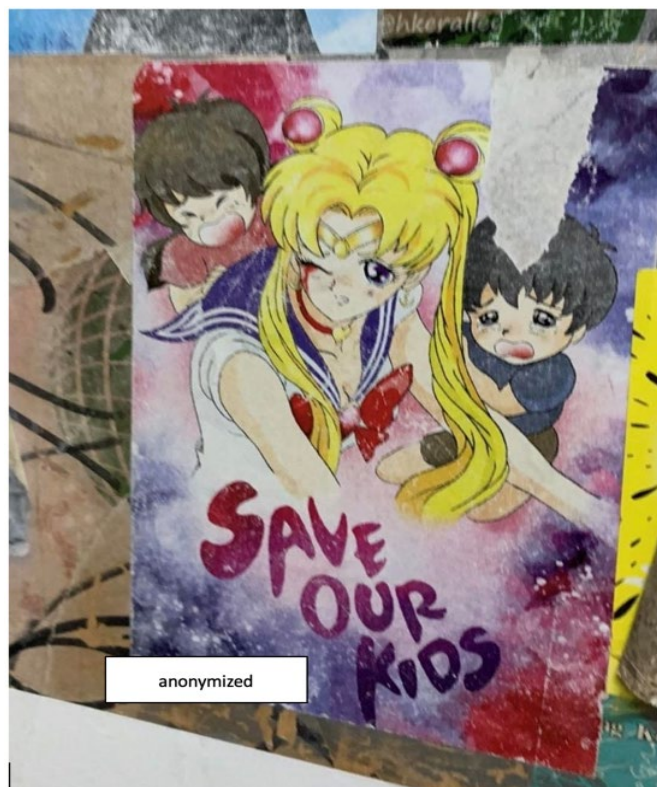

*Figure 9 Image of Sailor Moon having been shot in the eye while
saving Hong Kong children, displayed on the wall of a building in the
Sai Yeung Choi Street.*
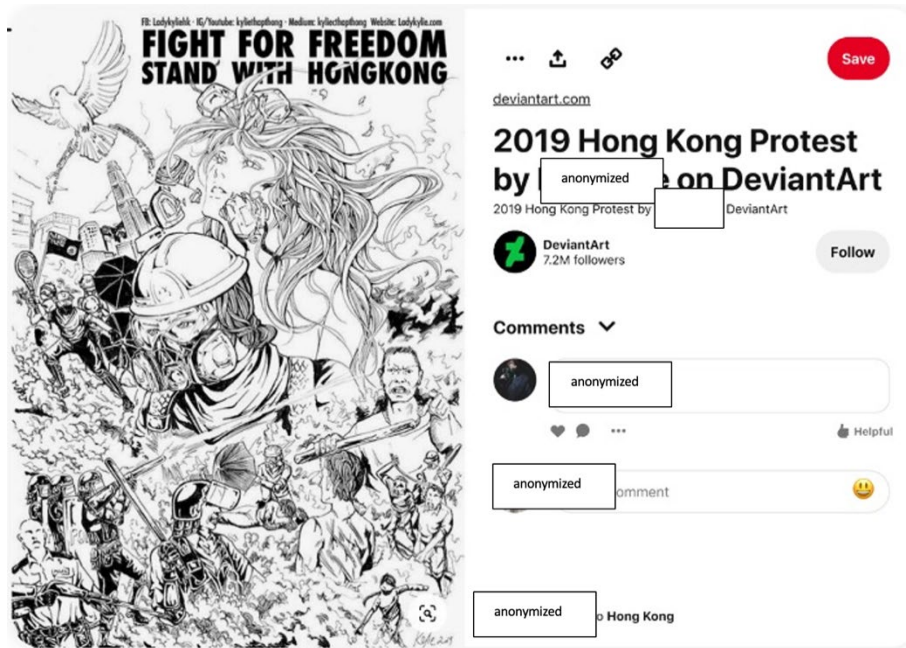
Figure 10 Protest art on DeviantArt.

Transnational pop digital anarchist frameworks highlight the role of non-institutional, cross-cultural networks in everyday life (see Figures 10–11).

Specifically, the transnational anarchist approach focuses on non-institutional historiographers working outside systems of institutionalized power and knowledge. It invites us to notice new roles of digital media, online social networks, and popular culture in sociocultural movements and transnational connectivity. Additionally, it also enables us to identify their role in the construction of transnational cultural histories that are simultaneously universal and local.

In the 2019 Hong Kong protests, Japanese animation played a crucial role as an already-existing people's cultural history that also shaped transnational connections online and offline. The

Figure 11 A protester with a black star representing China's government, engulfed by Hokusai's Great Wave off Kanagawa in ukiyo-e style.

networks enabled by Hong Kong's anime also extended beyond Hong Kong. In mid-2020, an exhibition in Taipei titled *Rebellious Brushes: Anniversary Exhibition of the Anti-ELAB Protests in HK* featured artists from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea (see Figure 12).[17] In mid-2023, "an independent, grassroots, crowdfunded advocacy group"[18] organized a protest by Hong Kong citizens in Tokyo (see Figure 13).

Figure 12 Image of the "Stand with Hong Kong" march in Shibuya, Tokyo (Stand with HK Japan).

Figure 13 The "Rebellious Brushes" exhibition held in 2020 in Taipei. The main poster for the exhibition features The Heroine [女勇武] by Hong Kong artist Kai Lan Egg [芥蘭炒雞蛋], modeled after Heisei Mary by Japanese artist Shohei Otomo.

What is Hong Kong's Anime?

The number of protesters in the 2019 protests grew from an estimated 10,000 on March 31 to hundreds of thousands on June 9. The main organizer, the Civil Human Rights Front, counted over a million people.[19] A survey conducted among 6,688 respondents showed that 58% of protesters were 29 or younger, 26% were between the ages 20 and 24, and around 18% were 45 or older.[20] Media reports indicated that the protests were shaped by high school and university students.[21] [i] These protests were anarchist in nature, grounded in the principles of mutual aid and cooperatism—the same principle[22] attributed to Japan's early twentieth-century anarchist movement, which also used popular and everyday culture as a vehicle for social movement. Focused on art, education, literature, Esperanto, and other forms of popular culture and lifestyle, they opposed imperialism, war, racism, discrimination, and oppression enacted by state government. They advocated for domestic and international organization based on equality and peace.[23]

Without a "top," "leader," or "chain of command," digital technology and digital literacy became crucial for communication among these protesters, utilizing various mobile apps, social media, digital platforms, and visual content for the planning and execution of protests. They relied on digital media such as AirDrop, which allows untraceable file transfers between Apple iOS devices via Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, and enables information sharing with all nearby Apple iOS devices.[24] Dating app Tinder (see Figure 14), rideshare app Uber, and mobile game *Pokémon Go* were used to facilitate impromptu gatherings, dispersals, and coordination between protesters (e.g., movement, extraction, protection, mapping the whereabouts of fellow protesters and the police). Moreover, the language of digital

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[i] I use the term "shaped" instead of "led" to reflect how the protests were decentralized and had no leaders or hierarchical organization.

media was translated into street protests—their temporary structures and participants' roles and organization adapted logistical strategies from video games.[25] In this way *Pokémon Go*, Uber, and Tinder were "tactical media:" that is, digital media and technology used for bottom-up, noncommercial purposes by those excluded from the institutionalized systems of power and knowledge.[26] The number of downloads substantiate the relevance of digital media and digitally shared content in "digital media activism."[27] The Telegram app alone, used for sharing information among protesters, was installed 1.7 million times, with 110,000 new users in July 2019—four times more than the previous year in July 2018.[28]

Cultural artifacts in the streets and on the Internet show that popular visual culture has played a crucial role in Hong Kong protests, activism, and public participation since the 2014 Umbrella Movement. Like the protests in 2019, the Umbrella Movement was a response to the change of legislation. The new law allowed the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China to screen candidates running for Hong Kong's Chief Executive – and, simply, meant that only candidates approved by the government in Beijing could participate in Hong Kong elections. The Umbrella Movement derived its name from the umbrellas protesters used as protection from pepper spray and other dispersal methods used by the police.[29] Specifically, the yellow umbrella became the symbol of the 2014 protests, akin to the yellow construction workers' helmets that protestors wore for protection here, and that were

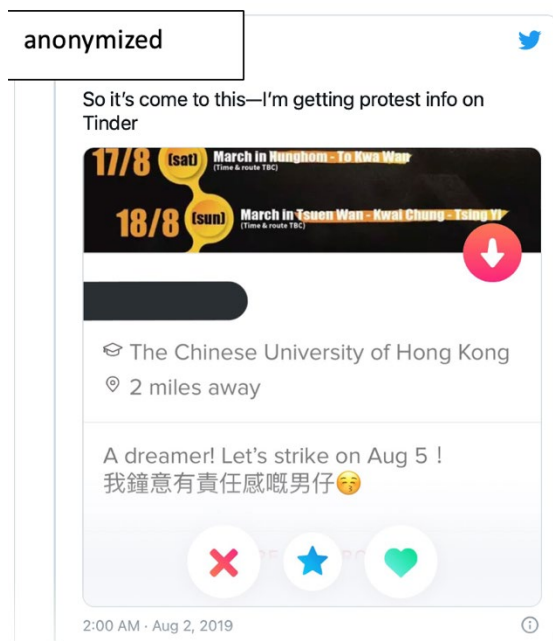*Figure 14 Screenshot of a Tinder user receiving information on the time and place of a protest gathering on August 2, 2019.*

later taken up as a similar symbol by protestors in 2019. Characters like Totoro from

My Neighbor Totoro (1988), Monkey D. Luffy from *One Piece*, and Nobita Nobi from

Doraemon were among many depicted online and offline with a yellow umbrella

and/or yellow helmet (see Figures 15–19).

Figure 15 Nobita and Doraemon

Figure 16 Characters from Doraemon holding yellow umbrellas in support of the protests.

Figure 17 Totoro with a yellow umbrella and helmet.

Figure 18 Poster inspired by One Piece, where a protester, emulating the anime, asks a boy to keep his helmet until his return.

Figure 19 Pokémon explaining the semiotic of protests: medical mask for concealing identity; eyepatch symbolizing a protester shot in the eye by the police; Hong Kong flag with colors changed to resemble the One Piece pirate flag; yellow helmet and yellow umbrella for protection; five fingers representing "five demands;" black T-shirt representing protesters' attire.

In a global context, *Black Panther* (2018) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017–present) are examples of popular culture used in social movements, specifically in the Black Lives Matter and abortion rights campaigns in the USA, respectively.

Elsewhere, pro-democracy activists used the three-finger salute from *The Hunger Games* during the 2014 protests in Thailand and Hong Kong's aforementioned Umbrella Movement, demonstrating how "engagement with popular culture can lead to civic engagement through the civic imagination."[30] Throughout 2019 and 2020, protesters in Hong Kong made numerous references to Hong Kong's icon Bruce Lee and films like *Kill Bill* (2003-2004), *V for Vendetta* (2005), *The Hunger Games,* and *Les Misérables* (2012). These references formed a mixture of transnational popular culture that appeared in videos, posters, slogans, memes, images, and graffiti—-both online and offline.

In this transnational mixture, though, Japanese animation formed a prominent form of communication. On August 7, 2020, the protesters staged a laser light show while singing and dancing to the Cantonese version of "Let's Fight" song from *Digimon*. Toji explained: "[*Digimon*] influenced our Hong Kong generation deeply; it means positivity to us. Later generations may have different characters to associate with."[31] For the 1990s generation, *Digimon* is about fighting against evil with courage and unity.[32] Similarly, the protagonist of *Demon Slayer*, Tanjiro Kamado, became intertwined with Bruce Lee's philosophy of "be water," creating an intertextual assemblage. This connection is significant given that Bruce Lee was particularly embraced by the marginalized African American and Asian communities, both on and off screen, amidst the racial politics of the 1960s and 1970s (see Figure 20).[33]

Figure 20 Tanjiro from Demon Slayer with the message "Be Water;" referencing Bruce Lee's martial arts philosophy

Protesters posted videos online where they reported news, and the newspaper *Apple Daily* featured a cover page in the style of *EVA* (see Figure 21). They used *One Piece* visuals in protest art (see Figures 22–23) and slogans such as "We are all Shinji," referring to Shinji Ikari, the protagonist of *EVA*.[34] And these are only a selection of the many online videos that used audio-visuals from Japanese animation. The very reason why such images became powerful and viral is because they translated across cultures and became meaningful to diverse groups of people in and beyond Hong Kong. Two protest manga creators explained:

> Hong Kong popular culture is now localizing and finding local identity including political and social themes. People would love to see things like that and, rather than just entertaining, people seek for resonance with the political situation in popular culture. Hong Kong situation is now in popular culture; we want it to be deep rather than entertaining.[35]

Figure 21 Apple Daily cover featuring writing in the style of a Neon Genesis Evangelion episode title. Apple Daily was closed after the government arrested the CEO and seized its assets.

Figure 22. Luffy from One Piece with messages: "Hong Kong people, add oil!" and "Brothers and sisters, let's rise and fall together/stay together, no matter what!"

Figure 23 Protesters depicted in the style of One Piece.

Shinji, of anime *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, is a 14-year-old boy piloting a giant bio-mechanical suit who fights aliens attacking post-apocalyptic Earth while experiencing an internal struggle due to abandonment, emotional instability, social alienation, and rejection of reality.[36] In the broader otaku semiotic, anime fans worldwide recognize Shinji as a tortured human being struggling with inner dilemmas amidst external forces and injustice that he can neither control nor escape. Hong Kong protesters identified with Shinji in particular, noting: "We are as confused as Shinji. We can't help asking, 'Why me? What should I do? How can we fight the almighty enemy?' (…) We feel that we are the chosen ones, with the responsibilities of fighting for freedom resting on our shoulders" (San, 27, HK manga fan).[37]

Film producer Peter Tsi, who acquired TV rights to *EVA* in the 1990s, has explained:

> Young people born after 1997 have been shaped by Japanese pop culture (…) Young people are nurtured by Japanese anime and manga, not [Hong Kong broadcaster] TVB dramas, *Harry Potter*, or even Disney cartoons. The core values of these titles are about upholding one's ideals, resistance to authorities, and unity. Adults portrayed in these shows are often hypocritical, corrupted, and selfish like Shinji's father.[38]

Another popular example of Hong Kong's anime has a similar story and main character. *Mobile Suit Gundam* focuses on the war between the Principality of Zeon and the Earth Federation, in which the teenage civilian mechanic Amuro Ray operates a giant robot.[39] Through *Gundam*, director Tomino Yoshiyuki wanted to tell an anti-war story so the viewers could confront the painful realities of war, including the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1939.[40] *One Piece*, a popular TV anime in Hong Kong, was also referenced throughout the protests. *One Piece* is a fantasy anime about the adventures of Monkey D. Luffy, an adolescent orphaned boy, and his crew of pirates. Throughout the series, they help the weak and the oppressed,

which often leads them to confront other pirates as well as the World Government: a corrupt federation of over 170 nations governing most of the world with near-absolute power. In mainstream historiography, pirates are usually portrayed as violent barbarians. However, as *One Piece* narrates, pirate ships were possibly the only human communities for centuries that were based on equality.[41] Hiroki Azuma attributed the new form of anime consumption—database consumption—to *EVA* and *Gundam* specifically.[42] Database consumption is characterized by youth alienation from social and political institutions, as well as from grand narratives, following the 1980s economic crisis and other social, political, and economic crises. Consequently, young people prefer consuming emotionally and intellectually stimulating elements rather than focusing on the narrative itself. This type of consumption parallels the production and consumption of digital content, such as short posts, images, memes, and GIFs.

Hong Kong's anime has three characteristics. First, they draw primarily from the science fiction and fantasy genres. Artists often use these genres as "thought experiments" to imagine different worlds and alternative realities.[43] Second, their protagonists fight to fulfill dreams and create a better future in fantastical, futuristic, or magical realist settings. They are anarchist actors who cooperate with peers to resist and challenge the unjust, corrupt, and oppressive systems of power. Third, the protagonists are adolescent youth, reflecting the vulnerability of this age, where internal struggles clash with external factors, creating a binary Good vs Evil framework. This also mirrors a common age of the protesters: high school and university students. Like many popular cultural artifacts, animation is a popular visual language, transnationally shareable by individuals across the "borders" of ethnicity, geography, class, age, and gender.[44] This culture and its "civic imagination"—"the capacity to imagine alternatives to current cultural, social,

political, or economic conditions"[45]—are both global and locally specific, highlighting local needs and transculturally shared imaginations.

The Politics of "Apolitical" Anime

Anime is often described as pop-culture diplomacy without "cultural odor"— identifiable with a specific culture—[46] and as soft power.[47] Unsurprisingly, some Japanese academics have commented that linking anime with Hong Kong protests was "against common sense" because anime has nothing to do with Japanese politics. Others found it refreshing, and still others have considered the possibility for the same strategy in the anti-US military base movement in Okinawa.[48] The purported erasure of nation(ality) in anime and manga is often credited with contributing to the success of national and cultural branding, the export culture industry, and the Japanese government's Cool Japan "initiative to further strengthen the ties between Japan and other countries (in such areas as economics, culture, and diplomacy)."[49] Napier has translated the Japanese term *mukokuseki* as "stateless" to describe the attractive cultural hybridity of Japanese animation.[50]

However, despite their transnational appearance, the characters are unmistakably identifiable as anime characters—the design of the characters and environment follow the established conventions of anime. This makes anime simultaneously culturally specific and more broadly applicable – or, in other words, it becomes simultaneously Japanese and transnational, since both Japanese and transnational cultures are embedded in and around anime production. In this sense, Stevie Suan has discussed anime's identity at length, asking to "map out a transnational dynamic that is still related to a certain

geography while operating beyond national boundaries."[51] While not all Japanese animation is nationalized as part of the government-backed Cool Japan initiative or other similar programs, anime's national identity becomes more complex when programs like this are involved. Hong Kong's anime, which denotes the mainstream understanding of anime outside Japan, also opens up possibilities for interrogating the post-production transnationality of anime, including the troubles with anime's identity.

For example, Hong Kong's anime draws our attention to how the Japanese government has used anime, which is supposedly nationless and apolitical, for political purposes. An example is *Captain Tsubasa,* which is about an 11-year-old boy who dreams of winning the FIFA World Cup for Japan. Mark MacWilliams has described how "Japan Foundation made broadcasting the new 2001–2002 series on Iraqi national TV one of the key priorities of its cultural diplomacy," while the economic cooperation projects put *Captain Tsubasa* stickers on their supply trucks. A Japanese Foreign Ministry official said they "believe children, who will shape the future of Iraq, will be filled with dreams and hopes by watching the show, and boost pro-Japanese sentiment even more (*The Daily Yomiuri* 2006b). Hence, Captain Tsubasa became a symbol of the bright future shaped by Japan's construction projects."[52] Other examples include naming Doraemon as cultural (anime) ambassador by Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2008,[53] as well as naming Hello Kitty Japan's tourism ambassador to China and Hong Kong in 2008[54] and global ambassador for the UN in 2019.[55]

Conversely, many anime titles are banned in China for depicting violence and "immoral" themes related to gender, sexuality, sex, delinquency, and rebellion. One of the more popular titles is *My Hero Academia* (2016-present), a TV series about a boy who wants to become a hero but lacks the special powers to

do so. The anime was banned because the character Dr. Daruma Ujiko, whose real name is Maruta Shiga, is a scientist who experiments on humans.[56] His name "maruta" (丸太) is inspired by the Japanese word for primarily Chinese and Korean victims of human experimentation conducted by Unit 731 (a biological warfare unit of the Japanese Imperial Army) during World War II. *My Hero Academia* sparked more controversy after the Sayuri, singer of 2019 season 4 ending song Kôkai no Uta (航海の唄), released a video for the song, which seemingly contained allusions to Hong Kong protests, namely gas masks and overall yellow-black visuals (figure 24).

Figure 24 Sayuri's video alluding to the Hong Kong protests.

Psycho-Pass (2012-2019), a cyberpunk anime thematizing future Japanese society governed by AI in which citizens rebel against the seemingly perfectly ordered system and question its legitimacy, was also banned due to violence and encouraging rebellion and delinquency. In *Psycho-Pass: The Movie* (2015), Japan's government is exporting the AI governance system to less developed authoritarian Southeast Asia Union (SEAUn). As some Japanese join the resistance there to help overthrow the authoritarian regime, it is revealed that Japan's government engineered the civil war so they could export the AI system in cooperation with the SEAUn dictator. Another popular title is the fantasy post-

apocalyptic anime *Attack on Titan* (2013-2023), also banned because of violence. The main character is an adolescent boy, Eren Jaeger, who lives with the remaining humanity behind large walls and becomes a soldier to defend his city against titans—giant humanoids that attack cities and devour humans. Despite the sophisticated weaponry and training, the city walls are breached, and people are decimated by the much more powerful titans. The story resonated with the Hong Kong fans and remained one of the most popular metaphors for China-Hong Kong relationship among Hong Kong fans.

As one protester explained during an interview, "Maybe we're Eren and Mikasa inside Wall Rose. China's recent economic growth and rising international influence had made it a "Titan," and now it was assaulting the democracy within Hong Kong's walls.[57]"[58]

The perception that anime is stateless and apolitical is challenged not only by the culturally specific characters and worldviews embedded by Japanese creators but also by anime stories, which often explore authoritarianism and anarchism, from dystopian *Psycho-Pass* to *sekaikei* ("abstracted world") *Gundam*, which rejects political and social reality. As the above examples show, messages are encoded and decoded,[59] sometimes unexpectedly by the audience and sometimes consciously by the directors, showing anime can be very political and politically relevant. During the 2019 protests, a "Joint Statement from the Hong Kong College Animation and Comics Fandom on the Amendment to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance" was published by animation and comic societies, student unions, and *dôjin* groups. The statement expressed that the revision of the Bill "is closely related to the anime and manga fandom" due to censorship legislation. They cited examples from China where digital and physical content was removed, and creators were prosecuted based on featuring "sensitive themes." The

censorship legislation also targeted Boys Love *dôjin* creators, "threatening Hong Kong's creative freedom and the development of the anime and manga fandom."[60]

National governments have used animation as propaganda, and the cultural industry has used it as a capitalist commercial product.[61] It has been discussed as a form of cultural imperialism,[62] but non-institutional actors have also deployed it to challenge regimes of power and knowledge. Popular cultural artifacts are polysemic. A historical example of animation used to assert and subvert political order is *Princess Iron Fan*, the first Chinese animated feature film made in 1941 by the Wan brothers in Japan-occupied Shanghai. The Wan brothers encoded it with messages that subverted Japan's imperialism, such as the large circle representing the Japanese flag on the robe of the Bull Demon King, the authoritarian cruel monster.[63] Unaware of these references, the Japanese government celebrated *Princess Iron Fan* as a Pan-Asian achievement representing the state ideology. *Princess Iron Fan* demonstrates how animation is communicated, translated, appropriated, and interpreted across cultures after production and is best understood through a transnational perspective focused on non-institutional relations. A similar phenomenon occurred with Hong Kong's anime. The Chinese state media used the same titles as protesters, including *EVA,* in their own anti-protest news videos.[64] Immediately after the protests, the Hong Kong Police Force introduced a new mascot, which was widely compared to Tanjiro from *Demon Slayer* (see Figure 25). However, after online criticism, the Police Force refuted the comparisons.

Figure 2521 The Hong Kong Police Force mascot, "Grape," launched in 2020, with inscriptions: "Blade that eliminates deception" and "Don't chase after petty advantages."

Ismangil and Schneider have described Hong Kong's 2019 "DIY propaganda art" as "networked agitprop"—easily spread through digital networks because it appealed to the shared idea of "nation" in a transnational context. By reinforcing the dichotomous nationalism and nation-building, it became trapped in a "box of imagination," feeding into the hyper-capitalist consumer economy.[65] Focusing on the visual references from the Euro-American context, such as *Star Wars* (1977-present), they wrote that "Referencing transnational popular culture makes an important strategy for agitprop creators to integrate their nation-building efforts into transnational understandings of political struggle and revolution."[66] Indeed, alongside ideas of mutual aid and coexistence, Hong Kong protests contained elements of radicalized nationalism and anti-Chinese xenophobia. This article, however, argues that in the heterogenous polysemic landscape of popular culture, the content creators used transnational popular culture not to practice nation-building but because transnational popular culture is their practice of everyday life:

> Our generation grew up with Japanese manga and anime. We're familiar with this culture and we think this form is better than just saying it [protest]. We share the same thing: being otaku. As otaku, we know the local market and culture, so we decided to use anime and manga. There isn't a particular source of inspiration, it's because we're otaku, we know this culture, so we do it this way.[67]

Hong Kong's anime emerges from a distinct blend of historical, social, and cultural context, giving it a unique character. For example, some content creators have pointed out that they have only low-key cooperative ties with the Japanese content creators because recent anime and manga tend to be funded by capital from China (Rei and Ryoji, Interview, 2022). However, anime is the people's cultural history – and thus, also a transnational cultural history – and these particular interviewees appealed to it as members of the transnational digital community of anime fans:

> Digital media, then, offers us an opportunity to reevaluate the nature and use of past material and whether this flattening is an extension of the "fact" and to use the affordances of technology to present history in multimodal forms, beyond the text (…). Once we understand the ways that chronology orients us in particular directions away from people and experience and see that the long-- form text, the book, complements that emphasis, we can open history to other forms (storytelling and databases) and media (comics and visual forms).[68]

Hong Kong's anime resonates with other historical uses of popular cultures by ordinary people. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the international language Esperanto became popular worldwide as a "language without culture or territorial belonging."[69] Esperanto was central in Japan's non-war and anarchist movements based on the idea of the world as "democratic and non-hierarchical from its natural origins."[70] It spread in the European scientific community as a politically neutral language of universal brotherhood.[71]Therefore, by connecting the history of "analog" social movements with present-day digital ones, we can better understand

the historical importance of Japanese animation, address its historiography critically, and contextualize it within the underrated people's history.[72]

Conclusion

With the digitalization of culture, artifacts like anime have become more accessible and widespread in cultural consumption and social movements. They became a means of maintaining life through mutual aid, cooperation, and coexistence. Observing the impact of digital technologies on communication, research professor in digital media and culture at the University of Sydney John Hartley called for an analytical shift from a linear model to a dialogic one,[73] noting that the digital, participatory, and interactive media enabled the emergence of the "user" who can now engage infinitely with the dialogues constantly produced by the new media.[74] Furthermore, Hong Kong's anime reveals new trends in popular and anarchist historiography as people's writing of cultural history in transnational terms. When activists used animation, they remade its cultural components into coded messages that are readable by the public because of the familiar everydayness they grew up with. Japanese animation, civic participation, social movements, and the practice of everyday life are heterogeneous phenomena. They include contesting ideas and conflicting political, social, individual, and economic interests because they are polysemic. However, digital technology and popular culture enable new everyday practices, and Hong Kong's anime shows how and why they are crucial in changing the idea of "history." With the new forms of people-authored history and historiography that are transnational, digital, anarchist, and pop, we notice both a lengthy history shaped through people's everyday lives and popular culture and identify the potential to change how scholars write and define history.

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Ballet Immemorial: *Princess Tutu*, Meta-Ballet, and the Fatal Significance

of Gesture

Katy Oliver

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Abstract: In W.J.T. Mitchell's essay "Metapictures," Mitchell claims that Diego Velásquez's painting Las Meninas is "a veritable whirlpool of interpretive 'aspects,' switching and alternating the places of painter, beholder, and model, the viewer and the viewed... The figure of the 'whirlpool' suggests a way of specifying (or picturing) the multistability effect in a graphic form" (75). Mitchell's "whirlpool of interactive 'aspects'" provides an excellent means of grafting the concept of the metapicture onto different artistic discourses—here, ballet and its counterpart, meta-ballet (75). I contend that meta-ballet has two components: it comprises both the deliberate act of referencing the balletic canon and also the process of exploring the constituent parts of the balletic tradition (gesture and bodily movement, staging, performativity, and so on) in a way that mutates normative understandings of ballet. This paper's aims are twofold: firstly, I develop the concept of meta-ballet and apply it to the show Princess Tutu. Secondly, I explore the uniquely meta-balletic nature of ballet pantomime and bodily motion as deployed by the show. Princess Tutu is quite self-consciously a meta-ballet, making constant references to real-world ballets, ballet techniques, and balletic pantomime. Its playful re-articulations and references to the canonical Western ballets of the nineteenth century illustrate the rich possibilities within ballet's vast and variegated archive of bodies, texts, performances, and gestures.

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In W. J. T. Mitchell's landmark essay "Metapictures," he claims that Diego Velásquez's 1656 painting *Las Meninas* is "a veritable whirlpool of interpretive 'aspects,' switching and alternating the places of painter, beholder, and model, the viewer and the viewed, with dazzling complexity.[1] The painting depicts a household in the midst of being painted by an artist, its "labyrinth of reflections" growing ever more coiled as the viewer realizes that the portrait artist who stares directly out of the picture plane is a representation of Velásquez himself, and that the reflection of the supposed 'window' of the canvas (the surface on which the image is painted) is captured in a mirror in the middle distance.[2] Reflected in the simulated mirror are the images of the king and queen of Spain, who had commissioned the portrait. Their painted reflections indicate that the monarchs stand both 'within' *and* 'outside of' the painting, and the painted Velásquez's direct gaze out of the picture plane suggests that the image of the monarchs is being replicated a second time on the canvas on which he paints. Mitchell's "figure of the 'whirlpool' suggests a way of specifying (or picturing) the multistability effect in a graphic form"[3]. Mitchell argues that Velásquez, by creating a 'multistable' miasma that reveals the 'secret' of *Las Meninas*'s artifice (and in so doing, coyly questioning its own composition and inviting the viewer to engage in the same interpretive play), generates a work that comments not only on painting as a broad discourse but also on the act of artistic spectatorship.

Mitchell's notion of the metapicture's "whirlpool of interactive 'aspects'" provides an excellent point of reference for defining the related concept of meta-ballet.[4] Meta ballet as configured here is comprised of two components. One is the conscious act of referencing the balletic canon (in this case, the ballets most integral to the development of ballet as an aesthetic form). The other is the process of exploring the constituent parts

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of the balletic tradition—gesture and bodily movement, staging, performativity, and so on—in a way that enhances (or even disrupts) a normative understanding of ballet. As David Michael Levin explains,

> In Europe, ballet originated as a species of court entertainment. Long after it entered the public domain, however, it continued to be, in essence, a divertissement, a merely theatrical event. The early ballet consisted of artificial and rigidly determined dance movements. Gradually, though, it submitted to the desire for a more stylized... expressiveness.[5]

Ballet pantomime and narrative ballets largely fell out of fashion in the early part of the twentieth century, beginning with the innovations of Michel Fokine and solidifying with the rise of the more abstract and anti-balletic style of Isadora Duncan. The work of George Balanchine and his non-narrative (or as Levin calls them, "anti-theatrical") ballets would finalize this shift in popular and critical favor, wherein narrative ballets became (and remain) popular to stage and attend—but not to create.[6] Levin argues,

> Viewed against the classical tradition, Balanchine's unique aesthetic can seem exceedingly austere. It calls for a "bare-bones" reduction of the ballet essence. Yes—but only because this asceticism is designed to release a beauty and a grace which the older, seemingly richer essence had in principle to suppress. Whereas the older art sought expressiveness, both in the decorations of stage and costume and in the familiar symbolism of immediately intelligible gestures and postures ... the new Balanchine art refuses the expressiveness of stage costumes and excludes, too, all those resources of corporeal syntax that cannot achieve their expressiveness without the encumbrance of some mimetic or transcendent symbolism.[7]

Despite this turn away from a formalized language of pantomime, the expressive capabilities of narrative ballet remain astonishing in their complexity and their power to enter an atypical and embodied archive. This is not to suggest that non-narrative ballet is somehow a lesser art object or that it is less capable of bodily communication—merely that narrative ballet outlines a unique form of communication and crystallizes certain gestures into highly meaningful and historicizing objects.

Scholarship on *Princess Tutu* has tended to place its engagement with ballet in the periphery rather than at the foreground, instead focusing on other forms of adaptation within the series. For example, Catarina Vieira and Sahra Kunz explore the anime's relationship to the mahô shôjo ("magical girl") genre, while Amy Shirong Lu references *Princess Tutu* in a discussion of the two-way transcultural flow observable in anime adaptations and articulations of Western fantasy stories. Scholars like Bill Ellis and Masafumi Monden have each written about *Princess Tutu*'s playful engagements with the fairy tale form. Monden's article, "Magical Bird Maidens: Reconsidering Romantic Fairy Tales in Japanese Popular Culture," focuses specifically on *Princess Tutu*'s explorations of femininity within the flexible framework of the fairy tale. Monden has also written elsewhere on ballet and its relationship to Japanese girlhood and shôjo culture, though outside of the context of *Princess Tutu*. Amanda Kennell, in "Origin and Ownership from Ballet to Anime," writes on the act of 'remixing' as an essential part of ballet culture, history, and creation—a practice that *Princess Tutu* adopts wholeheartedly in its reimaginings of *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Lohengrin*. Kennell is focused on questions of ownership and authorship, whereas I am most interested in *Princess Tutu*'s expressive, communicative, or 'meaning-making' possibilities.

The goal of this paper is twofold: firstly, to articulate the concept of meta-ballet and apply it to the mahô shôjo anime *Princess Tutu* (*Purinsesu Chuchu* | プリンセスチュチュ), and secondly, to explore the uniquely meta-balletic nature of ballet pantomime and bodily motion as they appear in the show. *Princess Tutu* is the ideal case study for this venture because it functions quite self-consciously as a meta-ballet, carrying out the

objectives named above (balletic reference, dissection, and reassembly) throughout the

course of its two seasons. While one could reasonably attach the prefix "meta-" to any

work with self-referential elements in any discipline, Amanda Kennell argues that ballet

has always been metatextual as a means of self-perpetuation, promotion, and

development:

> Classic story ballets were constructed by many people, none of whom had complete control over the finished product. Certain rights attained to each of these people depending on their contribution. Which rights attained to whom was generally agreed upon, although there was flexibility to bargain. [...] ...the theater directors who commissioned ballet and could freely reuse symbols, settings and so forth as long as they did not obviously copy an existing ballet in its entirety...[8]

By participating in a form of adaptational labor that Kennell calls "symbolic borrowing,"

Princess Tutu is therefore "representative of a process of creation common to classic

ballets ... [a] long-standing pattern of rearranged stories, symbols, themes, characters,

scores, and choreography."[9]

Princess Tutu's story, to which ballet is central, makes constant reference to real-

world ballets, ballet techniques, and balletic pantomime (the practice of miming to

represent concepts and emotions during a staged ballet). Indeed, as Bill Ellis claims, "we

could say *Princess Tutu* is not about fairy tales at all but about *fairy-telling*, the ongoing

tradition of generating new versions of old tales and inventing entirely new tales out of

bits and pieces of existing ones."[10] Although I would contend that *Princess Tutu* is more

closely related to the canon of Romantic and Classical narrative ballets than to fairy tales

in general, Ellis is precisely correct in noting the anime's use of visual, narrative, and

stylistic 'collage'—its act of 'ballet-telling,' so to speak. The layering of Mitchell's

"whirlpool of interactive 'aspects'" grows ever more complex given that *Princess Tutu* is

a Japanese series, filtering the largely Western canon of ballet through time, place,

animation, and translation.[11] While these aspects of temporal and cultural transmission are undoubtedly significant, the clever playfulness with which *Princess Tutu* engages in its ballet-telling presents a clear thesis of its own: in the right circumstances, movement, mime, and visual quotation usurp spoken language, and the body in motion may transcend that which threatens to make communication impossible—linguistic capability, the passage of time, and even death.

Dressing the Set: Balletic Reference in Action

Before beginning this analysis, it may be useful to sketch out briefly the show's overarching plot and principal characters. *Princess Tutu* follows four characters— Mytho, Fakir, Ahiru, and Rue—as they attend a prestigious ballet academy and are drawn to a storybook called *The Prince and the Raven*. Mytho is the storybook's prince who has come to life, losing his emotions in the process. Fakir is the reincarnation of Mytho's knight-at-arms, who was slain in the original story; Ahiru is a duck who has been transformed into a human girl to protect her beloved Mytho, transforming secondarily into the magical Princess Tutu to do so; and Rue is her nemesis, a dark dancer who also claims to love the prince. As Ahiru and Fakir attempt to restore Mytho's heart, they square off against Rue, in the guise of her alter ego Princess Kraehe, and the villainous and enigmatic Raven, who may also have been revived from the storybook.

Princess Tutu is structured in the manner of a nineteenth-century narrative ballet: its 26 episodes are organized into two seasons and, stylistically, into two theatrical acts. The first act reaches a temporary conclusion that is later reversed by the end of the second act following a 'turn,' or an upheaval of narrative expectations. The episodes themselves *are* called Akts ("Acts"), as evidenced by their title cards, and each

season is called a Kapitel ("Chapter"). Each episode combines visual and musical motifs of a famous ballet (*Giselle*, *Coppélia*, *Swan Lake*, and so on), while the overarching plot of the show is heavily inspired and contextualized by nineteenth-century ballet in general.

Music is one of *Princess Tutu*'s strongest and most frequent tools for meta-balletic reference. The anime's opening theme song, Okazaki Ritsuko's "Morning Grace," is a variation on a theme found in *The Nutcracker*'s "Waltz of the Flowers." *Princess Tutu*'s score generally maintains an orchestral sound, borrowing frequent leitmotifs from *The Nutcracker* as well as other ballet scores, suggesting that beyond the lip of the 'stage' upon which the anime takes place, an orchestra is busily playing away. Numerous pieces of classical music appear throughout its episodes, including works by Saint-Saëns, Mendelssohn, Prokofiev, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Satie, Debussy, Chopin, Schumann, Bizet, Ravel, Mussorgsky, Wagner, and many more. Intriguingly, though the ballets that comprise the anime's narrative source material are principally from the nineteenth century, the various compositions that feature in the dance set-pieces vary much more broadly in stylistic period. The oldest piece, Mozart's Rondo in A minor, K. 511, was completed in 1787, while the most recent, Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet Before Parting," premiered in 1938. The music of *Princess Tutu* spans more than 150 years—an astronomical length of time in the world of classical music, spanning from the Viennese period all the way to the modern and neoclassical periods. According to Emily Alane Erken, this type of layering has an interesting consequence: "The 'mix-tape' effect created by lodging disparate musical styles side-by-side sparks the multilayered interplay of media."[12] Echoing Mitchell's discussion of the layered and layering effect of meta-composition, Erken claims this classical collaging creates a set of stylistic brackets

or boundaries for the borrower to explore. The overall effect is playful and occasionally dreamlike. *Princess Tutu*'s music also functions to buttress the more dramatic elements of the plot, ensconcing moments of high tension or emotion within a framework of passionate strings, bright horns, and melancholy piano. While *Princess Tutu* references dozens of classical ballets, the ones most integral to the narrative include *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, *Coppélia*, *The Dying Swan*, *La Sylphide*, *Giselle*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, and *Scheherazade*. As mentioned previously, the ballets are more closely confined in terms of their era of creation, beginning with Filippo Taglioni's *La Sylphide*, which premiered in 1832.[i] The most recent of the ballets, *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, premiered in 1912.[ii]

Many of *Princess Tutu*'s scenes conform to the stylistic trappings of Romantic-era (c. 1827-1870) and Classical-era (c. 1847-1904) narrative ballets—as seen in the anime's opening credits, where the stage for the plot is created by the literal raising of a velvet curtain. Occasionally, characters and scenes are lit as though they are under bright spotlights or other forms of stage lighting. There are also the frequent interjections of two narrators, which are highly evocative of staged arts, if not ballet in particular. Before each episode begins, there is a brief narration in which one of two things happens: the narration discusses either the plot of the show itself, highlighting some elements of whatever events are taking place, or else it describes the plot of a famous ballet in such a way as to hint to the viewer what the nature of the episode will be. While the former is reasonably common in theatrical works and episodic media such

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[i] Because Taglioni's original choreography is now lost, the anime borrows from the staging of August Bournonville's 1836 revival, which is still performed today.
[ii] This excludes *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the music of which was written between 1826 and 1842, but which was not made into a ballet until 1964.

as television shows, the latter is an explicitly intermedial and meta-balletic way of assembling a story. *Princess Tutu*'s many allusions to canonical nineteenth-century ballets make it clear from the first moments of the pilot episode that it is a pastiche of narrative ballets.

One of *Princess Tutu*'s two narrators, the writer Drosselmeyer, functions in the typical way, commenting upon the actions of the characters. He is occasionally seen peering out from within a dark realm somewhere between life and death—a sort of 'backstage' space that only he may access. The other narrator is unnamed, unseen, and unperceived by the anime's other characters. She provides a non-diegetic metacommentary on the actions of *all* players, Drosselmeyer included. Eventually, the deuteragonist Fakir becomes a temporary tertiary narrator, predicting and writing down the events of the finale before they occur. This matryoshka-esque stacking of narrators invokes the literary technique of the *mise en abyme*—the story within a story, or more literally, the image "placed in the abyss."[13] The prophetic narrative Fakir creates is not precisely a *mise en abyme*, for the story that he tells is the story of the world around him happening in real time, though it is unclear whether he is controlling fate or merely serving as its amanuensis.[iii] Fakir's and the unseen narrators' recursive meta-narrations do not so much perfectly duplicate themselves (as a mirror would) as it is constantly influencing, interrupting, and mutating themselves into new branches of story.

Occasionally, during the episodes' larger-scale or more important dance set-pieces, the principal characters (who might just as accurately be described as the principal dancers, given their framing and costuming, the frequency of their dancing,

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[iii] Perhaps a better term for this phenomenon might be *mise dans une chrysalide*, an image "placed in a chrysalis."

and their centrality to the plot) are backed by an otherworldly *corps de ballet* (the

"company of ballet-dancers" employed by a theater).[14] In Akt 4, which reimagines and is

named for the 1841 Romantic ballet *Giselle*, these backing dancers are the ghostly Wilis,

legendary Slavic and Germanic spirits of "betrothed girls who have died as a result of

being jilted by faithless lovers" and who "[come] out to dance at night and [lead] the

faithless ones to their death by making them dance until they [fall] dead of

exhaustion."[15] *Giselle* is a *ballet blanc*—that is, a "ballet, typically a classical one, in

which the ballerinas are dressed in white tulle and tights to represent wraithlike or

otherworldly beings."[16] As such, the Wilis all wear white, heightening the unearthliness

of their bodies. In Akts 13, 25, and 26, *Princess Tutu*'s *corps de ballet* are humanoid

crows, servants of the evil Raven, the show's ultimate antagonist. The crows dress all in

black, as though *Princess Tutu* has created its own variation on the *ballet blanc*, the

ballet noir. While the Wilis' white costumes suggest misty incorporeality, the black of

the crows' feathers is dreadfully opaque, like shadow made tangible. Neither the Wilis

nor the crows speak or use balletic pantomime while dancing, but their movements are

purposeful and unsettling, communicating their potential menace to both characters

and the audience. The Wilis of Princess Tutu are abstractly threatening, borrowing their

menace from the audience's presumed knowledge of the original ballet, while the crows,

who serve as the Raven's foot soldiers, are overtly (and theatrically) menacing, wielding

swords and attacking the protagonists with a buoyant and highly kinetic panache

reminiscent of stage-fighting.

      The significance of costuming in *Princess Tutu* extends beyond these

otherworldly *corps de ballet*. When protagonist Ahiru transforms into Princess Tutu,

she dons a pink and white tutu replete with crown and pointe shoes. Conversely, when

antagonist Rue transforms into the evil Princess Kraehe, she dresses in a black-plumed tutu, and her dark hair evokes the shape of a curling crow's feather. The pair also wear many other costumes when they switch between their roles as students of dance and as mundane ballet dancers, at various times donning school uniforms and casual clothing for everyday life, leotards for dance practice, and ballet costumes for school performances and town festivals. This act of physical transformation is highly significant, as if to suggest that one cannot be what one must be unless properly attired. The necessity of the 'right clothes' also has roots in the *mahô shôjo* genre, in which a magical girl's costume not only enables her to perform necessary tasks, but which also, according to Sarah Jessica Darley, has "an aesthetic connection" to her objectives.[17] This is clear as far as dancing and battle are concerned; in Akt 4, Rue struggles to dance the whole of *Giselle* not only because she lacks the stamina, but also because she is dressed in her movement-restricting school uniform and street shoes. Princess Tutu, who is able to dance *Giselle* to completion, is dressed for the activity, and as such, her movements are free and unhindered, and her energy is not spent resisting the 'ordinariness' of her clothing. Other main characters, including Mytho and Fakir (and even several minor characters, such as Ahiru's fellow ballet students), participate in these costume changes as well.

It is no coincidence that many of the anime's characters quite literally emerged from a storybook—specifically, the storybook of Drosselmeyer. Drosselmeyer, the writer of the Princess Tutu legend, is named after the mysterious sorcerer figure in *The Nutcracker* (both the E.T.A. Hoffmann story and the later Tchaikovsky ballet that adapts the tale). Drosselmeyer is not the only allusive character; three of the four leads of *Princess Tutu* are patterned after characters in *Swan Lake*. Princess Tutu and

Princess Kraehe represent *Swan Lake*'s Odette and Odile, respectively. In *Swan Lake*, Odette is a princess cursed by the evil sorcerer Von Rothbart to wear the form of a swan during the day. Odette meets and falls in love with the handsome prince Siegfried, who wishes to free her from her ensorcellment and swears an oath of fidelity to her. Odile is Von Rothbart's daughter. On Rothbart's orders, Odile dons a glamour that makes her resemble Odette, and in this form she seduces Siegfried to disastrous consequences. Meanwhile, "Siegfried" is the true name of the amnesiac prince Mytho—the name he has forgotten after shattering his heart and being cast from his storybook. When Mytho steps from its pages, he is stripped of his memories, becoming an empty slate onto which new impressions of emotion and desire may be stamped. He enrolls in the local dance school and pursues ballet as a means of broadening his understanding of himself and the unfamiliar world around him. Meanwhile, Drosselmeyer's titular Princess Tutu is no longer even a person after emerging from the storybook; instead, she is a mantle of power waiting to be taken up, a role waiting to be filled, just as a ballet is cast and then staged.

As this paper now turns to investigate, by playing with the narrative associations that its audience has with figures from *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*, *Princess Tutu* gradually deconstructs its composite stories, instead creating an amalgamated meta-balletic plot that, while comprised of familiar elements, is entirely its own. Consequently, the series contains much talk of the importance of 'knowing one's role.' Drosselmeyer frequently warns characters of the dangers of forgetting the parts they are meant to play in his grand orchestration. Indeed, Amanda Kennell argues that the characters in *Princess Tutu*, while dancing through the overarching 'ballet' of the anime, switch from role to role as time passes and they become more entangled in the narrative.

The dance teacher who coaches all the main characters, Mr. Cat, frequently gives his students advice that stems from his own experiences as a dancer—and which frequently references narrative ballets. In Akt 18, when Fakir questions him about healing an impure love, he replies thusly: "What is it that defines an impure love? After all, who can say that Odile's love is impure?"[18] His remark is an allusion to *Swan Lake*, wherein the black swan, Odile, is also said to fall in love with Prince Siegfried. Although she deceives him and ultimately succeeds in destroying his happiness with the swan-maiden Odette, there is no way for anyone but her to know whether Odile's feelings for Siegfried are genuine. This question of truth versus falseness is one that permeates the second Kapitel. *Princess Tutu*'s own 'black swan,' Rue, harbors intense feelings for Mytho. By the end of the series, it is revealed that *she*—not Ahiru/Princess Tutu—is Mytho's true love and destined princess. Rue then 'usurps' the role of Odette from Ahiru. Such role-switching happens to almost all of the characters: Ahiru goes from duck to human girl to Princess Tutu to duck once more, Fakir changes from an antagonistic figure to a major ally, Mytho transitions from an empty husk to good to evil and back again, and so on. No one is quite who—or what—they first seem to be.

Pantomime and the Archive of Gesture

Having glossed several of the general meta-balletic references that *Princess Tutu* employs, it may be useful to include a more targeted reading of the show's use of ballet pantomime—arguably, its most intriguing meta-balletic facet. Pantomime is a theatrical language of gestures in which the 'speaking' body crafts mimes that carry specific and codified meanings interpretable both diegetically (that is, by other characters) and nondiegetically (that is, by the audience). Although it is most heavily associated with

pantomime theater, pantomime is also a significant element of many nineteenth-century ballets, which do not permit speech to 'corrupt' the space of performance (indeed, one subgenre of the narrative ballet is the so-called ballet pantomime).

Peter Brooks calls pantomime "a language of action and presence" that sacrifices "abstractions, hypotheses, [and] preferential or optative situations" in favor of the emphatic, the urgent, and the immediate.[19] Pantomime itself is an explicitly meta-balletic (or even meta-gestural) action, with one use of a particular mime—for example, the mime for death, two fists crossed at the wrists—acting as a referent to all other uses of the same mime, as well as the very concept of death itself. By extension, the body of the dancer becomes a metapicture, or at least a mechanism that creates metapictures. Acclaimed dance critic Edwin Denby explains the power of pantomime in this way: "in the pantomime ballet, stylized movement is the main aspect of expression. It is what one looks at particularly, because it keeps making a serious dramatic point. Gesture by gesture, as if idea by idea, the drama is built up. The audience watches for each allusion in turn; it follows point by point."[20] In *Princess Tutu*, pantomime is a key that unlocks many doors: gesture is at the heart of the act of transformation, the magic inherent to the world, and the movement of the plot. To explore some of these moments, and other moments of meta-balletic engagement, I now turn to analyzing scenes from various episodes of the show in chronological order.

In the very first episode, Ahiru runs outside in her nightgown in search of the mysterious Drosselmeyer, in an image evocative of *The Nutcracker*'s nightgown-clad Clara investigating her parlor. While Ahiru is outside, Drosselmeyer freezes time, utilizing his godlike powers as the narrator. As if a lighting crew were working from behind the scenes, the lighting changes to look paler and ghostlier. Ahiru wanders

through the now-unfamiliar space as Drosselmeyer's profile is seen swinging a pocket watch, captured on the reflective surface of a fountain, and trapped within the silhouette of a dormitory. Drosselmeyer makes his intentions of recreating his unfinished tale known, calling to the past (the story as it exists on paper in its incomplete form) and to the future (the story that is to come). Drosselmeyer then says, "The water has begun to flow; the time has begun to pass. Now, tell me a story."[21] For Drosselmeyer, this is a moment of remembrance; for the audience, it serves as a prediction. This moment serves as a 'dimming of the lights,' signaling that the performance proper is about to commence. This moment of introspection and apprehension then melts—and reality rearranges itself into the shape of the familiar—as Drosselmeyer retreats into the shadows and time is untethered. During other moments of frozen or slowed time, captured images of *Princess Tutu*'s various characters are shown as a literal reaching through space and time occurs. Drosselmeyer's voice unites the disparate images, describing the past and presupposed future of each. An invisible hand assembles a tableau of *Princess Tutu*'s characters, which seems to function as a living, breathing programme.

Akt 4 borrows heavily from the plot of *Giselle*. Mytho becomes entranced by a ghostly Wili dancer (the supernatural antagonists of the original 1841 ballet), who threatens to drag him into the underworld. She attempts to do this by giving him a branch of rosemary. This gesture—the giving of the rosemary—is one of the most famous moments in *Giselle*, in which the evil queen of the Wilis, Myrtha, brandishes a rosemary branch to raise Giselle's spirit from death and to claim her as a newborn Wili.[iv] The

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[iv] In some versions of the story, it is instead a myrtle branch.

Wilis also cast a spell on Giselle's two suitors, Hilarion and Albrecht, compelling them to dance against their will all through the night. Within the framework of the ballet, this spell functions as a gauntlet: each man's only hope of escape is to dance without succumbing to exhaustion until sunrise (when the Wilis must return to their graves), or else their lives are forfeit.

As students of ballet, Ahiru and Rue immediately understand the fatal significance of the rosemary branch: should Mytho accept it, he will die and become a vengeful spirit. Even when removed from the context of the stage, the heretofore fictional tale of the Wilis frightens the girls, because they recognize the horror of the rosemary's magic power—a power which Mytho, having lost access to his own emotions, memory, and will, cannot understand and subsequently cannot fear. Unlike the compelled dances of Hilarion and Albrecht, Rue and Princess Tutu dance as a means of drawing Mytho more insistently towards the world of the living—that is, they dance to save Mytho's soul. For this reason, Rue's failure to dance through the night is also suggestive. In the original ballet, Giselle's 'lesser' suitor, Hilarion, cannot dance till dawn, and so the Wilis drown him as punishment. In *Princess Tutu*'s reimagining, Rue feels her body giving out in the middle of her performance and fears what will happen if she cannot complete her *pas*. Princess Tutu takes on the role of Giselle's true love, Albrecht, who is able to dance long enough to defeat the Wilis and help free Giselle from her enchantment. It is only by enacting the conclusion of *Giselle*—and by dancing in Albrecht's place—that Princess Tutu is able to draw Mytho back from the clutches of the Wili dancer, while Rue laments her failure both to dance and to act as Mytho's savior.

Throughout the first season of the show, deuteragonist Fakir struggles with the knowledge that he is the reincarnation of Drosselmeyer's storybook knight, who wielded

the sword Lohengrin and battled the Raven once before and lost. At the moment of his defeat, the knight was torn in two by the Raven's enormous talons. As a reminder of this grisly literary lineage, Fakir bears a jagged birthmark—or scar—that divides his body from shoulder to waist. The body remembers being torn in half, even though the person is essentially detached from their former life—this is an altogether magical sort of muscle memory. In addition to the scar, Fakir is left with a crippling fear of his foretold death, as well as the desire to escape his duty to protect his prince, Mytho. The storybook knight's sword is also Fakir's to bear. The weapon is named for Lohengrin, a figure in Arthurian mythology who also features in Wagner's eponymous 1850 opera. The myth of Lohengrin, as it were, is also known as *The Knight of the Swan*, in keeping with the swan motif that appears throughout the show.[22] (Additionally, Wagner's "Siegfried Idyll" becomes Mytho's musical motif, as well as "Siegfried's Death March" from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*).

In Akt 13, the finale of the first season, Princess Tutu is required to communicate a message of love to her beloved Mytho in order to save him from the enemy Princess Kraehe. However, due to a curse that has been placed upon her, Princess Tutu realizes that to speak words of love to Mytho would result in her death. The natural but unexpected solution is pantomime. By expressing her feelings in a way that is abstracted from language, Tutu has at her disposal the entire canon of classical and narrative ballet in which someone mimes the symbol for love. As a fellow dancer, Mytho is sure to understand what she means as clearly as if she had spoken it aloud. Following this instance of pantomime, Tutu dances the famous *pas de deux* of *Swan Lake* by herself, an act so patently impossible that a scornful Kraehe ridicules her for trying. The pure force of Tutu's emotion is so strong that during a lift, her body hangs suspended in the

air, as though an invisible partner is holding her up. She then falls, but after standing once more, she continues to dance as though nothing unusual has happened. Through this dancing, Kraehe's bewitching of Mytho fades, and some of his emotions return to him. He and Tutu share a moment of happiness as Kraehe is defeated.

"No matter what I do, my feelings don't reach him," cries a despairing Princess Kraehe as she retreats into the darkness.[23] Kraehe's predicament is a tragic one; she relies too much upon words in trying to win Mytho's affections. Despite being an ingenious dancer, she is unable to trust in the communicative power of ballet, relying instead on spoken language, which is lesser in its power both to reveal and to transfix. Rue/Kraehe is at her most successful when she entrances Mytho via physical movement. In a scene that echoes Odile's thirty-two *fouettés* (one-legged turns) in *Swan Lake*, Rue performs an astonishing *tour de force* to seduce Mytho to her side. Her body expresses truth at every turn—the truth of her desire and love for Mytho and truth of her desperation for companionship. When she speaks, however, all that is left to her is deceit and manipulation. Only later in the show does Rue learn of an awful truth: her life as she knows it is false. She is not the daughter of the monstrous Raven, but rather a normal human girl kidnapped at birth. Upon learning this, she gives up her pursuit of Mytho, as the lies that formed her identity as Kraehe have dissolved. It is worth noting, though, that her dancing does not change. It is still troubled and virtuosic, for her true identity—formed of her awful desire and her loneliness—has not changed. As with Fakir, the memory lodged in her limbs remains unaltered, expressing the same feelings and intentions.

Likewise, Mytho, reduced to a shell of his former self, cannot recall what it is like to feel, but his body remembers. He responds instinctively to Princess Tutu's passionate

mimes and dancing because they belong to a more primeval language that has been left intact within his subconscious. This language calls to his muscle memory—something that, as a dancer and swordsman, he possesses in great quantity, even if his mind and heart have been tampered with. Pantomime, *Princess Tutu* appears to suggest, contains within itself the power to transcend even the most formidable magic of erasure.

The scene directly following this one involves a similar problem and solution: Edel, a servant of Drosselmeyer, shows an escaping Mytho and Princess Tutu the way out of the dark cavern where their confrontation with Princess Kraehe took place. Edel, who is a marionette bound by strings, is unable to travel where she pleases without the permission of her master. Out of necessity and defiance, she sets herself ablaze, knowing that her wooden body has the power to communicate the message of *safety, follow, here*, even if her feet will not move and her voice will not carry through the darkness of the underground grotto. Her body becomes a beacon from which a clarity-restoring light shines. The dying Edel, seeking to comfort the heartbroken Princess Tutu, asks Mytho and Tutu to dance a *pas de deux* together as a last favor. Dance continues to signify more than words; as Tutu and Mytho dance the *pas de deux*, their dance functions as a tacit declaration of love—or at least warmhearted affection, as Mytho does not possess his emotions in their entirety.

In Akt 17, Mytho, overwhelmed by the slow return of his heart, cannot rely on language as an outlet for expressing his emotions. Like Princess Tutu does in the first season's finale, Mytho turns to the canon of narrative ballet for aid, creating the pantomime for 'love' before collapsing on the floor of the dance studio. His gesture sends his fellow ballet students into a frenzy as they try to discover the intended recipient of the mime, thinking that Mytho has confessed his love to someone in the

room. Later in the same episode, Fakir becomes embarrassed when Ahiru recreates Mytho's mime towards him, for the mime remains significant—ripe with meaning—even when removed from the context of ballet and the ballet studio. Throughout the episode, the famous "Aragonaise" segment of Georges Bizet's *Carmen* plays, suggesting that a seduction or improper love of some sort is taking place. The audience also learns in this episode that Rue has poisoned Mytho's heart with raven's blood in a desperate attempt to sway his affections. The effect on Mytho is immediate; he behaves with increasing cruelty from this point forward, filling Rue with despair as the audience simultaneously realizes that the seduction to evil suggested by *Carmen* has been fulfilled.

During Akt 21, Fakir learns of a ritual that will enable him to unlock and wield the reality-warping powers of Drosselmeyer. In order to prove his worth, Fakir is tasked with attempting communication with an ancestral oak tree said to speak to those who possess Drosselmeyer's tale-spinning power. There is a slight complication: the tree no longer exists—it has already been cut down so that not even a stump is left standing. Only its roots, hidden deep underground, remain. In losing the body of the oak tree, the original source of inspiration for its corresponding pantomime has been lost and must be recreated. In this scene, Fakir does not simply commune with the oak tree; he gives it a new body, restoring it via mime. Fakir must mime the tree, or the essence of the tree, before its meaning may be made tangible. His body first mimics the shape of a tree, with arms outspread like branches and head held towards the sky. It is only once this gesture is complete that the ritual proper begins and Fakir is then transformed into the tree, growing a new body for it by offering his own. From within the bark and branches of the oak, Fakir hears "what cannot be heard"—a heartbeat.[24] The tree tells him to "submerge [himself] in the bog of truth."[25] While this scene may be interpreted in a number of

ways, it seems inextricably linked to the anime's use of balletic mime as a form of silent communication, a language of heartbeats and shuddering limbs, in which the search for truth becomes a kinetic endeavor. To submerge oneself is a physical act rather than a mental one—it is the act of delving into something with the body, rather than auditory listening, which only requires the engagement of the ear and the mind.

Earlier in Akt 21, Mytho, whose heart has by now been fully consumed by evil, dances a *pas de deux* with Rue. As she reaches to take Mytho's hand, his arm suddenly transfigures into a raven's wing, glossy black and feathered. Startled, Rue pulls away. Mytho is furious; he grabs Rue and tosses her to the ground, saying, "You hesitated to take my hand. Can you really say you love me?"[26] Even though Rue *says* nothing to prompt Mytho's anger, he understands immediately by her expression and the withdrawal of her hand that she feels afraid. The communicative capacity of hands also features in Akt 22, when a group of townsfolk intent on disrupting Drosselmeyer's story threaten to cut off Fakir's hands to keep him from writing (and thus, from spinning prophecies). While this is not exclusive to ballet, the hands are considered one of the human body's primary implements of power, the main tool (other than the face) that a person uses to enact his or her will and express his or her feelings, thoughts, and intentions. As Fakir performs the roles of both dancer and writer, the potential loss of his hands is monumental in its physical and symbolic implications. We learn that this same punishment was previously inflicted upon Drosselmeyer, who defied fate by continuing to write in his own blood—a more primeval ink, a liquid expression of bodily desire and effort.

In Akt 23, Drosselmeyer captures Princess Tutu. In order to force her to continue carrying out the story according to his will, he transforms her into a marionette. Her

limbs are attached to invisible strands and manipulated by an unseen force, reminiscent of Edel, Drosselmeyer's original servant. Tutu's gestures are no longer her own, and her body may no longer produce genuine expressions of emotion. As such, her movements become stilted, uncanny, and uncommunicative, almost as though her body has forgotten how to 'speak.' While suggestive in its own right, this scene simultaneously recalls the image of the dancing doll in the 1870 ballet *Coppélia*, which in turn is based on E.T.A. Hoffmann's short story "Der Sandmann." It is only when her strings are cut that Princess Tutu is able to dance in a manner that carries meaning.

By *Princess Tutu*'s final episode, Rue has been swallowed by the show's true antagonist, the Raven. From within the enormous desert-like stomach of the Raven, Rue dances out her death in perfect synchronization with countless skeletons, other victims whom the Raven has consumed—a literal *corps*(*e*) *de ballet*. Other skeletons lie motionless on the ground, but their poses suggest that they are merely stretching, preparing to join in the endless dance. The dance they perform is *The Dying Swan*, backed by its traditional music, Camille Saint-Saëns's *Le Cygne*. This death-dance suggests, broadly, the concept of a ballet existing in perpetuity. Time is collapsed into a flat plane as Rue and the numberless dead mirror one another's movements, invoking the presence of dancers of every era, even if they are all fleshless and no longer identifiable as individuals (or in Rue's case, on the way to becoming so). This functions as a macabre visualization of the narrative ballet tradition, in which the movements of a dance—such as *The Nutcracker*'s famous "Waltz of the Flowers"—are preserved through countless layers and instances of imitation.

Earlier, in Akt 25, Ahiru performs a similarly sorrowful dance after learning that she must give up her human body (as well as her role of Princess Tutu) if she is to

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restore Mytho's heart to its original pure state. Fakir comforts her with both speech and dance. He joins her in her lonely movement, transforming her solo into a *pas de deux*. As he convinces her that all will be well, he turns her (thus turning her mind to a different point of view) and lifts her (thus raising her up from her despair). Bodily motion is again in unity with the movements of the plot. Later on, in the final episode, when Ahiru/Tutu *does* transform once more into a duck and can no longer speak, she finds that she is still able to communicate through ballet pantomime. She raises her wingtips above her head and makes the mime for 'dance with me' to Mytho and the raven-transformed townsfolk. The dance emboldens Mytho, restoring his will to fight the Raven, while simultaneously entrancing the enemy *corps de ballet* long enough to let Mytho attack his foe without their interference. Although it is doubtful whether a real duck could or would make such a gesture, the point remains salient: balletic pantomime is backed by such a readily accessible catalogue of meaning and historical significance that anyone (or anything), so long as they may learn and copy a gesture, may invoke the power of the mime. Even from within a different body—one without the regular markers of human expression—Ahiru is able to summon forth the canon of narrative ballet and, thus, the ability to make herself legible to her human friends.

Conclusions

During a comedic moment in Akt 18, *Princess Tutu* pokes gentle fun at its own thesis of the life-and-death significance of gesture. As Ahiru and her friends are walking around the campus, they spot a group of strangely-dressed people holding odd poses—a group of acting students. When asked to explain what they are doing, a girl dressed as a shrimp and held aloft in a strange curled position answers: "We are here expressing our

own inner worlds in a more external and concrete form."[27] Even though the scene is bizarre and none too serious, this is the crux of what gives *Princess Tutu*'s meta-balletic pantomime so much power—W. J. T. Mitchell's "multistability effect" in action.[28] Tumultuous or unnamable internal feelings, when broadcast via the body, the muscles, the limbs, thus become crystalline, quantifiable, and, most importantly, repeatable. They also become inextricably linked to the broader historical canon of ballet, itself a form of legitimation.

Just as narrative ballet is often neglected in the world of contemporary dance, it is also rarely considered in the realms of literary and visual scholarship. However, I find it to be just as ripe with promise in the field of visual studies as photography or cinema. The linkages between set and stage, body and gesture, and dance and music are exceptionally powerful in their expressive and referential abilities. *Princess Tutu* is the ideal foray into the world of meta-ballet, as its entire premise depends upon the upcycling of old forms and works, as well as the complicated bodily tradition of ballet. The play of balletic layers described above barely scratches the surface of the complex webs of balletic reference and pantomime in *Princess Tutu*, as well as the well of communicative possibilities contained within meta-ballet. However, this is a start—a glimpse into the texture and richness of its contents.

Notes

[1] W. J. T. Mitchell, "Metapictures," in *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 75.

[2] Mitchell, "Metapictures," 58.

[3] Mitchell, "Metapictures," 75.

[4] Mitchell, "Metapictures," 75.

[5] David Michael Levin, "Balanchine's Formalism," *Salmagundi* 33/34, (1976): 222.

[6] Levin, "Balanchine's Formalism," 224.

[7] Levin, "Balanchine's Formalism," 223.

[8] Amanda Kennell, "Origin and Ownership from Ballet to Anime," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 49 (2016): 25-6. https://doi-org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/10.1111/jpcu.12378.

[9] Kennell, "Origin and Ownership from Ballet to Anime," 25; 10-1.

[10] Bill Ellis, "The Fairy-Telling Craft of Princess Tutu: Metacommentary and the Folkloresque," in Foster & Tolbert, *The Folkloresque: Reframing Folklore in a Popular Culture World* (University Press of Colorado, 2015), 231. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt17mvkfh.17.

[11] Mitchell, "Metapictures," 75.

[12] Emily Alane Erken, "Narrative Ballet as Multimedial Art: John Neumeier's *The Seagull*," *19th-Century Music* 36, no. 2 (2012): 160, https://doi.org/10.1525/ncm.2012.36.2.159.

[13] "mise en abyme, n.". OED Online. July 2018. Oxford University Press. www.oed.com/view/Entry/245796 (accessed 14 Oct. 2018).

[14] "corps, n.". OED Online. May 2018. Oxford University Press. https://www-oed-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/view/Entry/41857?rskey=504cd4&result=2&isAdvanced=false.

[15] "wili | willi, n.". OED Online. May 2018. Oxford University Press. https://www-oed-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/view/Entry/229038.

[16] "ballet blanc, n.". OED Online. May 2018. Oxford University Press. https://www-oed-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/view/Entry/270962?redirectedFrom=ballet+blanc.

[17] Sarah Jessica Darley, "The Magical Girl Mirror: Reflections and Transcultural Transformations of Euro-American Fairy Tales in the *Mahō Shōjo* Genre," in Sheehan, *Cross-Cultural Influences between Japanese and American Pop Cultures: Powers of Pop* (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023), 88.

[18] "Wandering Knight ~ Egmont Ouvertüre," *Princess Tutu*, directed by Yamauchi Tomio (2003), DVD.

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Gundam and the Japanese Media Mix: Novelizations, Model Kits and Statues

Shotaro Kinoshita

Abstract: *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979) and related texts – collectively called the Gundam franchise – revolutionized robot animation with its realistic settings, eventually gaining immense popularity through reruns and expansions into various media formats. This paper explores the Gundam series' innovative media mix strategies, including novelizations, model kits, and life-sized statues, which have each been critical to its enduring success in specific ways. For instance Gundam novelizations, particularly those by director Tomino Yoshiyuki, deviated from the TV series, incorporating mature themes and expanding the narrative universe. This approach set a precedent for media mixing in animation. Additionally, Gundam's plastic models, especially the MSV series, created a new form of "narrative consumption" where fans engaged with the broader lore of the series through detailed models. These models maintained the franchise's popularity during periods without new TV broadcasts. Finally, life-sized Gundam statues further exemplify the franchise's media mix innovation. Starting with the 2009 Tokyo installation, these statues have evolved, incorporating dynamic elements and interactive features. These installations offer a unique "pseudo-authenticity," making the fictional Gundam universe tangible and attracting widespread attention. Overall, *Gundam*'s pioneering media mix strategieshave not only sustained the franchise's cultural and economic impact, but also expanded it, thus solidifying its status as a cornerstone of Japanese animation culture.

Keywords: *Mobile Suit Gundam*, Media Mix, Grand Narratives, Narrative Consumption, Tomino Yoshiyuki

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Introduction

In 2021, the Japanese government selected Tomino Yoshiyuki as a Person of Cultural Merit,[1] which is the second-highest official award that can be given to a cultural figure in Japan, following only the Order of Culture. Tomino is the second person in the animation industry to win the award since Hayao Miyazaki of Studio Ghibli in 2012.[2] Tomino's achievements in the animation industry are many and varied, but he is best known for directing the anime series *Mobile Suit Gundam*. In this regard, his award is an indirect indication that the Gundam series is part of a select group of works that represent Japanese animation culture. According to data from the Bandai Namco Group, which owns the Gundam series IP, the overall sales of the Gundam series, including toys, has been steadily increasing in recent years from 34.6 billion yen in 2010 [3] to a record high of 145.7 billion yen in 2024.[4] No other anime series has grown this much, and on these merits alone, there is already much room for research on the background of the Gundam franchise's success and its impact on the Japanese anime culture and industry. Consequently, this paper works to shed light on the contributions that the Gundam series has made in the history of the media mix of animated TV series, as well as explore how its success has affected consumers' impression of the series.

 Mobile Suit Gundam is a TV animation series that began broadcasting in April

1979. While the show was cancelled in January 1980, it eventually became successful.[5] This is in part due to its focus on realism – but also, as this paper will argue, due partly to the diverse development of related products and works in media forms other than animation.[6] For example, Ōtsuka has pointed to the popularity of Gundam's Gachapon dolls, which are more "deformed", that is, the exaggerated expression that reduces the size to two heads to create cuteness, than the anime designs, and the manga, which is more realistic than the original anime, as reasons why Gundam was able to survive as a series after the anime ended.[7] Elsewhere, Dominguez looks at the film *Char's Counterattack (1988)* and argues that it was the turning point that created the worldwide popularity of the Gundam series, which began to spin off into multiple media and other franchises, including manga, toys, novels, and later video games, as well as the initial anime and movie.[8] Meanwhile, Nakamura and Tosca have analyzed the Gundam series of video games, noting that the wide range of genres, from simulation to action, has both satisfied hardcore fans and also served as a gateway for "light" or more casual fans.[9]

This strategy of developing anime and other character content through multiple media is collectively referred to as 'the media mix' in Japan. The media mix is best known academically as defined by Steinberg, who uses this term to describe "the cross-media serialization and circulation of entertainment franchises" in comparison

to transmedia storytelling.[10] What both media mix and transmedia storytelling have in common the creation of various works across media platforms. However, it has been noted that while classical transmedia storytelling emphasizes the premise of a fundamentally consistent worldview, the majority of Japanese-style media mix works prefer a divergent model that allows for variation from the central world. Steinberg's analysis of the Japanese media mix, based on several examples, shows that the development by Kadokawa Shoten in the late 1980s marked a major turning point.[11]

However, while the media mix theory proposed by Steinberg itself is generally accepted in fields such as popular culture and anime studies, there is also a lack of analysis regarding the history of how the media mix developed from the late '70s through the '80s. This is acknowledged by Steinberg himself, who mentions the media mix of Gundam and of Bandai toys as one of the representative examples that he has not analyzed in his foundational work.[12] We would add that in regards to Gundam, as mentioned above, there are studies that focus on individual media mix methods and media mix strategies at a certain point in time. However, there are few studies that capture the role that the Gundam series has played in the history of media mixing itself, or else analyze the effect of such media mixing on the image of the Gundam series as a whole. As a franchise, Gundam has utilized both a strategy of deepening a singe worldview (transmedia storytelling style) and a strategy of

spreading a fluctuating worldview (Japanese-style media mix) in a complementary

manner,[13] making it a highly suitable case study for better understanding and

analyzing the history of Japanese media mix.

   This paper argues that in the history of Japanese anime media mix, the Gundam

series has been a leader and a catalyst for development in two areas: novelization and

three-dimensionalization. It is also argued that the continued development of these

media mix methods provided a space for both producers and fans to expand and

reconstruct the Gundam setting, and established Gundam's status and image as a

realistic robot.

   In light of the era during which *Mobile Suit Gundam* was launched, these were

not only successful examples of the media mixing of individual *Gundam* works, but

also and at the same time, were also important cases for revisiting the history of

media mixing in Japanese anime culture as a whole.

Extension of the Novelization of Animation

Novelizations are one of the most common methods of media mixing for TV

animation series. In Japan, animation and manga have always had a close

relationship. For example, *Astro Boy* (1963), which was based on a manga (1952),

began as the first Japanese TV animation series. In contrast, novels for teenagers

began to flourish in Japan in the mid-1960s.[14] In 1973, a publication format called "*bunko*" emerged – these were low-priced versions of monographs usually for a teenage demographic.[15] In this context, media mixing in terms of novelizing a TV animation series started with *Space Battleship Yamato*, which was broadcast in 1974.[16] The novel versions of *Space Battleship Yamato* were published on October 20, 1974 (*Earth Destruction Arc*)[17] and February 3, 1975 (*Earth Resurrection Arc*).[18] At the time, home-use VCRs were less common in Japan; thus, the appearance of anime novelizations were a valuable source of content for fans seeking to recall the anime series after it had aired.[19]

Although the *Yamato* novels differ from their TV counterparts in some of their stories and settings, they did not further deepen the worldview of the TV version. In addition, the end of the book clearly states that the target age group is "upper elementary to junior high school students", individuals aged 9–15 years in Japan,[20] and subsequently these novels did not present sexual descriptions. Ishizu Arashi and Toyota Aritsune wrote the first novel version of *Space Battleship Yamato* instead of Nishizaki Yoshinobu, who is known as the original author. In later years, another novel version of Yamato was released, this one composed by Nishizaki;[21] however, it recounted the original storyline using images from the main TV anime as illustrations, with almost no original elements. Still, with the success of *Space*

Battleship Yamato, the anime novelization method was recognized as a form of media mix in TV animation.

Then in 1979, *Mobile Suit Gundam* was broadcast. Two novel editions of *Mobile Suit Gundam* were released at the time of its broadcast. The first was written by Nakane Masaaki, and the second was penned by Tomino Yoshiyuki. The Nakane novel version (Volume 1: March 31, 1980)[22] was released after the TV anime broadcast and, similar to the novel version of *Space Battleship Yamato*, was written for a relatively younger audience. Moreover, the content was similar to the storyline of the main TV series. However, the Tomino novel version (Volume 1: November 30, 1979),[23] which was also published by Asahi Sonorama, was novelized by Tomino, who is the original writer of *Mobile Suit Gundam* and the director of the TV anime. This version was released during the broadcast period (April 7, 1979–January 26, 1980) of the TV anime. In this way, for the first time in the history of Japanese animation, the director and original creator of a film had personally written a novelization of the film during its broadcast period. Of further interest is that Tomino's novelization featured many changes from the series. According to Tomino, the publishers held low levels of expectations for the anime novelization at the time; thus, they asked him to write the novelization as a complete work in one volume.[24] As a result, the story was changed to avoid any contradiction even if the novel was a

one-volume read-only work. Despite the shorter form, the novel expanded on several

core concepts from the series, particularly its metaphysical psychic elements.[25]

Later, the novel version was extended to three volumes due to the unexpected

success of the first volume. Here the final story differs greatly from that of the anime

version, with more spiritual and political content, including the spiritual awakening

of the people and the establishment of a new nation following the death of the main

character, Amuro Ray. Seager notes that Tomino's novel version reflects the

revolutionary-oriented leftist ideology found in the student movement that preceded

it.[26] Moreover, battle scenes were also more violent, and there was some overt sexual

content. Although the storyline of Tomino's novel version of *Gundam* differs from

that of the main TV series, a few of the original setting concepts from the novel

appeared in the later movie *Mobile Suit Gundam 3: Meguriai Sora* (1982) such as

the GUN CANNON aircraft number. Thus, the success of *Mobile Suit Gundam* – in

which Tomino as the animation director himself has worked on a piece of the media

mix – has been pointed out by Tsugata as the first case in which a creator in the TV

animation industry was brought into the limelight.[27]

   A notable novelization of the Gundam series has been the one undertaken for the

animated film *Mobile Suit Gundam: Char's Counterattack* (1988). The novelization

of *Char's Counterattack* was also written and directed by Tomino, who also wrote

and directed the movie of the same name. Unusually, though, this film features two

novel versions, both by Tomino. The first was a three-volume novel called *High

Streamer*,[28] which was serialized in the anime magazine *Animage* from May 1987,

one year before the movie was released. In *High Streamer*, the story begins as a

prequel to the movie *Char's Counterattack*, before eventually telling the same story

as the film. The venue *Animage*, in which the novel was serialized, is a magazine

published by Tokuma Shoten, which has been acknowledged as a pioneer of the

media mix in Japan along with the Kadokawa Group.[29] The strategy of this magazine

was to serialize many novels that were expected to be adapted into anime.[30]

However, although the *Gundam* series was expected to be a success, the development

of a prequel novel by the original author and director prior to the release of the movie

was extremely rare as a form of media mix. Tomino himself described it as a new

experiment, saying:[31]

> In the novel version of *Char's Counterattack*, I am trying a method of introducing
> the characters who will develop the next story before and after the current one,
> while continuing the work that I am currently doing. My fear that I would lose out
> to the younger generation if I did not take this approach is the reason I came to
> this approach.

Adding further to this experiment , another novelization of *Char's Counterattack* was

released the following year. This second novelization, titled *Beltorchika's Children*,[32]

was published not by Tokuma Shoten, but instead Kadokawa Shoten. *Beltorchika's*

Children is a novelization based on the first draft of the screenplay for the movie

Char's Counterattack,[33] and includes several elements that were not used in the

movie. For example, the main character, Amuro Ray, is married and has a child with

Bertorchka Irma, a character who did not appear in the movie. According to Tomino,

"The Gundam world is a story of evolving human beings," and *Beltorchika's Children*

depicts the "denial of machines" as the destination of this story, which was a

departure from the entertainment value expected from a robot animation work such

as *Char's Counterattack* in the main story.[34] As a result, such elements were

modified in *High Streamer* and the movie version of *Char's Counterattack* to reflect

the wishes of sponsors and commercial considerations.[35]

Tomino has commented at length on the position of *Beltorchika's Children* in

relation to *Char's Counterattack*, and reflected on the difference between the film

and the novel as media.[36]

> If the movie is the main story, *Beltorchika's Children* is positioned as a motif
> novel and should not be published in the nature that it should be...
> And I am presenting this book in this way for two reasons. First, I wanted to
> provide a sample of the differences in expression between film and print.
> Another reason is that this story was the motif of *Char's Counterattack* and I
> wanted to let people know that this was my original intention...
> Naturally, I wrote the scenario for the movie version of *Char's Counterattack*. The
> first draft of the theatrical scenario submission was this story (*Beltorchika's
> Children*), and when it was submitted for review by the investors, which could be
> called the "Gundam Movie Adaptation Committee," various opinions and
> criticisms were raised about this scenario.
> The most important opinion was that the theme of the novel was the denial of

mobile suits. Of course, this was my intention.

However, Gundam has a thick market created by the sale of mobile suit toys, which provides the funds to produce the movie. If the production itself denies this realistic foundation, it is only natural that the investors would refuse to produce the movie. This is not an issue of the nature of "it can't be helped because we are in different positions. I had to admit that I was chasing too many dreams.

Yet another opinion that felt sanctioned to me was, "I don't want to see Amuro Ray married in a movie." Some may think that this opinion is worldly and trivial, but I have adopted it as the most important point because it is the opinion that I felt was most important for the production and planning of a film.

The reason why I have such an intuition is because I feel the same way about the nature of the film medium...

Films should be open entertainment, that is, something that can be enjoyed by a large number of people who can watch it together. In the past, there was a time when what were called "literary films" were accepted in Japan, but as times change, the concept of planning must be fundamentally changed...

The hero of the movie is a bachelor from Tange Sazen to the era of Rambo, the same James Bond and Sherlock Holmes even if the actors change. It doesn't matter how old you are or what you look like, you must fall in love and have adventures in a wonderful way.

Movies are for people who are tired of this world to watch for a little distraction. There is nothing more dangerous than propaganda films.

More importantly, Gundam is a robot anime. There is no need to watch it if the main character becomes the property of someone else in the show and goes about his "normal life," and furthermore, it has to have battle scenes that would be frowned upon by the PTA.

I have not forgotten this principle when it comes to battle scenes. However, as for the characters, the Gundam world is a story of evolving human beings, so the end result is "Immaterialism," or "denial of mechanical weapons = denial of mobile suits." This is the meaning of the comment on "Amuro's Denial of Marriage". It even risks becoming a film that denounces against investors...

In other words, this opinion made me keenly aware of the danger of making films based solely on personal feelings...

Therefore, I would like you young people to know that what is contained in *Beltorchika's Children* is a method that is only allowed in the form of a novel, and not strictly a field that can be turned into a film.

There may be some disagreement about this creative theory articulated by

Tomino. However, it is true that the film's content was changed based on sponsors' wishes, while novelizations allowed Tomino a higher degree of creative expression absent in film production. For this reason, *Beltorchika's Children* is frequently regarded as a parallel, separate work that is not part of the so-called canonical history of the series. However, *Beltorchika's Children* continued on in the media mix, both in a Kadokawa-released cassette book (1989) that featured an audio drama with many of the same voice actors as those in the main movie,[37] and a manga adaptation serialized from 2014 to 2018 in Kadokawa Shoten's *Gundam A* magazine. In addition, Tomino published a sequel to *Beltorchika's Children*, titled *Mobile Suit Gundam Hathaway's Flash*.[38] The relationship between *Mobile Suit Gundam Hathaway's Flash* and *Beltorchika's Children* has meant that the former has long been seen as difficult to animate.[39] However, a theatrical adaptation directed by Murase Shūkō was released in 2021.[40] Dominguez notes that these attempts by *Char's Counterattack* to tell a broader story through various media mixes predated other anime such as *Akira, Evangelion*, and *Ghost in the Shell*.[41]

Thus far, this paper has introduced the development of novelization works as an example of the media mix in the Gundam series. With this series, the original author and director Tomino undertook the novelizations as a tool for deepening the concept of the work and for expanding the world of the series at a time when novelizations of

animated films were less common. Today, it is much more common for animation

directors to produce novelizations of their own work. However, instances where the

director has novelized a prequel or undertook novelization around the same time as

the broadcast of TV animation work – or novelizations where the world of the work

has been altered by rearranging it for an older audience – are relatively scarce.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that, unlike the early Gunpla strategy discussed

below, the novel versions of Gundam took an early strategy of diffusing the subject

matter of the work through the development of multiple worldviews, rather than a

single worldview as in transmedia storytelling. In the Gundam series, novelizations

have remained an important medium for strengthening the series as a whole, rather

than merely promoting or duplicating the animated works. Moreover, it has been

used for media mixes and anime adaptations based on the novels. Not limited to

Gundam, TV animation works have been the source for various media mixes, but the

characteristics of the TV medium make it difficult to use extreme expressions, and

there are restrictions that make it impossible to ignore the wishes of the sponsors.[42]

In this respect, novelization has the advantage of being free from such restrictions,

allowing the author to freely develop the story as he or she envisions it. Although

Space Battleship Yamato was the first novelization of an original TV animation work,

Mobile Suit Gundam novels by Tomino were the first to consciously practice the

strengths of novelization and establish this as a media-mix method capable of expanding the world of the work. Thus, one may say that the novelization of the Gundam series was a pioneering example in the history of Japanese animation media mixing.

Creation of the GUNPLA genre

Among the media mixes undertaken by the Gundam series, one initiative that also sets it apart from other animated series of the time was the challenge to produce three-dimensional models, of which plastic models are a typical example. Robot themes have long been popular in Japanese TV animation, beginning with *Astro Boy* (January 1, 1963-) and followed closely by *Tetsujin 28-go* (October 20, 1963-). A related phenomenon is visible in how television is an efficient advertising medium with a sponsor-supported structure, and from the very beginning of TV animation culture in Japan, there was built-in financial support from sponsors and a corresponding contribution to sponsorship from the animation side. In this case, the main sponsor of *Astro Boy* was the confectionery manufacturer Meiji Seika. According to Steinberg, Meiji's sponsorship was more accidental than strategic, but it came at a time when Japanese confectionery manufacturers were intensely competing for children's snacks and putting a lot of effort into advertising.[43] The success of Meiji's chocolate with an

Astro Boy sticker as an extra led to other TV animation series, including *Tetsujin 28*, being sponsored by confectionery manufacturers.

Toys were also sold during the era of *Astro Boy* and *Tetsujin 28-go*, but the majority of toys for these series were made of vinyl.[44] It has been noted that the success of *Mazinger Z* was the first time that a toy company took control of an animation project.[45,46] During the broadcast of *Mazinger Z* (December 3, 1972-), a three-dimensional toy named "Chogokin" – which was made of zinc alloy – was released, and quickly became a hit due to its realistic texture, reminiscent of the robot in the series.[47] In this context, *Mobile Suit Gundam* also began airing with a toy company, Clover, as the main sponsor. Clover released a silver-colored zinc alloy Gundam during the 1979 broadcast period, which differed in design from the white-colored Gundam in the anime. These toys were targeted at preschool children, but did not sell well because they were unappealing to adolescents, who were the main audience of the anime.[48] Yamaura Eiji, the producer of *Gundam*, suggested to Clover that a plastic model that realistically embodied the shape of the robot and was inexpensive would be a good idea.[49] However, Clover rejected the concept, and instead the manufacturer Bandai was given the rights to produce plastic models based on the series.[50] The initial plastic model of the main character, Gundam, was designed by designer Masatoshi Muramatsu, who had been in charge of military plastic models, and the design was

inspired by the armor of tanks and fighter planes.[51] The model was made in a 1/144

scale, which was the same scale as existing plastic models for non-anime franchises.[52]

The Gundam plastic model (so-called GUNPLA, a combination of the first two terms)

at this scale became a huge hit and sold over 1 million units in only six months after its

release. This success occurred despite the fact that the models were released in July

1980, six months after the end of the TV animation in January 1980.[53]

In contrast to previous animated series, which focused primarily on heroes and

protagonists, the plastic models lineup for Gundam included the series' enemy robots,

such as the Zaku and Gouf. [54] Moreover, these models also gained comparable

popularity. [55] This success was partially due to the fact that all robots from the

Gundam franchise, be they friend or foe, were considered military weapons called

"mobile suits." In fact, Tomino requested that his mechanic designer, Ōkawara Kunio,

pursue designs that would make enemy robots "look like weapons."[56] As these booms

in sales heated up, all mobile suits that appeared in the anime were turned into model

kits, and eventually Bandai even produced a line-up of robots produced that did not

appear in the series, titled MSV (Mobile Suit Variation).[57]

The MSV project began when the publishers placed an order with Ōkawara for

information that could not be supplemented by the official setting materials alone at

the time of the release of the Gundam movie version.[58] So four newly designed mobile

suits (*Zaku* for wetlands, *Zaku* for bombardment, *Zaku* for underwater, and *Zaku* for desert warfare) were published in a book about the Gundam movie version.[59] Then, after all the suits that appeared in the TV anime had been made into plastic models, plastic modeling of the MSV series began.

Although they did not appear in the TV anime or movie version, mobile suits that were considered to have existed in the world of the film - such as ace-specific units, prototypes, and units that were modified for local use - were proposed and commercialized as plastic models and distributed to the public through media such as model magazines and anime magazines.[60] New MSV plastic models continued to be released during the gap period (1982-1985) when there were no TV broadcasts of the anime or movie versions of the Gundam series – and in this way, the MSV models contributed to maintaining consumer interest and memory of the Gundam series.[61] In addition, over the course of product development, the silhouettes of MSV plastic models have been improved, bringing realism to the Gundam worldview and attracting adult fans of plastic models.[62]

Table 1. MSV GUNPLA (all released by Bandai, in order of release date)

Release Date	Product Name

April 1983	1/144 MS-06R ZAKU II
April 1983	1/144 MS-06K ZAKUCANNON
April 1983	1/144 YMS-09 PROTOTYPE DOM
May 1983	1/144 MS-06D ZAKU DESERT TYPE
May 1983	1/144 RGC-80 GM CANNON
June 1983	1/144 MS-06M ZAKU MARINE TYPE
June 1983	1/144 MS-14C GELGOOG CANNON
June 1983	1/144 RX-78-1 PROTOTYPE GUNDAM
July 1983	1/144 MS-07H GOUF FLYING TEST TYPE
July 1983	1/144 FA-78-1 GUNDAM FULLARMOR TYPE
August 1983	1/144 MS-06E ZAKU RECON
September 1983	1/144 MS-06V ZAKU TANK
September 1983	1/60 MS-14C GELGOOG CANNON
October 1983	1/100 SHIN MATSUNAGA'S MS-06R ZAKU II
October 1983	1/144 YMS-09 DOM TROPICAL TEST TYPE
October 1983	1/100 YMS-09 DOM TROPICAL TEST TYPE
October 1983	1/100 MS-06K ZAKUCANNON
October 1983	1/60 MS-06R ZAKU II Black Tri-Stars use

October 1983	1/60 FA-78-1 GUNDAM FULLARMOR TYPE
November 1983	1/100 YMS-09 PROTOTYPE DOM
December 1983	1/60 JOHNNY RIDDEN'S MS-06R-2 ZAKU II
December 1983	1/144 RGM-79 GM SNIPER CUSTOM
February 1984	1/144 JOHNNY RIDDEN'S MS-06R-2 ZAKU II
March 1984	1/144 MS-06E3 ZAKU FLIPPER
April 1984	1/144 MS-06F ZAKU MINE LAYER
April 1984	1/100 FA-78-1 GUNDAM FULLARMOR TYPE
May 1984	1/144 MSN-01 PSYCHOMMU SYSTEM ZAKU
May 1984	1/144 RX-77-4 GUNCANNON- II
May 1984	1/144 MS-06Z PSYCHOMMU SYSTEM ZAKU ZEONG TEST BASE
June 1984	1/144 RX-78 PERFECT GUNDAM
July 1984	1/250 MSN-02 PSYCHOMMU SYSTEM PERFECT ZEONG
September 1984	1/144 JOHNNY RIDDEN'S MS-14B GELGOOG
September 1984	1/100 JOHNNY RIDDEN'S MS-06R-2 ZAKU II
December 1984	1/100 RX-78 PERFECT GUNDAM

The MSV series also involved expanding the *Gundam* setting. Kits included information such as when the specific mobile suits were created in the fictional timeline, their purpose, and who piloted them, helping to flesh out the world of the series. Ōtsuka has described the unique development of the Gundam series of plastic models as an early example of "narrative consumption" through media mixing.

> Narrative consumption" is the attitude of consuming the setting or worldview (Grand narrative) behind an individual work or episode (Small narrative). At the level of concrete products of narrative consumption, "stories" themselves cannot be sold directly, so "things as fragments are consumed as a pretense.[63]

In this positioning, where Ōtsuka reads Gundam as a "Grand narrative" work that replicated Cold War ideological structures, we argue that the MSV kits constitute an important point in the construction of this form of "narrative consumption."[64] With these models, users are consuming not only the small story of the MSV series of GUNPLA, but also the worldview of *Mobile Suit Gundam* behind them. In this way, GUNPLA have become a new medium for telling and expanding the larger story of the military history and development of weapons in the world of *Mobile Suit Gundam*.

In this manner, the plastic models of the MSV series became popular in contexts separate from those of the main anime series, such that a few of them even appeared in *Mobile Suit Z Gundam*, a sequel to the original anime *Mobile Suit Gundam*.[65] This is an example of the significant influence of plastic model culture on the main Gundam

series. Furthermore, a model magazine, *Mokei joho*, published by Bandai, the company manufacturing the GUNPLA models, further deepened the setting of Gundam's fictional world. This magazine was a free public relations magazine whose main purpose was to introduce the company's products, but it became popular when it began to provide additional information on GUNPLA, such as background military history and development history that did not appear in the main anime. Such was this new popularity that later it, and was later sold for a fee.[66] However, in the anime works that followed the first series, such as *Mobile Suit Z Gundam* and *Mobile Suit Gundam ZZ*, the development of plastic models such as the MSV did not gain much momentum. [67] Probably reasons for this include how the world of *Mobile Suit Z Gundam* was difficult to understand and the anime did not gain popularity; the sales strategy for GUNPLA during this period was inconsistent; and the structure of *Mobile Suit Gundam ZZ* was far removed from the worldview of the original *Mobile Suit Gundam*.[68] Specifically, *Mobile Suit Z Gundam* and *Mobile Suit Gundam ZZ* were stories that moved away from the simple conflict structure between the militaries of different countries, leaving little room to conceive of a background setting such as a military or development history – which had been selling points for the MSV models. In addition, the appearance of many mobile suits in these sequel series that transformed into or combined with fighter aircraft resulted in a loss of weaponry with

military elements.

Simultaneously though, the original novel *GUNDAM SENTINEL* (serialized in another monthly model magazine entitled *Model Graphix* from the September 1987 issue to the July 1990 issue, and depicting depicted the period between those anime works) featured plastic models with realistic designs and serialized images of plastic models with special effects. The development of original stories centered on this model magazine, consequently, the development of original, non-animated plastic model products became very popular among avid plastic model fans.[69] The project and concept of MSV itself continued afterwards and was developed as a media mix for works such as *Char's Counterattack*, *Mobile Suit Gundam F91,* and *Mobile Suit Victory Gundam.* Note that in the MSV project of *Char's Counterattack*, a mobile suit that only appeared in *Beltorchka's Children (*itself a media-mix work that became a separate story from the anime) was also incorporated and made into plastic models. In particular, the *HI-ν Gundam* and *Nightingale*, mobile suits unique to the sequel anime *Beltorchka's Children*, have had their settings changed in books,[70] such as being classified as MSVs as successors to the *ν Gunda*m and *Sazabi* respectively, in line with the worldview visible in the anime version.

When the sales of new MSV products for narrative consumption began slowing down at this point, GUNPLA turned to the route of making existing mobile suits more precise

and realistic. A significant example of this is the Master Grade series, a 1/100 size

model line first released in 1995. Master Grade models, which were more realistic than

existing GUNPLA models that cost several hundred to one thousand yen, were priced

from 3,000 to 10,000 yen and targeted mainly at adults.[71] The Master Grade series

sold well during lagging sales of the smaller models, and later led to the release of the

1/60 scale Perfect Grade series, which reproduced the internal mechanisms in more

detail.

The 'realistic' angle of these new GUNPLA series is an interesting one. Of course, to

begin with, the Gundam mobile suits do not exist beyond the franchise and its world,

so they have little basis or limitations in reality. Moreover, even in the anime, detailed

internal mechanisms are not depicted. Considering these two facts, the realism that

GUNPLA and GUNPLA fans were aiming for differs significantly from the realism that

plastic models of real tanks and fighter planes are aiming for. In this regard,

Kawamura points out that GUNPLA are copies or simulacrum without substance: that

is, they   are not realistic in the sense that they attempt to approach the real world, but

rather, are media that make consumers rethink what "realism" is.[72] Matsui also points

out that GUNPLA are not merely faithful "reproductions" of "shapes," but also have

the mediating nature of "interpretation" of the original, and thus were passed on to

subsequent character models as a new way of modeling products such as plastic

models.[73] Watanabe further points out that "interpretation" in GUNPLA is the logical

bridging of unrealistic elements in the original anime so that they can be accepted as

"what they could be," which is where new stories are born.[74]

While the existing scholarship is correct to point out these key differences, there are

also additional complications to such discussions of 'realistic' models. For instance,

since the 1980s, Gundam plastic models began to be developed in a different context

from the world of the anime   and the previous trend of pursuing realism. Notably, in

light of the fact that GUNPLA were widely recognized by the general public at this

point, manga such as *Plamo Kyōshirō* (serialized in the monthly manga magazine

entitled *Comic BomBom* from the February 1982 to November 1986 issues) were

created, which were themselves about the GUNPLA building process. For example,

Plamo Kyōshirō tells the story of the main character, Kyoda Shiro, who uses a plastic

model simulation machine to pilot his own plastic models in a virtual space and fight

rivals. It is characterized especially by its setting in which the level of modification of

GUNPLA determines the winner, and the direction of the modification does not

necessarily have to be faithful to the original work. As another example, the "*Perfect

Gundam*," an original mobile suit in the world of *Plamo Kyōshirō* 's work, does not

appear in the original Gundam anime, and instead was made into a plastic model in

the MSV category after its appearance in *Plamo Kyōshirō*.

It is also worth noting, however, that the main reception of GUNPA in *Plamo Kyōshirō* is different from the narrative consumption in MSV. In MSV, GUNPLA functioned as a medium for consuming the Gundam worldview, but in *Plamo Kyōshirō*, it is only the plastic models that appear. There, the GUNPLA is not portrayed as a reproduction of character in *Mobile Suit Gundam*, but instead as a character in its own right, without regard to the context of the original story.

After *Plamo Kyōshirō*, other works featuring boys and girls building GUNPLA continued to be developed, such as *Gundam Build Fighters* (October 7, 2013–March 31, 2014) and *Gundam Build Divers* (April 3, 2018–September 25, 2018). Like *Plamo Kyōshirō*, Build Fighters and Build Divers are also composed of plastic models built by the main characters and remotely controlled to fight. *Plamo Kyōshirō* is set in Japan at the time of the GUNPLA boom, a composition that makes the reader aware of the existence of the original work, albeit only slightly. However, Build Fighters and Build Divers are set in a time and space far removed from Japan and the real world, such as the future and other worlds, where GUNPLA is treated as a character completely removed from the original story. And in these series, GUNPLA are modified and arranged with more freedom than in the days of *Plamo Kyōshirō*. For example, the *Beargguy*, which appears in both series, is based on the *Agguy* that appeared in the original *Mobile Suit Gundam*, and is designed to be cute, reminiscent

of a stuffed bear. At the time of *Plamo Kyōshirō*, there was a consistent orientation toward boy-oriented content and military bases to create original cool weapons, but in this *Beargguy*, such weapon-like elements and coolness are completely discarded. This kind of arrangement and play with GUNPLA had been done independently by GUNPLA fans or shown in model magazines, but it is noteworthy that it was offered as official Gundam content.

These were far from the only such examples, though. In addition to these, several other anime and manga production series were created with plastic model production as the main focus, from which many original mobile suits were invented and then became a source of new plastic model products in turn.

Another series that emerged during the 1980s was the SD Gundam series, in which anime characters were arranged with two heads, which is a parody technique frequently used in Japanese anime.[75] The SD Gundam series was first released by Bandai in 1985 as Gashapon vinyl resin dolls, which became very popular and were quickly followed by manga, games, and anime that were completely different from the original Gundam worldview. These included the *Musha Gundam SD Sengoku Den* and *BB Warrior SD Sangokuden,* which both feature SD Gundam.[76] The plastic models for SD Gundam have also emerged since 1987 and have been continuously developed to the present day.[77] According to Kamiya, the culture of "deforming" characters as

parodies for the inner circle of a fan community had existed in manga and anime before the SD Gundam series, but it was SD Gundam that established this practice as its own genre of character consumption.[78] The *SD Gundam* series— completely differs from the realism pursued by the TV animation Gundam series and conventional plastic models. However, this move is also believed to have led to the development of the Gundam series as a whole by attracting a younger generation of fans who were unfamiliar with past animation works.[79] Ōtsuka has said of SD Gundam, "Ten years after Gundam's TV broadcast, the consumers of Gundam products are children who do not know the original Gundam, and the creation of SD Gundam, a replica, has once again prolonged Gundam's life." [80] Moreover, he argues that "The original Gundam is now only a realistic version of SD," citing this as a notable example of how deformed characters have contributed to maintaining the popularity of original works. [81] Similarly, Nakamura and Tosca point out that sales of games dealing with SD Gundam account for a large portion of the Gundam series' media mix in games, and argue that the SD Gundam series has contributed to attracting a younger audience and extending the life of the Gundam series as a whole.[82]

The fact that first GUNPLA themselves and then later the SD Gundam series became consumer content as independent characters, apart from their original stories, was in line with the trends of the time. As noted above, the early hits of the Gundam series

and activities such as MSV and other models supplementing the anime's world, have

tended to be understood through the narrative consumption theory presented by

Ōtsuka. In this regard, Azuma notes that the popularity of narrative consumption in

the 1980s served to compensate for the decline of larger narratives (such as political

ideology) in the real world.[83] On the other hand, Azuma has also pointed out, using

Evangelion as an example, that the main characteristic of otaku culture since the

1990s has become waning interest in the story itself, replaced instead by "database

consumption," in which only the components of the original work, such as "moe"

characters.[84] It should be noted that Ōtsuka himself is said to have regarded narrative

consumption only as a one-case example and not as a concept that lies at the center of

consumer society theory.[85] However, Azuma's suggestion of database consumption

and a preoccupation with moe elements was widely accepted as an alternative to the

narrative consumption theory and as an argument that represents the consumption

trend since the 1990s.[86] In these discussions by Azuma, *Gundam* was exemplified as

a representative example of narrative consumption in the 1980s, and as a counterpart

to the database consumption represented by *Evangelion* in the 1990s and beyond.

However, as mentioned above, the Gundam series as a whole has also been media-

mixed since around the 1990s as content that is separate from the story, such as SD

GUNDAM series and GUNPLA that are designed to be more realistic than the original

anime and has also been accepted as what Azuma refers to as database consumption.

For example, regarding the Gundam and Hello Kitty crossover project in 2019, Kamiya pointed out that this unique collaboration was possible because of the success and acceptance of the deformed and "cute" content of the SD Gundam series.[87] Kani also points out that there is a generational difference among *Gundam* fans, with the science fiction generation oriented toward "setting moe," which is story-consuming, while the anime generation is oriented toward "character moe" and "mecha moe," which is database-consuming, and that GUNPLA became popular because it was accepted by the latter group.[88]

As previously described, GUNPLA have expanded their contents through various new media mixes based on the two directions, namely, realistic and non-realistic lines. In particular, it is worth mentioning that, in addition to continuing the realistic media mix accepted in the context of story consumption, the company also responded to the trend toward database consumption by emphasizing characters and cuteness away from the story, thereby maintaining the acceptance of a wide range of content.

Challenge to create a life-size Gundam

Life-size Gundam statues offer yet another entry and effort in this lineage of three-dimensional versions unique to this particular anime series. One of the earliest official

attempt to create a life-size Gundam of a human-controlled robot animation was probably the Gundam at the "Gundam Museum" (now the Bandai Museum at Toy City) in 2003. [89] However, it was a bust-like figure with only an upper body. Meanwhile, the first Gundam to be sculpted as a standing statue was the 18-meter tall Gundam (RG1/1 RX-78-2 Gundam ver.G30th) in Tokyo in July 2009.[90] At the same time, a 15.5-meter tall Tetsujin 28-go was installed in Kobe in October 2009 as a life-size sculpture of a robot animation other than Gundam.[91] Considering these examples, the Gundam series can be noted as the earliest example of a full-scale sculpture or standing figure from anime. Miyakawa, who was president of Sunrise at the time, recalls the time when the life-size Gundam project was first proposed.[92]

> When I was president of Sunrise, I built an 18-meter standing statue of Gundam in Odaiba in 2009, the 30th anniversary of the broadcast of Gundam. Most people would think that a new movie would be made to commemorate the anniversary of Gundam, but since I am not a visual artist, I was able to come up with the idea of a life-size standing Gundam statue without any particular focus...
> When we planned the standing statue, many of the board members were opposed to it for cost-effectiveness and safety reasons, but the result was a great success.

Furthermore, what makes the life-size Gundam unique is that it has been updated through multiple installations. The Gundam installed in 2009 was a standing figure with nothing in its hands; however, the Gundam installed in Shizuoka in July 2010 was a standing figure with a beam sabre – a weapon from the anime – in its right

hand.[93] When it was installed again in Tokyo in April 2012, the design was updated in detail to match the setting of the work, and at night, in addition to the lighting up of the main body, images were projected on the walls of the adjacent commercial facility.[94] In 2017, a life-size statue of the Unicorn Gundam (RX-0 Unicorn Gundam Ver. TWC) with a height of 19.7-meter tall from the original video animation *Mobile Suit Gundam UC* (March 12, 2010–June 6, 2014) replaced the Gundam installed in 2012.[95] This Unicorn Gundam incorporates new effects, such as a transformation mechanism that replicates the original every 30 minutes.[96] In December 2020, an 18-meter tall, movable Gundam was installed in Yokohama, and was recognized as a Guinness World Record for the "largest mobile humanoid robot" and "largest mobile Gundam"[97] Miyakawa, still discussing his time as president of Sunrise, describes the impetus for this movable Gundam project.[98]

> I created an 18-meter standing statue in Odaiba in 2009, the 30th anniversary of the airing of Gundam…
> When we unveiled it at Shiokaze Park in Odaiba, it attracted 4.15 million people in a period of just over 50 days. Then I thought, "If it drew that many people just standing there, wouldn't it draw even more if it moved?"

In 2021, an 18.03-meter tall Freedom Gundam from the animated TV series *Mobile Suit Gundam SEED* (October 5, 2002–September 27, 2003) was installed adjacent to

a commercial facility in Shanghai.[99] This Freedom Gundam standing statue, a new animation projected on an LED vision system in the commercial facility was incorporated into the production.[100] China was chosen for the first full-scale Gundam outside of Japan because it is the country with the highest sales of GUNPLA outside of Japan,[101] and because it is a country where Gundam is easily accepted. One possible reason why this model was chosen as the first for overseas development is that Gundam SEED was originally very popular in Asia.[102] And the most recent one, the RX-93ffv Gundam (unveiled in April 2022, with a maximum height of 24.8 meters), was installed in a commercial facility in Fukuoka, which was based on the ν Gundam in *Char's Counterattack*.[103]

As much as the GUNPLA series we have detailed at length – and perhaps even more so – these seven life-size sculptures mentioned above represent the challenging efforts that the Gundam series has undertaken. The Gundam series is essentially an animated work set in a virtual world of the future, so it does not have a model region on the present-day Earth and is not associated with film tourism.[104] However, given the fact that such Gundam-related facilities have actually been reported to motivate foreign tourists to visit Japan, it was a noteworthy initiative from the perspective of anime tourism.[105]

Matsui pointed out that the significance and appeal of the three-dimensional

Gundam cannot be explained by "narrative consumption," though that may be the case

for the conventional Gundam series.[106]   According to Matusi, narrative consumption

theory can explain the appeal of the content itself, but it cannot account for going all

the way to Odaiba or Shizuoka to see an 18-meter monument called a "life-size

Gundam." Consequently, this means that a full-scale Gundam has its own unique

appeal that cannot be found in the mere repetitive viewing of anime or the

consumption of stories through familiar character goods. One of its attractions would

be the pseudo-authenticity of the life-size Gundam. Regarding the significance of

Gundam's life-size monument, Matsui, citing Walter Benjamin's argument, suggests

that daring to materialize a symbolic existence without substance leads to the

possibility of perceiving the uniqueness of the here and now.[107] The "Gundam"

mechanic on which the full-scale Gundam is based does not exist anywhere in the

world as a physical entity, but only in two-dimensional contents and the "story" behind

them. However, the full-scale Gundam is a physical entity that dares to make the

"Gundam" a reproduction without substance into a "real thing." Benjamin uses the

word "aura" to describe the weight and authority that an original thing has in the "here"

and "now," and usually aura is lost when the "real" thing in the "here and now" is

"reproduced" in the form of an image.[108] However, in the case of Gundam's life-size

monument, Matsui contends that the contrary has happened: here, the existence that

was originally a "reproduction" of an image is materialized as a three-dimensional object with a huge physical mass, which becomes "the only one that exists" and and is perceived as a "pseudo-aura."[109]

To expand upon this divergence, the ν Gundam installed in Fukuoka is a three-dimensional rendition of a newly-designed mobile suit that does not appear in any of the existing Gundam anime or related works. And, through the new animated images created for it and the plastic models, it also contains expectations and possibilities for a new story.[110] As another attraction, we cannot ignore the fact that the process of creating a full-scale Gundam itself is also new content. Likewise, the movable Gundam installed in Yokohama in 2020 (and its process from the 2014 project to its development and realization over six years) has been introduced in various media and sold as content. [111] Furthermore, in the development process of the Yokohama Movable Gundam, design ideas were solicited from all over the world and projects were developed to actually implement them.[112]

The success of the media mix of these three-dimensional versions expanded the popularity of the Gundam work and character, and it came to be recognized by the government as a representative of Japanese anime culture. Since 2000, the Japanese government has officially recognized anime and manga as part of Japanese culture and supported them as industries.[113] Cool Japan, an industrial policy launched in 2012,

has also considered anime and manga as one of its primary genres from the beginning.[114] In this context, Gundam in particular was highlighted as an advanced case study at the government's Cool Japan Strategy Promotion Conference in February 2015, due to its life-size Gundam initiative and overseas development.[115] Then, in April 2015, a plastic model of Gundam was installed in the office of the minister in charge of Cool Japan and opened to guests from various countries.[116] This plastic model has remained in the minister's office ever since, but Gundam is the only character content that received such special treatment.[117] In addition, in September 2018, the overseas development of GUNPLA was introduced on the website of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry as a successful example of export in Cool Japan.[118] In this way, the Gundam character and related businesses have come to be sought after for their diplomatic role as icons representing Japanese anime culture and as good examples of industrial policy. In particular, the full-scale Gundam was recognized by the government as a unique initiative, and subsequently introduced in a governmental white paper on science and technology.[119] In addition, materials on the development process of the full-scale Gundam and interviews with related persons were widely provided as educational content by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.[120]

As discussed and analyzed throughout this section, the development of multiple life-

size sculptures and the combination of various production techniques are media mix

methods unique to the Gundam series and its success as both a ground-breaking

cultural production and a commercial product.

From Consumed Media Content to Social Icon

This paper has introduced examples of the challenging media mix that the *Gundam*

series has undertaken, and in many cases, pioneered. The *Gundam* series has created

room for diverse work development and media mixes by constructing a large story

based on its unique world and then using unique new extra-textual works to further

develop that. As introduced in the discussion by Ōtsuka and Azuma, the Gundam

series' media mixes such as GUNPLA were often referred to in the context of narrative

consumption. However, the series also features initiatives and meta-content that

cannot be captured within the framework of narrative consumption theory, all of

which are notable in the history of media mixes in Japanese animation. As briefly

covered and theorized in this work, the Gundam series has undertaken various

challenges in relation to media mix, including comic book adaptations, game

adaptations, and series-specific magazine strategies. Behind the Gundam series'

growth to this point as content is the fact that it has combined a media mix that allows

for the consumption of stories and a media mix that does not have a story to match the

needs of the consumers of each era. Through repeated efforts to reproduce Gundams and mobile suits in realistic three-dimensional forms, for which the "real thing" is not supposed to exist, and to weave background settings and stories to make their existence more convincing, we have become aware of the existence of the "real thing" and have come to feel a pseudo-aura from the reproductions. This is a unique characteristic of the Gundam series. Still, given the breadth and complexity of this franchise, there is certainly room for subsequent research on the evolution of the media mix strategy for the series as a whole. In addition, in the Gundam series, the copyright was transferred by the original author Tomino from the beginning, and as a result, various media mixes were conducted flexibly,[121] and the pros and cons of this and comparisons with other anime works are also considered to be worthy of further research.

An important challenge faced in evaluating the Gundam series is that the media mix has become so enormous that it has become difficult to consolidate content. In 2019, the number of Gundam-related books owned by individuals was recognized as a Guinness World Record at 4,049.[122] For example, a cross-series encyclopedic book series of mobile suit encyclopedias, called *MS daizenshû*, has been released irregularly since 1988 with different publishers. The *GUNDAM SENTINEL*, also mentioned in this paper, was a content derived from model magazines, and although it differs

significantly from the rest of the series in terms of copyright, it was included in the *MS daizenshû 2015* and other publications.[123] However, in the 2021 edition, GUNDAM SENTINEL is no longer included,[124] as the publisher Kadokawa states on its website that "some works are not included in the chronological table due to the wishes of the rights holders."[125] There are also issues such as whether or not works that do not appear in cross-series books and games, such as this *MS daizenshû*, should be recognized as canonical history for the franchise. It would be worthwhile to examine these points in comparison with other franchises and series such as *Star Wars*, where similar complications and conflicts – even termed 'canon wars' – are known to exist.

On the other hand, too many media mixes and series developments of Gundam have themselves led to the creation of new products and stories that attempt to archive Gundam. This kind of media mix that becomes like an Ouroboros is an advantage in the sense that content can be mass-produced, but there is a risk that it will become a closed world of hardcore fans. One of the efforts to break the circle may be a social initiative such as the "Gundam Global Challenge" mentioned earlier. The project, called GUDA (GUNDAM UNIVERSAL CENTURY DEVELOPMENT ACTION), aims to return the message of the Gundam series, which has depicted a future society, to the real world, and to conduct open innovation research and development to realize a better future society.[126] Among these activities are unique attempts to support the

launch of open-access journal to which anyone can contribute.[127] The reason why Gundam is a good match for a project that considers such real-life issues may be due to the fact that the Gundam series has been pursuing a realism that relies on the real world and science in its pursuit of realism, in addition to the fact that it has been gaining recognition as a character through its continued challenge of a diverse media mix. Given that Gundam is set in a future society of mankind, the pursuit of realism in the Gundam world is, in turn, linked to the imagination of a future society of mankind. The Gundam series has always been about new media mixes, involving fans and communicating in an interactive manner. We will keep an eye on their future challenges, and we encourage fellow researchers to do the same.

Acknowledgments

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Cosplay Collaboration Videos:

Community Interactivity in Times of Pandemic

Edmund W. Hoff

Abstract: Cosplay has developed with the influences of contemporary society since its early beginnings. From analog event-based interactions to online activities, this growth in popularity has been gradual and encountered challenges along the way. The COVID pandemic lockdown conditions of 2020, however, have been extremely disruptive for conventions. Cosplay activities online have changed from a supporting element of the physical event to being the only option available for a period. In tumultuous times human society has proved capable of adapting rapidly and popular culture is no different. Particularly during the early days of the restrictive measures, there was a burst of online activity and for the global cosplay community this manifested as cosplay collaboration videos. These cosplay community-based projects coalesced around themes familiar to the fandom from anime and manga to games and beyond. The global reach of the digital realm facilitated groups to come together in cooperation in a unique way which inspires further development of tools available to cosplayers.

Keywords: Community, Cosplay, COVID-19, Digital, Anime

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Introduction

In a year that has been tumultuous around the world in many ways, people have attempted to come together to somehow rebuild connections through participatory activity. Digital methods of interactivity have become a reliable option to fill the void as international travel in traditional form has become near impossible. Online communication has grown in recent years as a legitimate form of community development.[1,2,3] Cosplayers also have been quick to utilize this medium in what has been traditionally analog aspects of group participation such as costume construction support or idea sharing through photo images. Until 2020 these forms of communication over the Internet were augmentations of direct networking at anime related events or similar forms of gatherings. The Covid-19 pandemic changed this dramatically however, and what was optional became a necessity for community interaction.

Early in the pandemic, among the many changes that came with lockdown measures in countries around the world was a burst of interactive endeavors - digital and otherwise. From Zoom classes to bread making and gardening, people were looking at ways to occupy the greatly increased amount of time spent at home. This reflects the extreme change in environment and the ability of living beings to adapt when faced with necessity. In times where change is not needed the status quo is often maintained; in times where change is vital, it can come quickly. With the innate awareness youth have for digital technology growing up with it all around them, their penchant to create change is formidable. This study will examine online cosplay collaboration videos as one form of this dramatic development in culture.

During 2020, dozens of cosplay collaboration videos were uploaded online. Those posted to the YouTube platform will form the focus of this article. As far as historical archiving is concerned, these projects were not planned well in advance; rather they were spontaneous digital congregations. These postings appeared in coordination with the fashion inspired 'Pass the Brush Challenge' and cosplayers tailored them to accommodate their transformation into character form. Of interest to this study is the examination of the nature of the videos uploaded and through interviews with project organizers, and questionnaires answered by participants analyzing the outcome of their efforts. The analysis of fan activity during this first year of the pandemic compliments similar studies conducted by others; most notably Alberto and Tringali's surveys of anime convention attendance later in the pandemic when events started being held in 2021 and 2022, "Working with Fannish Intermediaries."[4,5]

Literature Review

The early lockdown period in 2020 has provided the opportunity for many to look closely at the effect on fandom. Innate understanding of the use of the tools available has situated members of some communities to play a dynamic role in social activism.[6,7] Crystal Anderson examines the correlation between K-Pop online communities and the move to the digital classroom. The already established use of blogs, wikis and podcasts provides a blueprint for effectively engaging students through online platforms. [8] Similar to anime conventions, theme parks as gathering locations for fans have been heavily impacted by the pandemic. The magnitude of having all 6 Disney park locations around the world closed simultaneously cannot be understated. [9] This loss gives us pause and a "chance to consider how connections to such spaces were

continued during the lockdowns of the coronavirus pandemic". [10] In a similar way, the Eurovision event being cancelled for the first time in 65 years had a powerful impact on those who closely follow the multinational singing competition. This pushed the community to develop the Eurovision Again contest, giving fans the opportunity to relive past moments and react simultaneously with friends over social media in a similar way to the live celebration.[11]

The sudden upheaval of the pandemic and impact on fandoms provides compelling counterpoints to the collaborative cosplay videos presented in this study. Similar to the case of the Eurovision Again contest, the YouTube platform was commonly used as a venue to host the cosplay collaboration videos. The videos posted by cosplayers, however, were created between fans in a contemporaneous fashion and were not so much retrospective looks at past moments to be celebrated in coordination with other fans. We can see here a noteworthy disparity in fandom and how content is celebrated. Another significant difference is how unlike the Eurofan movement seems to have been an upwelling of desire for content by a great number of fans, the collaborative cosplay videos were initiated by a call to action from one or two community members to worked with other participants on a smaller scale.

Methodology

Before discussing the accumulated data directly, this section will explain how it was collected. The 'Dataset Cosplay Collaboration Videos - Videos' dataset is a listing of 65 collaboration videos and 'Dataset Cosplay Collaboration Videos - Responses' is the

feedback from 83 participants to the 9-question survey, 'Appendix A - Online Cosplay Video Activity Questionnaire'.

The collaboration videos were as short as 1:40 to as long as 12:21 in length; with as few as 6 participants to as many as 116. On average 21.5 participants in each video was the standard and with the 65 videos included in this study, 1395 cosplayers came together to participate in their respective projects. The videos normally begin with a cosplayer in casual clothing, at home with a background that is often incongruent with the character into which they would be transforming. They would then take a make-up brush or similar item, move the brush to the lens of the camera and after moving the brush away from the camera and a quick edit, it would appear as though the cosplayer had magically changed into the character. They would then pass the brush off screen one direction to the next participant of the project.

Figure 1 Screen captures of Astellecia Skye's part in the 'Pass the SSR' Crystal challenge video

In Figure 1 we can see an example from the Pass the SSR Crystal challenge video. The participants are dressing as characters from the *Granblue Fantasy* role-playing video game and coordinate to a certain extent with participants who appear before and after them by passing an in-game item.

Although the YouTube collaboration video project data analysis was extensive, it was by no means exhaustive. Most of the videos have a few thousand views each and some have views in the hundreds at the time of writing this article. Videos continue to be posted by creators and there are surely other videos that did not appear after multiple searches. That being said, a small number of outlier videos will not dramatically affect the results of the survey below. Video data analysis was limited to YouTube due to the substantial number available however there are likely different (or the same) videos posted to Facebook, Instagram or TikTok. Search expressions were limited to English as terms were predominantly used in this language. Although people wrote in various languages in the comments section associated with the videos, the titles and credits were often written in English. YouTube or Google cannot be accessed in some countries (most notably China), and this will also skew some results. A number of the videos included in the survey used variation terms such as 'Pass the Headband Challenge' for Naruto videos or 'Don't Rush Challenge' in relation to the music-based trend which occurred during the same time frame as other videos. Finally, fashion-based videos with costumes that were not based on particular characters such as Goth, Horror or 'spooky' themes were not included in the analysis.

Cosplay Collaboration Video Data Analysis

Cosplay collaboration videos became a particular trend that coincided with the global effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Comparison of Google search trends and cosplay collaborative projects posted to YouTube demonstrate this strong correlation. As can be seen in Figure 2, global searches for the term 'Pass the Brush Challenge' peaked during the week of April 19 - 25 and remained relevant from between

April 5 through June 13th. This corresponded with the Italy lockdown of March 9 to May 18 and approximately 90 countries and territories followed with some level of restrictive measures from late March to May or June. [12]
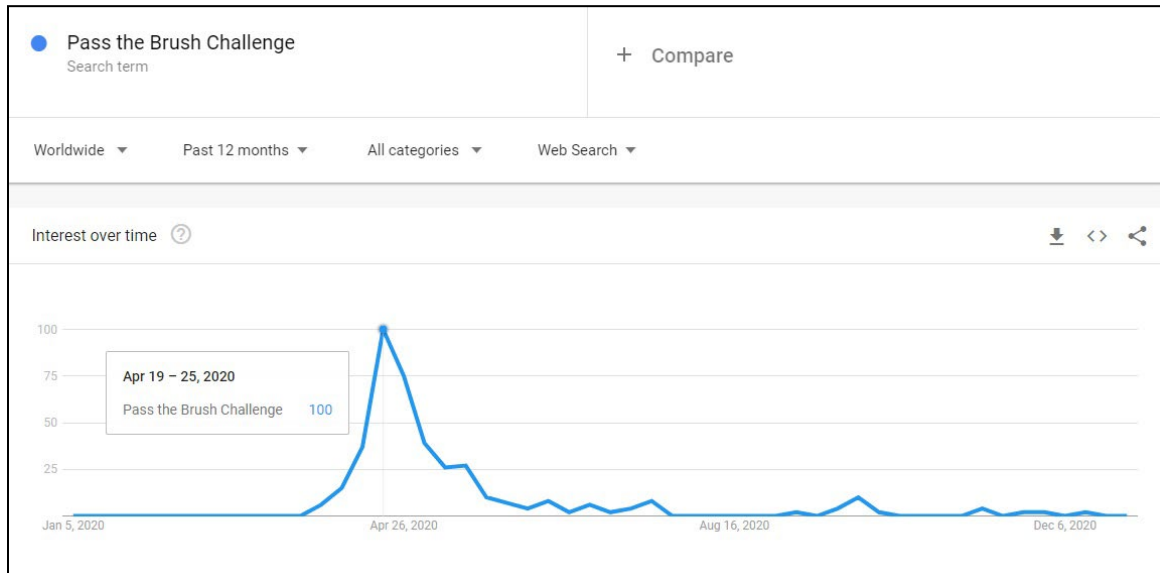

Figure 2 Google Trends search for the frequency of the searched term 'Pass the Brush Challenge' during 2020

YouTube postings of cosplay collaboration videos followed a similar trajectory although with a certain amount of delay. As demonstrated in Figure 3, among the 65 videos found on YouTube, 11 of them were posted in the month of April when the 'Pass the Brush Challenge' term peaked in trending on Google. The greatest number was posted in May at 24, and numbers dropped to 14 in June and 6 in July. For the remainder of the year from August until December one to three were posted each month.

Categorizing the main features of the videos, the greatest number of groups at 36 could be labeled 'Series' based collaborations as they accumulated characters from the same comic, anime, or game titles. They had the highest number of posts in May at 14
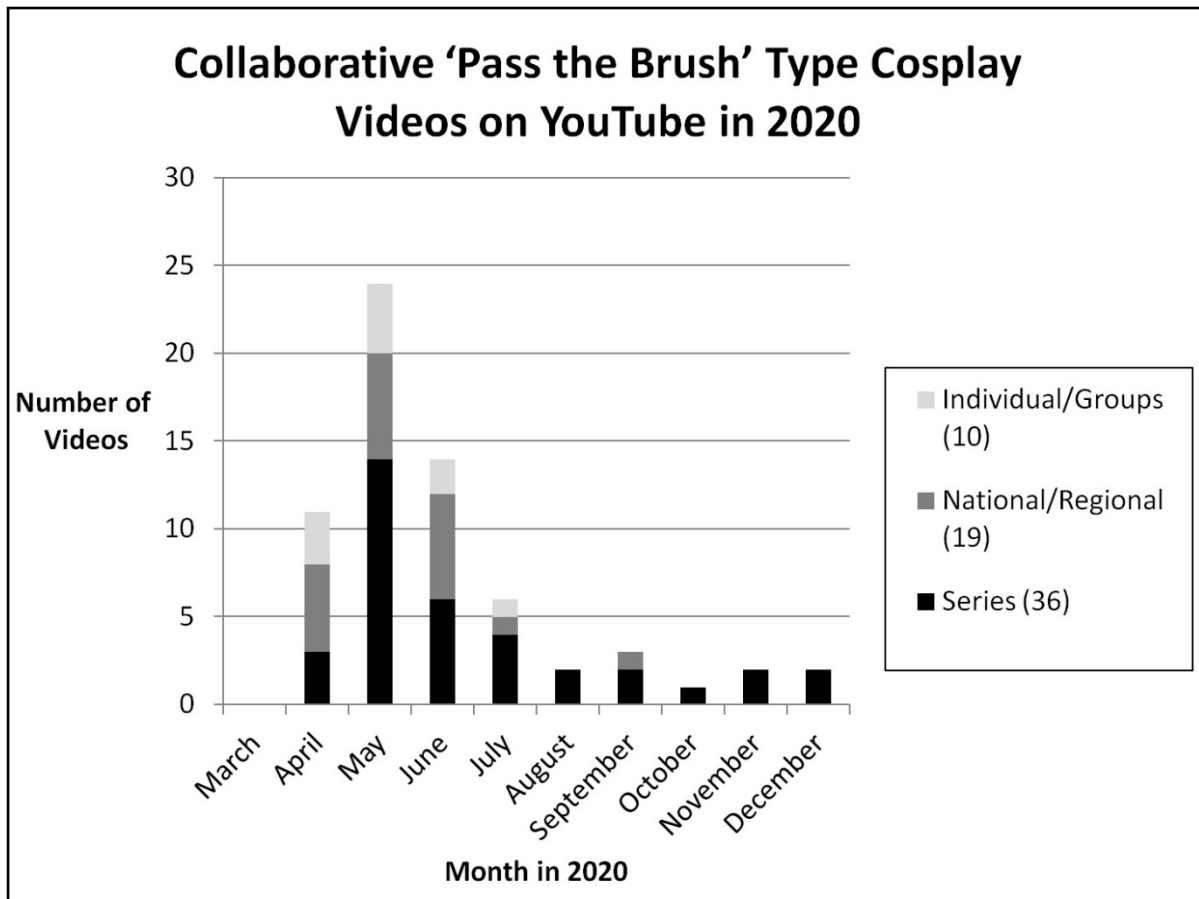
Collaborative 'Pass the Brush' Type Cosplay Videos on YouTube in 2020

Number of Videos

Legend:
- Individual/Groups (10)
- National/Regional (19)
- Series (36)

X-axis: **Month in 2020** — March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December

Figure 3 Graph of 'Pass the Brush' collaboration videos posted to YouTube during 2020

and continued to be posted throughout the year. In particular, a series of 4 *Touhou Project* videos were posted monthly from August to September. Clearly, participants found the strongest connection through a certain series. The next largest group could be categorized as National/Regional with a total of 19 videos. These peaked in May and June with 6 videos similar to series-based collaborations. A number of videos were difficult to classify as they could be placed in 2 different categories. One example is the Italian based Cosplay Italia group who posted 4 videos devoted to the *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* series.

This group could easily have been categorized under 'National/Regional' or 'Series', however, to demonstrate the overwhelming predominance of series-based

videos they were placed in the 'National/Regional' category. Finally, 10 videos are categorized as 'Individual/Groups' and were posted by individuals without particular series theme or location. Most notably, POC (People of Color) groups posted 3 videos in April including #7 from the 'Countries' category from the dataset. All features found in the title or comments section of the videos were included in the Cosplay Collaboration Videos Dataset.

The main features and categorization of some of the videos could be debated however the predominant trend of the 'Series' being the most popular category is indisputable. Although national identity or the role of the individual is notable in Figure 3, the series, in which cosplayers participated as part of an assembly of characters was the most popular format. In other words, the series is the exemplification of a shared vision that the participants have endorsed.[13] Bringing the project together is the work of individuals but it is clear that it is not about one member alone but a convergence through fandom.[14]

Participant Responses

Many collaboration participants were kind enough to complete a questionnaire regarding their experiences. Figure 4 is a pie chart of Q5 on the questionnaire inquiring about the amount of time spent preparing for what was often a 5 to 10 second video clip. The greatest number of participants spent 2-3 hours and about a third of participants worked for more than 3 hours in preparation. This would include preparing their costume, putting on make-up, and taking multiple videos until satisfied with the result. In all, a substantial amount of time was dedicated by all participants to the project considering the brevity of each persons' appearance in the video.
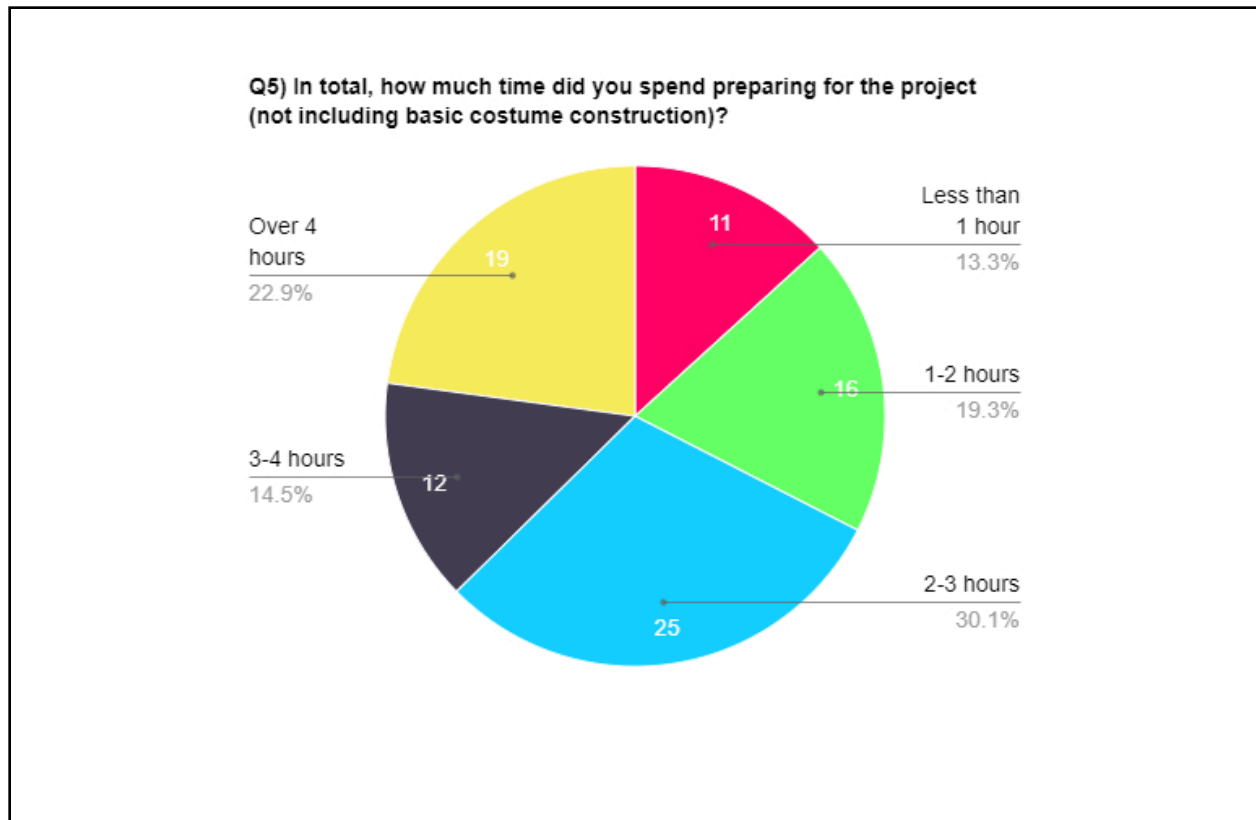
Figure 4 Interviewees responses regarding time spent in costume preparation for their video submission

The sentiments of participants came through in Q8 of the questionnaire. In response to the question 'With regards to the Covid-19 pandemic in particular, how did the project affect or inspire you?' Some expressed the sense of isolation felt and the access to an outlet for pent up energies; "You can still be creative at home while practicing social distancing (*n* 14). "A similar response was more to the point; "Just don't feel so alone anymore" (*n* 38). Others reflected on the interactivity of the exercise and ability to pursue a common cause; "It was beautiful to see people from all around the world contribute with the same cosplay passion from their own homes" (*n* 45). or "Perhaps we can have more innovative ways to present ourselves and interact with friends at home in future" (*n* 3). Still others reflected on agency in being able to

collaborate and build connections through the project. "It inspire me a lot, cause I didn't feel alone doing this, I thought about my friends, ask them some details and news at the same time. It was a good way to socialize" (*n* 53). These are only a few of many projects that appeared during these early days of the pandemic.

Conclusion

During the period of data collection a prevalent statement was that 2020 was a year to forget. This article sheds light on a time when the pandemic was perhaps at the toughest point. However, these moments of imagined togetherness and the sudden longing, which moved people to act deserve memorialization. Such bursts of activity in a time of confusion took cosplay fandom a fundamental step forward. This has not been a year to be forgotten by any means.

The experiences of the 1395 participants of the 65 videos in this survey deserve a spotlight in these dark days. The bulk of the projects were completed at a time when there was a rush of online activity, but many can see that this global experience is more of a marathon and those early weeks seem far away. Uplifting comments from participants from the questionnaire were worthy of note: "I learned that we are all in the same situation. People all over the world experience the same struggles as me right now and that definitely helped me coping with everything" (*n* 81). We habitually move from one task to the next and focus on what is in front of us, but these new skills learned through the activity will not only help with managing the moment but also bodes well for the future. In a time where mass events have come to a close these experiences will influence the direction of cultural interaction and community in years to come. The fact that the most common theme for the videos were the 'Series' category is meaningful; the

importance of the shared vision through anime and related stories proved paramount. Ultimately, these are stories of fandom recorded for history. Just as the Covid virus has mutated before and during the pandemic, so too society continues to adapt to deal with the realities or the world around us.

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Abstract: This study examines the shifting meaning of subjectivity and the blurred boundaries between humans and nonhumans. Additionally, it explores the impact of technology intervention on gender, drawing from the principles of posthumanism philosophy. Cloning is one of the issues highlighted in the posthuman realm. This study seeks to examine the incorporation of posthumanism and technofeminism in the character Tomie in the anime *Junji Ito Collection* (2018, Itô Junji "Korekushon"), with the intention of challenging the sexualization of shôjo while remaining skeptical using the narrative analysis method. The results and findings show that Tomie presents a posthuman idea centered on her super regeneration ability and cloned creations to defy the limits of humanity. This idea also promotes elements of technofeminism that lead to the use of biotechnology related to reproduction. Nevertheless, in the end, Ito tries to invite the audience to remain critical in responding to the issue of technofeminism, both in terms of ethics and objectivity.

Keywords: anime, cloning, posthumanism, technofeminism, Junji Ito, Tomie

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Introduction

Posthumanism is a theoretical perspective that challenges the anthropocentric, ethnocentric, and gender-biased aspects of traditional humanism. Katherine Hayles postulates in *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999) four assumptions for understanding the posthuman condition.[1] First, posthumans prioritize informational rather than material patterns, so the presence of a biological substrate that refers to the physical human body, including its organs and organ systems such as the brain, digestive system, nervous system, and so on, as constituents of the human body are not essential, because it is seen as an accidental event in history rather than a form of evolution is not essential. Second, posthumans view consciousness as only a minor component of human identity. Third, posthumans consider our bodies as natural prostheses that are constantly learning to manipulate, allowing any replacement of these prostheses to be considered a continuous process throughout our lifetime. Fourth, posthumans support the configuration of intelligent machines with human beings. The four key assumptions provide a framework for understanding the interconnectedness of humans, technologies, and the environment.

Derived from Jacques Derrida's deconstruction and Niklas Luhmann's autopoiesis, posthumanism argues that humans, through cybernetics, have dismantled the boundaries between human and nonhuman entities. The underlying reason is that human agency encompasses not only members of the human species but also entities that are not human. As a result, it is possible to argue that humans are not completely independent entities but rather part of a system that functions correlated to factors outside of themselves. Braidotti argues that due to "the

interdependence with its environment through a structure of mutual flows and data transfer that is best configured as complex and intensive inter-connectedness."[2]

This article focuses on biotechnology, specifically cloning, in a posthumanistic context. Cloning makes it possible to artificially reproduce an individual with identical traits and embodiment. This technology poses an ethical dilemma, placing the individual in a precarious state between life and death, non-essentialist subjectivity, and an ambiguous position between humans and nonhumans.

The posthumanist perspective seeks to advance egalitarianism by eradicating the dichotomies between human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic, male and female, mind and body, subject and object, and other dualisms through the utilization of technological intervention. Utilizing technology from a posthuman standpoint seeks to harmonize conflicting and imbalanced binary stances by fostering relational consciousness and a shared understanding of their interdependence. Borrowing the term "distributed cognition" from Hayles, this situation is characterized by the shared consciousness between humans and nonhumans in their interactions. [3] Similarly, Haraway uses the term "companion species" to describe the relationship between humans and nonhumans.[4] Braidotti adds to this concept with the term "zoe life," which captures the intricate nature of human biological-sociological existence involving human and nonhuman actors. [5]

In contrast to posthumans, transhumans utilize technology to augment human capabilities to achieve perfection. According to Bostrom, the posthuman represents the human ideal of perfection, rationality, and agency as a legacy of Renaissance humanism.[6] For Ranisch and Sorgener, transhumanist visions often encompass techno-optimists who encourage the enhancement of humans through physical or biological means, particularly as a means to evade death, such as through "cryonic" technology.[7] This highlights that transhumanists are not trying to contradict

anthropocentrism like posthumanists, instead endeavoring to advance humanism in a more extreme direction. Such belief leads them to "accept the possibility of serializing humans, of producing the same individual ad infinitum."[8] On the contrary, posthumanists believe that longevity to avoid death is irrelevant because death is virtual and immanent, so it is not the end of life but a generative process.[9]

Cloning intersects with the ideals of posthumanism and introduces elements of technofeminism. This particular element refers to the desires of feminists such as Donna Haraway[10] and Shulamith Firestone,[11] who advocate for technological advances to overcome women's biological limitations. Posthumanism challenges the Western philosophical tradition that relies on a binary or dualistic way of thinking, which places women at the nature-culture pole and men at the technology pole. This perspective separates women from technology since it is considered a masculine domain. Moreover, the dualistic tradition posits women as beings characterized by irrationality or emotionality, so challenging the notion of rationality as the foundation for technical advancement. Posthumanism resembles techno feminists's objective to question binary limitations and establish women as proactive technological participants. However, this paper does not discuss the active role of women in technology but focuses on the representation of fear and doubt towards the possibility of women's union with technology, especially biotechnology, which creates horrific creatures typical of horror narratives.

Technofeminism aims to discover women's roles in technology and offers the utopian dream of women's freedom from biological tyranny through technological intervention. Firestone presents this idea in her popular work *The Dialectic of Sex* (1971),[12] which celebrates technological advances, especially biotechnology, as a way to liberate women's reproductive functions. Haraway's well-known *A Cyborg Manifesto* (2016)[13] also presents the cyborgian narrative supporting this notion.

Technofeminism exhibits a strong correlation with the concepts of "cyborg feminism" or "feminist technoscience."[14] As a result, a recurring motif arises concerning the interrelation between technofeminist elements within the cloning story, mainly its association with women's emancipation from biological obligations, particularly concerning procreation. This is particularly true when considering its potential impact on the future of reproduction, a domain historically emphasizing women.

However, just like the involvement of technology in posthumanism, reproductive technology from the perspective of technofeminism also raises concerns. Unlike Firestone, who seems to support the involvement of technology as an empowerment for women, [15] and Wajcman, who is open-minded as long as fair control backs technology for women,[16] other feminists clearly show opposition. For example, feminists from the group FINRRAGE (Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering) view reproductive technology as just another way for men to oppress women by instilling masculine values that favor violence, essentially belittling the maternal values of a woman.[17] Biotechnology is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, according to Wajcman, it is considered capable of addressing biological limitations faced by women, such as "...choosing not to have a child, choosing to have a child after menopause, or choosing the sex of their child".[18] However, biotechnology can also be a hindrance to women when masculine authority is still dominant within it; in the end, it becomes "...another attempt to usurp self-determination of women's bodies."[19] This explanation leads to a discussion of cloning in this article as a posthumanism narrative with technofeminist components that particularly seek to empower women through interventions related to reproductive technology.

Numerous fictional works have delved into the posthuman perspective on human cloning, offering both entertainment and philosophical insights into the

possible future of this technology. For instance, Carrasco Carrasco (2021) posits that the ethical value inherent in posthuman technology reawakens the spirit of humanism through the resemblance of the cloned figure depicted in the novel *Never Let Me Go* (2010) to a capitalist object. She argues that this resemblance prompts the audience to empathize with the figure and imagine experiencing a similar fate. [20] In contrast, Wei and Yuan (2019) focused their analysis on the existential conflicts of the clone characters in *Never Let Me Go* as a representation of posthuman bioethics that is considered oppressive and dehumanizing. The authors posit that the clones are alienated from humanity due to their hybrid nature, which is perceived as unnatural despite their human-like forms and emotions. [21]

In the meantime, Yan's (2019) analysis of the novel *Never Let Me Go* reveals the existence of a panopticon narrative through the clone academy, Hailsham, which politicizes posthuman subjects to serve human interests. The clones are positioned as "homo sacer" (Agamben, 1998) [22] in a manner that renders them victims of justified slaughter. [23] Sing (2021) posits that the novel *Never Let Me Go* espouses democratic transhumanist ideas supporting of equal rights for humans to enhance their bodies despite the sacrifice of posthumanist values, as evidenced by the novel's portrayal of the clones as victims of exploitation.[24] On the other hand, Lacko (2021) compares how clone characters from the fictional works *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* (1976), *Never Let Me Go* (2010), and *Orphan Black* (2013-2017) identify themselves. In *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* (1976), the clones identify as saviors, while in *Never Let Me Go* (2010), the clones identify as naive characters who pretend to believe that they are real people through emotional ownership, and in *Orphan Black* (2013-2017) the clones are freed to search for their identities. Still, they are restricted through medical research, including control over women's bodies.[25] In addition, Harper and Gullion (2021) provide an analysis of the TV series *Orphan Black* (2013-

2017), which reveals the issue of posthumans and the conception of the monstrous mother. The authors posit that the clone characters, Sarah, Helena, and Alison, struggle to embody the ideal of a mother following dominant cultural norms despite their monstrous natures and destructive behaviors. [26] Additionally, Maiti (2021) employs Chabria's novel *Clone* (2019) as a lens through which to examine the subjectivity of the clone as a marginalized figure who, in search of identity, engages in acts of resistance against the dominant order.[27]

This paper aims to discuss cloning through Tomie's story in the horror anime *Junji Ito Collection* (2018, *Itô Junji "Korekushon"*), adapted from the homonymous manga by Itô Junji. Tomie Kawakami is a mysterious and gorgeous girl with super-regenerative powers. She can clone any part of her body, and she enjoys seducing men. The character Tomie has been the subject of numerous investigations undertaken from various angles. Haryanti and Anggapuspa delve into the visual elements and motifs of Tomie in the manga.[28] According to Haryanti and Anggapuspa, "Tomie Kawakami in the comic is visually presented as a character who is filled with seductive, manipulative, and aggressive"[29] in line with the *femme fatale* character. Khilnani examines how Tomie's mutilation scene as a form of body horror evokes feelings of horror and affective responses from the audience. [30] This occurs "when we witness physical mutilation of bodies, and it evokes affective responses through which we align our bodies with that of the victim, which can be achieved through a visceral involvement with the mutilated body on screen."[31]

Meanwhile, Pacheco and Rodríguez focus on the symbols, imagery, and cultural references associated with Tomie.[32] Pacheco and Rodríguez have described Tomie as "a character who combines passivity and activity. Tomie is a passive character in that she suffers from the murders. However, she comes back to life time after time. Tomie can be read as a monstrous woman as much of her attitude and actions"[33] and So Mi-

An discusses the representation of cruelty of Tomie in the manga through three stages, namely "the first is death through physical destruction in the form of dismemberment. The second is regeneration. The third is multiplication, in which the beauty of Tomie is her fatal character flaws".[34] Using Tomie's character as a lens, the research contributes to the existing literature, especially insights into the intersection of posthumanism, cloning biotechnology, and technofeminism, providing insights into societal attitudes toward biotechnological advancements and their implications for human identity and ethics. This article analyzes the narratives of *Junji Ito Collection* (2018, *Itô Junji "Korekushon"*) Episode 9 and 1-2 OVA, focusing on the character Tomie to examine the representation of posthumanism ideology.

Tomie as Posthuman in *Junji Ito Collection* (2018, *Itô Junji "Korekushon"*)

Tomie Kawakami is an antagonist in the anime *Junji Ito Collection* (2018, *Itô Junji "Korekushon"*), an anthology series based on Ito Junji's horror manga. Episode 9 of the segment "*Gaka*" or "*Painter*" and two OVA-type episodes entitled "*Tomie*" mainly depict Tomie's story. Although the original manga presents Tomie's story more elaborately, this paper uses the anime adaptation to limit and simplify the data.

Tomie's story begins in Episode 1 of the anime OVA *Junji Ito Collection* (2018, *Itô Junji "Korekushon"*) by showing the funeral ceremony of a high school girl, Tomie Kawakami, who has died of murder. Unexpectedly, Tomie still lives and casually appears in the classroom after the funeral ceremony.[35] During the flashback scenes, the audience learns that the perpetrators of Tomie's murder were none other

than her own classmates and homeroom teacher, Takagi. Tomie was mutilated into 42 pieces.[36]

The mutilated body parts of Tomie undergo a transformation, resulting in the creation of clones that not only possess physical characteristics but also retain memories and experiences associated with the 'original' Tomie. This phenomenon is exemplified in the initial scene of Episode 1 of the Original Video Animation (OVA), as one of Tomie's clones proceeds to attend school after her funeral. The audience learns about the true story of what happened to Tomie that caused her to return from the dead in the extra footage at the end of the episode. One of Tomie's classmates, Reiko, who has moved to another city, found Tomie's pieces of body, which she threw into the river and washed up in a cave on the beach. Enigmatically, one of the body pieces regenerated into a clone of Tomie, albeit imperfect.[37]

In a December 1998 interview with Davinch magazine, Ito stated that Tomie's original idea was to portray a narrative in which "a dead person would come back to life and visit their former friends as if nothing had happened."[38] The comment made by Ito implies a premise that resembles the Japanese myth of onryô. Onryô refers to the belief in the resurrection of the spirit of an individual who has died, with the intention of exacting retribution for the harm inflicted against them or harboring resentments. This tale is the reference for the narrative of Tomie, who reincarnates following her classmates and instructor Takagi's mutilation in Episode 1 of the OVA. While the story does not reveal the exact aim of Tomie's resurrection, the audience can readily observe the disorder she instigated upon her return, which can be construed as Tomie's retribution against her companions and teacher. Yamamoto and Reiko, who had the intention of voluntarily joining the police force, were apprehended by their other classmates, with one of them expressing a propensity to

cause harm to Yamamoto. Moreover, it is evident that Takagi, the teacher, has a loss of intelligence upon Tomie's comeback.

Ito's depiction of Tomie's resurrection deviates from the conventional onryô of Japanese folklore, which speaks of paranormal events. As illustrated in the manga, a doctor likens Tomie's skills to those of planaria worms; Ito proposes that Tomie's resurrection is the result of cloning and super-regeneration. The anime scene in Episode 9 where Tomie's body parts start to change into another Tomie, helps audiences understand the representation.[39] This leads to the idea of cloning, which shows the formation of a new individual with physical similarities to the original individual. According to Kass and Wilson, "cloning, however, is a general term describing any procedure that produces a precise genetic replica of a biological object, including a DNA sequence, a cell, or an organism."[40] This incident is comparable to their explanation. The manga version further supports this notion by explaining that burning Tomie will stop her regeneration, and submerging her in acid will stop it altogether.

The process of transforming the new Tomie from each part of the 'original' Tomie's body does not reveal any clear biotechnological codes. Still, it tends to make it a creepy scene typical of the horror genre. The obscurity is also based on Itô's Lovecraftian horror genre, making Tomie's biological process appear strange and speculative compared to the science fiction genre. Although it is not narrated in the anime, in the manga version, Ito implies that Tomie's new appearance involves genomic events, which is in line with the cloning narrative. Episode 2 of the OVA gives the narration of Yukiko as the recipient of Tomie's kidney donor. Although the episode concludes with a surgical scene to remove Tomie's kidney that has grown into a head, the full version in the manga demonstrates that Tomie's cells still remain in Yukiko's body. Yukiko's physical and behavioral characteristics gradually begin to

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resemble Tomie's as her cells are affected. This depiction is reminiscent of chimerism, where the donor's cells persist and thrive in the recipient's body, resulting in the recipient having two distinct sets of DNA. A similar incident occurred in the manga when a former male model wanted to take revenge on Tomie for dumping him by watching her age. He injects Tomie's blood into random baby girls, causing them to gradually resemble Tomie instead of their parents. Therefore, it can be concluded that Tomie is able to avoid death within the framework of the posthuman narrative not through magical powers but rather through technological intervention.

According to Braidotti, death in the posthuman perspective can be considered temporary.[41] Technological innovation allows death to no longer be the final limit of life. For example, digital technology can transfer the consciousness and memory of someone who has died into the virtual world. In addition, the accompanying digital footprint can make consciousness and memory immortal. This kind of technology also applies to the creation of cloning. Through cloning, deceased individuals are reproduced into new individuals with similar genetic traits, such as Dolly the sheep.

Tomie's cloning ability thus makes her death temporal and evokes what Bradotti calls a "virtual corpse,"[42] a condition of radical immanence. This situation refers to the condition when death, originally considered transcendental, turns into an immanent event so that its occurrence only occurs in the mind while maintaining the material aspect. Based on this, Tomie's death is seen as a posthuman death because it has occurred but is not final; it is only a stage leading to the next stage of Tomie's 'rebirth' through her clone. The process continues to happen repeatedly in the narrative, resembling a cycle, as described by An's findings that outline the repetition pattern in the narrative, namely death-regeneration-proliferation.[43]

When Tomie dies, each piece of her body transforms into a new Tomie with the same body and memories as the 'original' Tomie before she was mutilated. For example, in Episode 1, Tomie returned to school as usual but still remembered her classmates and teachers.[44] It indicates that death for Tomie is simply a creative ability that demonstrates the presence of the true Tomie herself. Correlating to Braidotti's posthuman worldview, death remains "... unsustainable, but it is also virtual in that it has the generative capacity to engender the actual."[45]

The distribution of Tomie's 42 body parts in various places in Episode 1 of the OVA also implies the spread of Tomie's consciousness or, to borrow Hayles term, "distributed cognition." "Distributed cognition" in the context of Tomie's story refers to how cloning technology allows each clone to share consciousness of the same subjectivity and experience as an individual named Tomie. It is illustrated through the scene when Tomie tells Mori during the painting session in Episode 9 about her experience as a murder victim, as seen in the following dialog:

> Tomie : Sensei. You know what? It's not the first time something like that has happened to me.
> Mori : What do you mean by that?
> Tomie : About me being wanted to be killed by men. The men who fell in love with me had the desire to kill me and mutilate my body. Isn't that strange? [46]

The existence of a "distributed cognition" between Tomie's clones as murder victims also shows that her subjectivity has been split so that it is no longer essentialist. Through the embodiment of each clone, which is exactly similar to Tomie, but is 'artificial', neither the 'real' Tomie nor her child, it eliminates her individual uniqueness. Tomie's clones are similar to the Dolly sheep, according to Braidotti, that "has become delinked from reproduction and hence divorced from descents. Dolly is no daughter of any member of her/its old species—simultaneously orphan and mother of her/itself".[47]

Tomie's disconnection from the chain of reproduction parallels Edelman's queer theory of futuristic reproduction. For Edelman, reproduction has traditionally been used to symbolize the future and maintain the status quo in political discourse, which can limit the potential of queer politics.[48] Tomie, referred to as the "mother of herself[,]" rejects heteronormativity as a conventional mother figure, aligning with Edelman's support for queer politics. This follows Pearson's explanation that speculative fiction, including horror, allows audiences to imagine alternative forms of family or kinship in both futuristic pseudo-utopias and dystopias.[49]

Tomie Clone as a Simulacrum with Relational Dependency and the Blurring of Subject-Object and Morality.

The formation of anti-essentialist subjectivity in *Tomie* for Dumas can also be interpreted through the process of simulacrum because there is no original source that forms her selfhood.[50] This statement parallels Lacko's argument that "clones as fictional characters, particularly in the light of their being perceived as copies, or Baudrillardian simulacra, devoid of originality and profound meaning."[51] According to Stout, the clone has the potential to "question and destabilize the boundaries between self and other, original and copy. . . Still, the clone may trump the double as a figure of fascination and dread since the clone opens up the question of technology's potential to alter human subjectivity".[52] The original/fake ambiguity in Tomie is shown in Episode 9, when Mori, who is obsessed with painting Tomie's beauty, finally feels satisfied when he succeeds in painting her with a two-headed form. Mori's reference to the painting comes from a photo taken secretly by his friend that shows Tomie with two heads. One head looks normal, but the other head looks deformed and hideous. [53] The depiction of Tomie in the photo is different from the 'real' Tomie outside the photo, who looks like a normal girl. However, it should

be noted that there is no such thing as a real Tomie, as both the Tomie in the photo and the one outside the photo are copies.

Photographic elements have been used in other works as evidence of the fragmentation of posthuman subjectivity. In *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), for instance, a garbage man has been given false memories by the Puppet Master, causing him to believe that a photograph is of his daughter. Similarly, according to Bolton (2014, 6-7) in *Blade Runner* (1982) Deckard as a Blade Runner realizes that rogue replicants' photographs attempt to mimic the existence of human memories.[54] Consequently, it can be concluded that the simulacrum space plays a role in forming the posthuman subject as an indication of a situation in which the original self no longer exists, leaving only fragments of subjectivity.

Although Tomie's subjectivity has been fragmented, Tomie does not show an identity crisis as is often shown in cloning-themed stories through the search for authentic selfhood. In line with Pérez explanation, "the search for "the original" is a common drive in most clone narratives."[55] Representation of Tomie means never doubting or perhaps not being concerned about whether or not she is the 'real one'. She showed herself firmly as Tomie in Episode 2 of the OVA. This episode shows the emergence of a new Tomie in Yukiko's body from the kidney of the previous Tomie whom Kitayama killed. When the doctors performed surgery on Yukiko, they were surprised by the kidney that had turned into a human head while introducing herself by saying, "watashi wa hontô wa Tomie to iu no" ("My real name is Tomie"). Tomie's words affirm her original self when she appears at the beginning of the episode, taking on the false identity of a girl named Reiko. Although seemingly unconcerned with 'originality,' Tomie's Clone is portrayed as tending to be 'the one,' expressed by her confidently in Episode 9 to Mori during a painting session that a girl like her is the only one in the world. Meanwhile, in the full version of the manga, Tomie's clone

incites her male admirers to kill other Tomie clones. Tomie's clone is also shown to have burned another clone that has not fully regenerated clone in the hospital.

Tomie's story also shows that individual subjectivity is not autonomous through her death, which is no longer personal but impersonal. The narrative of Tomie's death involves her classmates and even her teacher, both as perpetrators of the murder and as victims of Tomie's betrayal and seductive behavior. The narrative illustrates how a group of living individuals can cause death, and it is evidence of Tomie's existence through her clones as a source of disruption in the story. In line with Braidotti's argument, "death is but an obvious manifestation of principles that are active in every aspect of life, namely the impersonal power of *potentia*.".[56] It represents a posthuman subjectivity that is always dependent on relational capacities. "The relational capacity of the posthuman subject is not confined within our species, but includes all non-anthropomorphic elements."[57] The aforementioned reliance is shown through interactions with external elements beyond oneself, including the presence of individuals, technology, and nonhuman beings. Hayles posits that posthuman tales are distinguished by the termination of a specific understanding of humans, which, at most, entailed perceiving themselves as independent entities exerting their volition through personal agency decisions.

Through her social relationships with other characters, especially men, Tomie is also seen as a dependent posthuman entity. Although Tomie appears free to play around with the men she likes and thus appears autonomous, she can never enjoy that forever. In the end, she cannot escape her destiny as a murder victim of these men. Tomie knows that she will die, but she seems to have no power to prevent it, or perhaps she no longer fears death. Tomie's self-dependence follows Braidotti argument that "living matter—including the flesh—is intelligent and self-organizing, but it is also precisely because it is not disconnected from the rest of organic life."[58]

Therefore, Tomie shows how the posthuman subject cannot be separated from external influences, in this case, referring to the social relations that contribute to forming the subject's life path. Tomie's impersonal and temporal death reinforces that, ultimately, death from a posthuman perspective is just one stage leading to the next in a cycle. It also indicates that humans are not autonomous-essentialist individuals, as believed in the humanist tradition, but dependent-anti-essentialists because life and death are related to others.

Biologically, the idea of the lack of an autonomous subject in the posthuman narrative, embodied by Tomie's cycle of death and life, is similar to Dawkins's conception of a "survival machine."[59] For Dawkins, our life is just a 'machine' that keeps moving to preserve genes. "We are survival machines, but 'we' does not mean just people. It embraces all animals, plants, bacteria, and viruses."[60] It means that even within the internal sphere, all beings, including humans, are not autonomous because their existence is regulated to serve the genes within them. It also explains why Tomie seems unable to escape her destiny as a victim of the men's murder, as she is merely a 'machine' that carries out the orders of her genes. The genes are composed of DNA that "is not concentrated in a particular part of the body, but is distributed among the cells."[61] It also implies the loss of privilege of the mind over the body as well as a clear distinction between humans and nonhumans through the meaning of life as a generative process.[62]

The dependent and anti-essentialist posthuman subject is also related to what Braidotti calls impersonal relations. Every subject of the posthuman is interconnected and influenced by everything outside themselves. Braidotti asserts in her essay *Posthuman Critical Theory* (2016), "Life, as zoe is an impersonal nonhuman force that moves us without asking for our permission to do so and stretches beyond the bounded parameters of 'my' life to seek other vital

connections."[63] Furthermore, Braidotti believes that the relational and impersonal nature of posthuman subjects allows us to cooperate through a symbiosis based on the awareness of mutual need so that the world can be better. [64] On the contrary, Tomie's story shows the bad possibilities for posthuman subjects with impersonal characteristics if they are involved in a toxic relationship. It can be seen through the men's obsessive love for Tomie that leads to sadistic acts, while Tomie attempts to make relationships with the men only for her own personal gain.

Tomie's relational relationship with the male characters also shows another posthuman idea: the blurring of subject-object boundaries from a humanist perspective. Following Pacheco and Rodríguez, this ambivalence is shown through the narrative by placing Tomie as a character who is both active and passive.[65] This placement follows the nature of the subject, which always gives treatment to the object. In other words, the subject is active while the object is passive. Tomie is seen as an active character through her aggressive flirting and control over men. Tomie also does not hesitate to ruin the relationship between a man and his girlfriend or female partner to gain 'exclusive' rights over the man. She shows this in Episode 9 when she kicks out Nana, Mori's model, or when she pressures Yukiko to break up with Kitayama in Episode 2 of the OVA. However, Tomie can also be said to be a passive character, as she is ultimately the victim of the men's violence.

Ambivalence also occurs at the boundary between the nonphysical world, in the form of mind or consciousness, and the physical world, represented by the body, due to the presence of Tomie and her clones. The perspective of Cartesian mind-body dualism places the mind or consciousness as the essence of humanity. Posthumanism, as a critique of humanism, indeed rejects this. The rejection is reflected in Tomie's story as each piece of her body regenerates to create a clone. The process involves the body and Tomie's mind or consciousness and is illustrated

through the similarity of the 'mission' of each version of Tomie in the anime *Junji Ito Collection* (2018, *Itô Junji "Korekushon"*) as a seductive woman who enjoys destroying the lives of the men around her. Thus, it can be concluded that each piece of Tomie's body inherits the same physical form and consciousness. This means that Tomie is trying to oppose the separation between consciousness and mind, which, in the humanist tradition, is considered to be found only in the brain. In line with Haraway's argument, "the boundary between physical and nonphysical is very imprecise for us."[66] Anatomically, according to Yôrô in Ohsawa the separation between the mind (brain) and the body is also considered inappropriate because "you cannot distinguish a brain (mind) from a body because a brain is connected to nerves, which cover the entire body. There is no clear division between mind and body."[67] Ultimately, it also shows that the posthuman subject has removed the exclusive role of consciousness so that its position is now merely as a "minor side shadow."[68] The presence of both Tomie and her clones implies no positional superiority of either the mind, as transhumanists believe, or the body, as Hayles argues that "my dreams is a version of the posthuman that embraces the possibilities of the information technologies without being seduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality."[69]

Tomie's story also attempts to show a posthuman morality that does not clearly distinguish between good and evil. It is shown in the death of the "original" Tomie and the appearance of her clones. Original Tomie's death at the hands of the men who also caused the appearance of her clones illustrates the lack of empathy as a characteristic of humanism. Empathy is often linked to human emotions, as illustrated in various posthuman-themed fictional works like *Replica* (1998-1999), *The Dark Side Nowhere* (1997), and *Cloning Miranda* (1999). According to Ostry, these literary pieces suggest that emotions are placed "as part of what makes one

human." Evidently, the men in Episode 1 of the OVA did not listen to Tomie, who suddenly woke up during the mutilation process and still continued. They even examined Tomie's internal organs and speculated about her last meal, acting as if they were in an anatomy class, as shown in the following dialogue section:

Students : The intestines are surprisingly thick, huh?

1

Takagi : It's called the large intestine. . . . Let's remove the appendix!

Students : She seems to have just eaten a sandwich this afternoon. [70]

1

On the other hand, amoral behavior is also shown by Tomie herself as an antagonist who likes to mess with others. This behavior becomes the source of justification for the mutilation plan against her, as expressed by her classmates as they try to dispel Yamamoto's doubts. This contrasts with similar cloned characters in other works that attempt to show humanity through emotional engagement.[71] Itô's Tomie, on the other hand, is portrayed as a figure without empathy, thus not trying to be humanized. Even if she shows an emotional side, it is all artificial emotion to deceive men to achieve her goals. Therefore, Tomie's story shows a blurring of the good/bad boundaries just like posthuman narratives, as Halberstam and Livingstone explain that "posthumans have been multiply colonized, interpenetrated, constructed—as well as paradoxically empowered—but neither virtue nor vice attaches automatically to this multiple position."[72]

Tomie's Limitations as a Posthuman Figure and the Associated Elements of Technofeminism

Although Tomie is portrayed as a posthuman, the heterosexual narrative between her and the men still preserves the gender binary. It contrasts with other

posthuman characters in anime-manga products that have generally eliminated the gender binary or at least made it more blurred. For example, through the androgynous body depiction of Kira in the manga *Marginal* (1985-1987)[73] or by using homosexual-bisexual narratives such as those of Tsumugi, Nagate, and Izana in the anime-manga *Knight of Sidonia* (2009-2015).[74] The story of Tomie only challenges the stereotype of Japanese femininity, known as *kawaii*, attached to the shôjo (young girl) figure without altering her sexual orientation. Dumas suggests that *Tomie* can be interpreted as Ito's critique of the contemporary social phenomenon of *kawaii* culture, which led to the sexualization of shôjo.[75] According to Choo, "kawaii is derived from the Japanese idea of cuteness includes a degree of weakness that makes the shôjo dependent on others."[76] Choo explains that shôjo characters in manga and anime, featuring adorable traits, can imply a depiction of young females who lack sexual agency and show passivity and weakness. It is exemplified by characters such as Tsukushi in *Hana yori Dango* (1996) and Tôru in *Fruits Basket* (2001).[77]

Following Hayles, it is important to remember that posthumanism does not involve a complete separation from humanism or the emergence of an anti-human sentiment in an apocalyptic context.[78] Therefore, Tomie still deserves to be a horror icon that breaks the boundaries of the tradition of humanist dualism through a posthuman framework. The persistence of the gender binary in the form of heterosexual orientation does not only occur in Tomie's story. For Ohsawa, another posthuman-themed anime-manga, *Knight of Sidonia*, also shows similar limitations by showing heterosexual relationships again at the end of the story.[79] In addition, according to Daliot-Bul, the *Ghost in the Shell* anime sequel, *Innocent* (2004) also shows the limitations of the posthuman idea through the story of Major Kusanagi and Batou as a cyborg who "rediscover or redefine their humanity in their human

feelings".[80] Another comparable anime, *Ergo Proxy* (2006), similarly portrays human emotions as the ultimate path artificial humans choose (proxies).

Instead of being seen as a limitation, Tomie can also be considered a way of uniting the posthumanist tradition with humanism without the need to eliminate the gender binary, as in Haraway's depiction of cyborgs through the removal of the reproductive element as a sex function and replacing it as a fun activity in the form of non-monogamous relationships.[81] In the line with Choo, Tomie's posthumous body can also be interpreted as an alternative way to empower women (shôjo) in the anime-manga dimension that has often been sexualized[82] through the involvement of advanced technology. Thus, following Halbertsam and Livingstone "it becomes possible to assert a non-relation between fucking and reproduction. . .because of technological options."[83] The representation of technology through Tomie's super-regeneration abilities and cloning creations makes empowering shôjo characters much more plausible than giving them roles as superheroes with magic powers, as in *Sailor Moon* (1992-1997) or *Cardcaptor Sakura* (1998-2000).

On the other hand, the representation of technology as a form of female empowerment in Tomie's story also promotes elements of technofeminism. Technofeminism, in this case, leads to the use of technology to reduce or eliminate reproductive functions that have often been enforced and emphasized only on women. This is also the case in Japan due to the low birth rate. Similar to Tomie through her cloning creations, the theme of technofeminism as a critique of the demand for reproductive functions in women has also been conveyed in the science fiction manga *Marginal* by Hagio Moto. *Marginal* is set on an Earth where only infertile men are left. To solve the population problem, Ivan, a scientist, creates reproductive technology by making an androgynous figure, Kira. According to Harada, the manga depicts how "reproductive activities are regulated by male-

centered biomedical technology and the sociopolitical system in Japan."[84] Hagio's point of criticism lies in the selection of the intended androgynous character "to unbind the confinement of women, especially reproduction."[85] The theme of technofeminism in anime-manga thus illustrates the role of technology in "freeing of women from the tyranny of their reproductive biology."[86]

Technofeminism cannot always be seen as being on the side of women and having a positive impact. It is the active involvement of men that controls Tomie's super-regeneration abilities and cloning creations. The men's involvement is evident when they are always the perpetrators of Tomie's murder, which triggers her regeneration ability and cloning creations. It is also reinforced by the figure of Takagi, who became an impromptu scientist after losing his sanity. Takagi, who has escaped from the sanitarium, is said to be seen traveling from place to place while disguised as Tomie's father to experiment with Tomie's cloning creation abilities. In Episode 2 of the OVA, Takagi, who pretends to be Tomie's father, allows his daughter's kidney to be donated to Yukiko. His actions are not based on altruism but merely as an opportunity to experiment with placing Tomie's body parts in other people, as further explained in the manga version. This means that the female figure represented by Yukiko is used as a guinea pig instead of an active subject who participates in learning Tomie's cloning abilities. In addition to Takagi, the two male doctors who treated Yukiko also became the main actors in the research related to Tomie's super regeneration and cloning creation abilities after Tomie's kidney grew into a new clone. Although the two doctor's research ultimately failed after Takagi burned down the hospital, their roles helped reinforce the representation of patriarchal authority in technology.

The absence of women's involvement in the issue of reproductive technology in Tomie's story is also depicted through Tomie's characterization, who does not seem

to care about it. It also questions whether women can rely on technology, especially technofeminism, considering that access to technology is still centered on men, so it is not necessarily viewed objectively from a gender perspective. According to Ferrando, feminist thinkers and theorists such as Sandra Harding, Evelyn Fox Keller, Patricia Hill Collins, and Helen Longino believe that "objectivity is situated and embodied."[87] A similar belief also comes from Haraway that "feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledge."[88] It means that reproductive technology shown for women can be seen as objective when its development involves and considers women as active agents. In addition, women's disinterest in technology is both a challenge and an irony in the development of technofeminism.

The active role of women in technology, especially cloning, is also something conveyed by Roy in one of the chapters of her book entitled *Should Feminists Clone? And If So, How?* (2018)[89] Roy takes the position of a female scientist who shows how reproductive technology has placed women, especially from developing countries, as objects of testing. Meanwhile, it is people who hold power and dominance, such as politicians and Hollywood artists, who are able to control technology in this context, leading to stem cell research as a form of therapeutic cloning. This explanation shows that the objectivity of cloning (both reproductive and therapeutic) can only be achieved through the balanced involvement of the genders as active agents. In contrast to Roy's open attitude, Handwerker appears conflicted about reproductive cloning technology, citing numerous problems with its implementation.[90] At the center of the issue are ten myths that he believes to be untrue as a basis for justifying the application of reproductive cloning to humans. Based on Handwerker's argument, it can be concluded that cloning has denied the truth that diseases, abilities, and personalities are not determined solely by genetic factors, neglected the rights of women and children, success rates that are still speculative, extreme

contraceptive methods, inequality in women's access to technology, and possibly a greater number of abortions.[91] In line with Handwerker, Ottuh also suggested that it would be better to ban reproductive cloning based on its dubious objectivity.[92]

The cloning technology represented in Tomie's story also shows a skeptical tone toward the ethical side of its application. While Tomie's cloning ability supports the idea that women can be liberated from reproductive roles, it also shows a low level of objectivity from a technofeminist perspective. This is represented by the men who take on the role of 'scientists' in various experiments related to Tomie's cloning ability, which involves women's bodies as objects. In one of the chapters of Tomie's manga, titled *Yashiki* (*Mansion*),[93] the object of Takagi's experiments is not only Yukiko, but also a girl who is the daughter of the owner of the mansion he keeps. Takagi also persuades one of the girls, a former classmate of Tomie's, to become the object of his experiment. In another chapter titled *Tôri Ma* (*Passing Demon*)[94], a man who was a former model makes baby girls in a city the object of his experiments by injecting Tomie's blood into the babies, causing them to turn into Tomie. This is illustrated through a similar premise to Shelly's classic gothic novel *Frankenstein* (1818) by showing the fear of technology that leads explicitly to humans defying the laws of natural creation. Similar to Frankenstein's horror genre, Ito's Tomie also places the source of horror in the cloning technology itself.

Ito also portrays the cloning of Tomie as a representation of her sexual independence. In line with Murphy's argument (2021, 61) about clones that "like the cyborg, the clones' fathers are also inessential and, by the innovations of modern science, the underpinnings of patriarchal social figures and configurations. of masculine power formations are questioned."[95] This representation is reinforced by Takagi's explanation in the manga that Tomie is a girl who loves herself and only sees men as 'ornaments'. This statement explains Tomie's free and non-monogamous

sexuality. This behavior is an attempt to resist the norms of Japanese femininity through the shôjo figure as an innocent and dependent girl. The ambivalence of the depiction of clones in Tomie's story is in line with O'Riordan's explanation that after the success of Dolly the sheep, the depiction of cloning in horror movie is not only a source of fear but also a hope for future technology.[96]

Although Tomie's portrayal of cloning offers hope for future reproductive technologies for women, it also raises ethical questions. In Tomie's story, the audience is shown the serious consequences when technology is used against the wrong person, eventually leading the world to a dystopian condition. Therefore, Ito, through the creation of Tomie, tends to offer an open, critical, and skeptical answer to the implications of using technology, especially those involving technofeminist elements with women's liberation. Technology is not value-free. Thus, its application is often infested with various interests, distancing it from objectivity and making it seem paradoxical. On the one hand, cloning may provide a dream of reproductive freedom for women, but on the other hand, it is also a source of exploitation of women. Rossetti and Frade (2020, 157) have argued that "the paradox will always be present, but that should not nullify the struggle to accredit power to a historically less empowered gender when it is committed to contesting and changing the phenomenal field."[97]

Conclusion

Posthumanism as an ideology, theory, and perspective critiques the humanist tradition and generates debates and speculations about the impacts of technological interventions on human life. The story of Tomie, a girl with super regeneration abilities and cloned creations in the anime *Junji Ito Collection* (2018, *Itô Junji "Korekushon"*), exemplifies this depiction. Tomie's story, adapted from Ito's manga,

not only offers horror narratives but also offers posthumanist ideas through the involvement of technology of cloning, which generally tends to be found in the science fiction genre. The posthuman idea revolves around Tomie, who ultimately transcends death due to the regenerative capability of every part of her body. The presence of Tomie's clone has various posthuman consequences in the story, including loss of autonomous/essentialist subjectivity, subject/object ambivalence, blurred mind/body boundaries, and ambiguous morality.

However, like other anime-manga works, Tomie does not completely support posthumanism. Tomie's figure maintains the gender binary, which aligns with humanist ideas. Nonetheless, this limitation could be interpreted by Hayles's posthuman vision, which does not lead only to anti-humans.[98] The gender binary in Tomie's story can be analyzed as a criticism of the kawaii stereotype of the shôjo figure and its sexualization through the tone of technofeminism to acknowledge women's agency without forgetting the ethical considerations that may occur in the form of dystopian conditions.

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JAMS@AX 2024 Conference Report

Jaclyn Koshofer and Emilie Waggoner

Keywords: Anime Expo, Academic Symposium, Conference Report, Anime Studies, Manga Studies, Japanese Culture, Cosplay, Edo Japan Theme, Anime and Fandom

Author Bios:

Jaclyn Koshofer is a copyeditor for the *Journal of Anime and Manga Studies* and a content product manager at an academic publishing company.

Emilie Waggoner is the Director for Student Transitions at the University of Colorado Denver and an instructor in the First-Year Experience program.

Introduction

The JAMS@AX Academic Symposium, a special academic programming track at Anime Expo 2024, brought together scholars, librarians, educators, and enthusiasts from around the world to explore the academic study of anime, manga, and Japanese culture. Since its inception in 2011, the AX Anime and Manga Studies Symposium has featured over 50 speakers from more than 30 universities and colleges. *The Journal of Anime and Manga Studies* partnered with Anime Expo to co-host this conference for the second time following last year's MechaJAMS symposium, continuing to offer this unique opportunity to delve deeper into the world of Japanese pop culture on a scholarly level. This year, the symposium embraced the "Edo Japan" theme and encouraged presenters to discuss how anime presents Japanese history and culture, especially during this period. The symposium offered a diverse array of panels and presentations that delved into various aspects of anime and manga studies, from historical reinterpretations and cultural critiques to the impact of music and the integration of traditional art forms. This report provides an overview of the key discussions and insights shared during the symposium, highlighting the scholarly contributions and the vibrant exchange of ideas that marked the event.

Day 1

The JAMS@AX Academic Symposium began with the keynote panel, "Researching Anime: An Introduction to Anime and Manga Studies." The session started with

conference runner and JAMS editor-in-chief Billy Tringali's presentation, "From Fan Blogs to *Fruits Basket*: Documenting the Recommended Resources of Anime Studies." Tringali shared insights from his extensive—and still ongoing—research into the most highly recommended resources for the scholarly study of anime, manga, cosplay, and fandom. Fun fact: the most commonly recommended anime and manga in

these resources are *Fruits Basket*, *Cowboy Bebop*, *Fullmetal Alchemist*, and *My Neighbor Totoro*. Following this, editor of the blog *TheAnimeView* Peggy Sue Wood provided a comprehensive introductory guide to the interdisciplinary field of anime and

manga studies in her presentation, "Entering Anime & Manga Studies," offering valuable advice for newcomers on various approaches to the subject and how to get started in the field.

The second panel of the day, titled "*One Piece*, *Sekko Boys*, and Reimagined Histories in

Anime," featured the following

scholars: PhD candidate at UC Irvine

Juan Carlos Fermin, mobile educator

for the Los Angeles County Museum of

Art, Sierra Schiano, and graduate

student in Cinema and Media Studies

at the University of Southern

California, Janine Sun (Left . This session delved into how anime can represent history

and reinterpret historical narratives. Fermin's presentation, "The Japan That Could Have

Been: 'Wano Country' as *One Piece's* Refusal of Japanese Imperialism," explored *One*

Piece's critique of imperialist ideologies, mainly through the lens of the series' Wano

Country Arc. In "*Sekko Boys* and *Extra Olympia Kyklos*: Satirizing Sculpture in

Japanese Classical Reception," Schiano

examined the humorous

recontextualization of classical art in

anime. Sun discussed the integration

of traditional and modern media in

"Merging Media: Reconstituting

Rakugo through Anime in Studio

Deen's *Descending Stories*," emphasizing the hybrid media approach when combining

the traditional art of Japanese verbal comedy known as *rakugo* with modern animation.

The final panel of Day 1, "RADWIMPS and Music from the Films of Makoto Shinkai,"

which filled every seat in the lecture hall, featured a deep dive into the music that has

moved and influenced audiences throughout Japanese filmmaker Makoto Shinkai's

filmography, with a primary focus on his partnership with the Japanese rock band

RADWIMPS. Professors Elliott Jones and John Marr, both full-time faculty in the Music

program at Santa Ana College, highlighted key musical moments that have touched

souls, healed hearts, and moved audiences to tears. The session even included a sing-along to "Grand Escape" from the movie *Weathering With You* (2019).

Day 2

Continuing into the second day of Anime Expo, the panels started with New York City manga librarian and author of *Manga in Libraries* Jillian Rudes and University of Colorado Director of Student Transitions and contract

faculty member Emilie Waggoner's panel, "Manga in Libraries and Beyond: Centering Belonging and Connection through Anime." Both panelists stressed the importance of
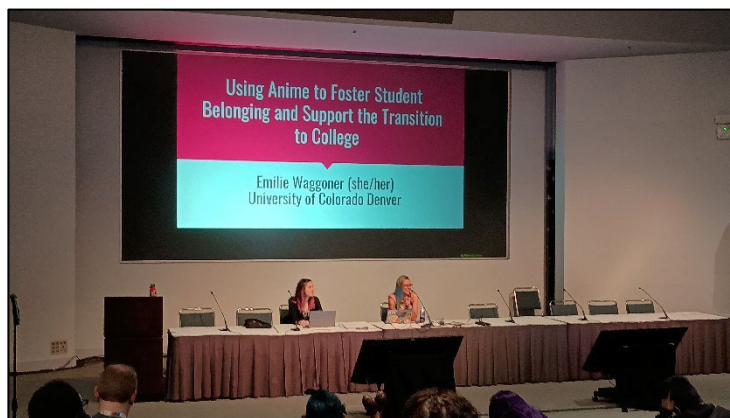
using anime and manga in education to foster a sense of belonging, promote social and emotional learning, and create spaces where teens and college students can engage with new methods of literacy and learning.

Following this, Assistant Professor in German at University of Colorado Boulder, Dr. Adrienne Merritt, and documentary filmmaker, writer, and journalist Dr. Dexter Thomas focused on identity within characters and fandom through their discussion in "Vampires and *Dragon Ball Z*: Memory Studies and Black Fandom in Anime." Dr.

Merritt discussed characters posed as "outsiders from within" and the "haunted memory" that compels Olrox of *Castlevania: Nocturne* to fight back against stereotypes and oppressive structures he finds himself within in their presentation "Olrox and Haunted Memory in *Castlevania Nocturne."*

In his presentation "Piccolo is (not) Black," Dr. Thomas thoughtfully analyzed Piccolo's character from *Dragon Ball Z.* He posed the question, "Why are we able to find the black characters when they aren't there?"

To wrap up the academic panels of Day 2, Editors-in-Chief of *Anime News Network*, Lynzee Loveridge, *Mechademia*, Frenchy Lunning, and the *Journal of Anime and Manga Studies*, Billy Tringali hosted a panel discussion around writing and publishing in anime and manga scholarship. All three panelists emphasized the need for writers to focus on analysis, critique, and theory when writing about and researching anime. They also highlight common pitfalls in academic publishing, such as addressing only surface-level discussions or failing to provide substantial evidence. The panel concluded with a discussion on the effects of artificial intelligence on writing and their hopes for the continued rise of publishing and research in anime and manga studies.

Day 3

Moving into the third and final day of academic panels at Anime Expo, Kokushikan University lecturer Edmund Hoff, independent scholar Dr. Daniel W. Ambord, and University of New Mexico graduate student Dayana Calle discussed the stewardship of resources, rural cosplay tourism, and the global reach of *Dragon Ball Z* in the panel "Exploring Dungeons, Borders, the Countryside – *Delicious in Dungeon*, Rural Cosplay, and *Dragon Ball Z*." Dr. Ambord engaged the audience by discussing the

ethical use of resources and transgressive thoughts on predator vs. prey perspectives in

Delicious in Dungeon and Dr. Valerie

Plumwood's ecological philosophy in his

presentation "Eye of the Dragon: Ecological

Thinking in *Delicious in Dungeon*." Hoff

followed with his panel, "Cosplay Studios as a
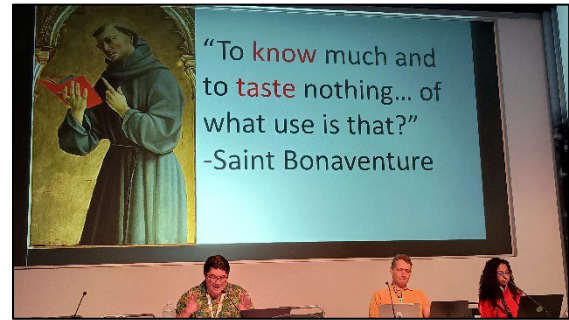
Source of Rural Revitalization in Japan," which highlighted the importance of cosplay

for the success of small businesses in rural Japan and the impact it has on the tourism

industry as a whole in rural areas outside of larger Japanese cities. Calle discussed

Dragon Ball Z's global impact and how the messaging around struggle, racism, and

nationalism connected to traditionally marginalized audiences across the globe as a call

to push back against oppressive forces in their presentation "'Everybody of the
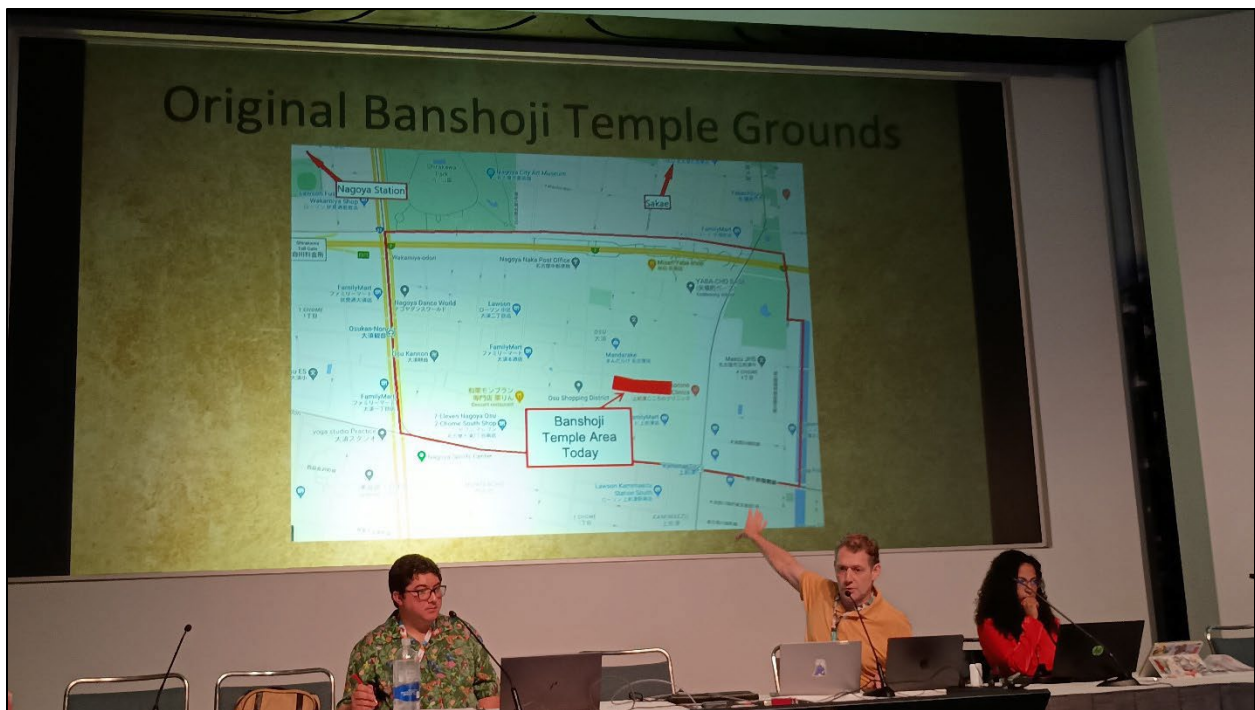
World…Give Me Your Energy!': How *Dragon Ball Z* Transcends National Borders and Unifies Generations."

Following this panel, University of Florida PhD candidate Lillian Martinez, 1st year MA Cinema Studies student at Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, Chenghao Wen, and Peggy Sue Wood discussed death, tradition, and *yôkai* in various shows and throughout history in the panel "Death, Yôkai, and *Demon Slayer.*" Martinez discussed funeral rites and the representation of modern Japan's clash against traditional Japanese beliefs and ways of life in their presentation "Growing Pains: *Demon Slayer's* Memorial to the Past." Martinez asked the audience to think about how *Demon Slayer* "causes us to reflect on a past lost to modernity" through the

visualizations of death and metaphorical rebirth of the main character in the show. Wen discussed the evolution of yôkai in their presentation "The Liminality of Kappa in Japanese Animation: A Century of Myth, History, and Identity". From history and myth to modern-day audiences in and out of Japan, Wen examined how yôkai, such as kappa, can depict both "good and bad" choices and representations for various audiences today. Peggy Sue Wood closed out the panel by discussing *Natsume's Book of Friends* in their panel "Making A Place For Yôkai In The Modern World." Wood discussed how folklore is represented by the various yôkai characters in the show to "honor the past and heal the current day," pointing to a modern world that allows for a deeper connection to nature, fostered through folklore and early religious cultural beliefs, to continue for audiences today. This was the second JAMS@AX panel to fill the lecture hall to capacity.

In the final panel of the JAMS@AX Academic Symposium, senior research scientist Dr. Roman Gomez, NASA jet propulsion optical engineer Dr. Caleb Baker, and NASA jet propulsion system integration engineer Dr. Kristjan Stone analyzed and critiqued whether physics is represented correctly in various anime shows.

Drs. Gomez, Baker, and Stone utilized various theories and scientific studies, such as Einstein's theory of relativity and ongoing research on space dust's impact on space equipment, to explain how anime does (and doesn't) correctly depict real-world science. Dr. Gomez concluded the panel by imploring fans to continue using anime as a creative way to think through complex scientific questions in our world and allow themselves to engage in new ways of thinking about anime.
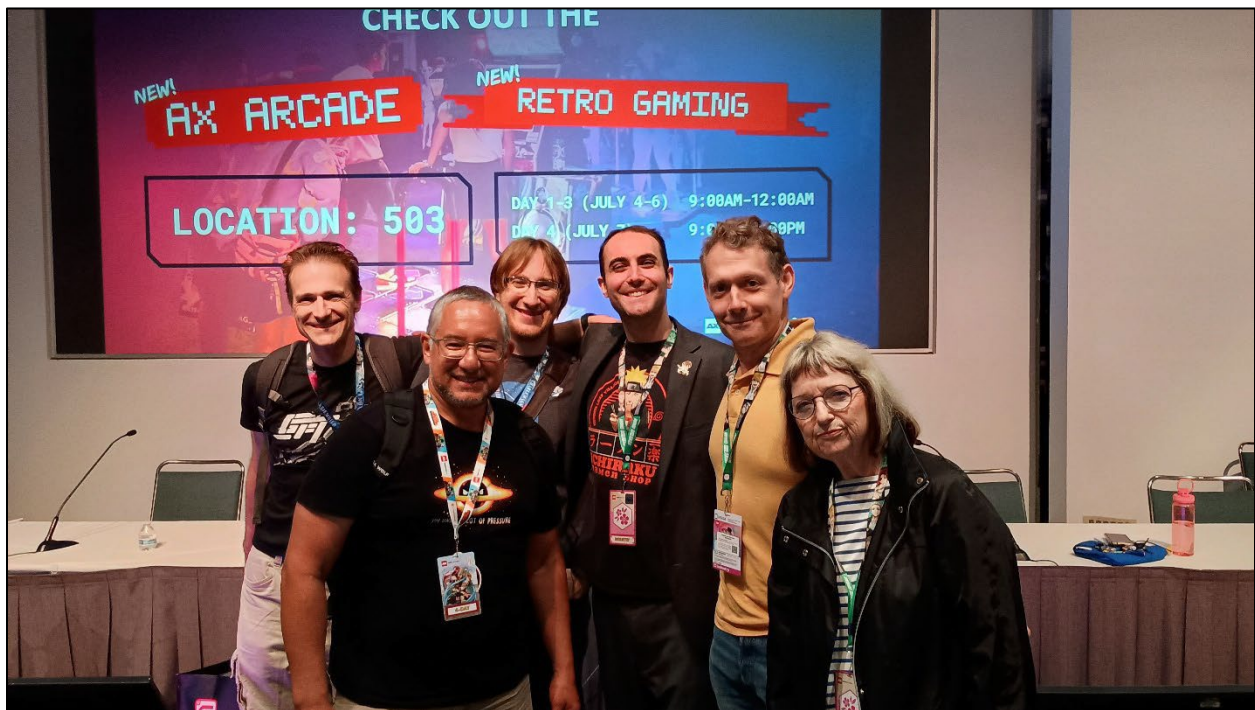
Conclusion

On the fourth and final day of Anime Expo, the Editor-in-Chief of JAMS and Coordinator of the JAMS@AX Academic Symposium presented two awards for "Best Academic Panel" and "Best Academic Presentation" at the Closing Ceremonies. These awards, given to Elliot Jones and John Marr for Best Academic Panel and to Roman Gomez, Caleb Baker, and Kristjan Stone for Best Academic Presentation, highlighted the symposium's commitment to excellence and the high-quality contributions of the participants. Overall, the JAMS@AX Academic Symposium at Anime Expo 2024 successfully fostered a vibrant exchange of ideas, provided valuable insights, and promoted further research in the field of anime and manga studies, underscoring the symposium's role in advancing the academic study of these mediums.

Book Review: Manga in Libraries: A Guide for Teen Librarians

M. Sara Lowe

Volume 5, Pages 254-258

Keywords: Manga, Libraries, Librarians, Public Libraries

Author Bio: M. Sara Lowe is Associate Dean for Educational Services at Indiana University Indianapolis. She completed her Master's in Library Science and Master of Arts in History at Indiana University Bloomington. Her research interests include information literacy instruction and library assessment.

Manga, comics or graphic novels originating from Japan, are popular both inside and outside of Japan. Sales of manga have quadrupled since 2020. In 2023, almost 49% of graphic novels sold were manga.[1] This increased popularity means manga is well represented in library purchases. In 2023, according to a *School Library Journal* survey, manga comprised 43 percent of high school graphic novel purchases and 64 percent of respondents noted that, in their library, manga was the most popular graphic novel with teenagers.[2] With the popularity of manga, and the rise in the amount of manga libraries purchase, *Manga in Libraries*' purpose is to fill a professional development gap in public libraries. It succeeds in its purpose.

Jillian Rudes is a certified English teacher and school librarian in New York State and currently works as a school librarian at a 6-12 grade public school in New York City. She is the founder of Manga in Libraries (https://mangainlibraries.com/), which provides manga professional development to librarians and educators including creating advisory lists and hosting webinars, workshops, and panels on manga. Ms. Rudes has received several awards including: the American Association of School Librarians' (AASL) Collaborative School Library Award (2020); the American Library Association's (ALA) Scholastic Library Publishing Award (2022); and Library Journal Mover & Shaker (2022).

The book encompasses an overview of Manga, Collection Development, Representation, Social-Emotional Learning, Programming, and Teaching. In the introduction, Ms. Rudes successfully makes the case for the importance of manga and why librarians should care about manga. Through its popularity and presentation, manga empowers readers and enhances literacy.

Chapter 1, Manga 101, lays out the basics of manga, the history of Japanese storytelling, how to read manga, and genres of manga. Important for school and public librarians, it explores manga content including where librarians might encounter book challenges, for example, violence and sexuality. Even someone with no knowledge of manga is easily brought up to speed on the genre.

Chapter 2, manga collection development, provides questions and tips for librarians to consider when deciding what manga to add to the collection. There is a helpful list of suggested titles for starting a manga collection and a list of manga resources. Once items have been purchased for a library collection, they may be challenged by the public. This is increasingly likely as challenges to books in 2023 increased by 92% over the previous year, although that number has decreased in 2024.[3] This chapter includes tips for preventing and handling challenges to manga titles in a library collection.

Chapter 3, representation in manga, contains interviews from experts on why it is important for library collections to have diverse and representative manga collections. Experts cover representation of LGBTQ+, girls and women, disability, BIPOC, and Latinx communities.

Chapter 4 addresses manga and how it can support social-emotional learning and emotional intelligence. The chapter adapts the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) social-emotional learning (SEL) framework for libraries and specifically to teens. The author discusses how manga supports SEL and a list of manga titles aligned with the CASEL SEL framework. Manga is then connected to an emotional intelligence feelings wheel as well as a list of discussion prompts.

Chapter 5 outlines manga programming in public libraries. Several sample programs are described related to: manga, anime, Japanese culture, pop culture, and comic cons. There are suggestions for public librarians to reach out to Japanese culture centers, of which there are several throughout the country, as well as field trips and manga and anime conventions.

Chapter 6 covers teaching with manga with a focus on K-12. A sample 10-week curriculum is included. The conclusion highlights the joy students feel reading manga. The author highlights student responses to questions about how they feel and what they like about reading manga.

Two appendixes cover Manga in Libraries Webinars and Manga Books Lists. The Manga in Libraries Webinars, Appendix A, is a recap of a webinar series with discussion questions for each and links to recordings and resource lists. The Manga Books List, Appendix B, is a list of Manga that are relevant to each book chapter.

Manga in Libraries is written in an easy to read, conversational style. It clearly explains concepts and terms so that even a novice to the genre will be able to understand how to incorporate manga into their library's collection and programming. This is not a rigorous academic work. Statements are not supported with evidence. There is no bibliography or works cited. Rather Ms. Rudes presents the topic in a professional development style, providing information that a librarian could put into practice in their daily work.

Overall, *Manga in Libraries* is an excellent introduction to the genre for public librarians and, importantly, how librarians can incorporate manga in their library.

Librarians new to the topic or being asked to develop collections and programming

around manga will benefit from the practical information provided.

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[1] "Manga Fans Can't Get Enough."
[2] Marlaina Cockcroft, "Off the Charts!" *School Library Journal* 69, no. 10 (2023): 20–23.
[3] "Book Ban Data," American Library Association, accessed October 24, 2024, https://www.ala.org/bbooks/book-ban-data.

Book Review: *The Early Reception of Manga in the West*

Cetoria Tomberlin

Author Bio: Cetoria Tomberlin is a librarian and poet living and working in the Midwest. Her works has previously appeared in *Fairy Tale Review*, *McSweeney's*, and various other publications. She is currently the Resource Sharing Librarian at Indiana University- Indianapolis.

The Early Reception of Manga in the West by Martin de la Iglesia is a non-fiction title, published in 2023, that argues the manga publishing boom in late nineties western culture was spearheaded by Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira*. De la Iglesia posits that while ultra popular titles from the late 1990s such as Akira Toriyama's *Dragon Ball* and Naoko Takeuchi's *Sailor Moon* may be more widely known, due in part to their anime adaptions, and therefore considered the beginning manga's noted presence in western culture, *Akira*, which began its publication run years before either title, was actually the first translated manga to begin this publishing watershed moment.

The book begins with an introduction that states de la Iglesia's thesis and explains the methodology he used for his research. He approaches this study of manga from a reception history perspective, meaning he is interested in how the work was received at the time of its creation. De la Iglesia analyzes English and German journalists' writing about four different works of translated manga at the time of their publication. The four translated manga are *Lone Wolf and Cub*, *Japan, Inc.*, *Akira*, and *Crying Freeman*. Each manga receives its own chapter and analysis from English and German publications. With careful consideration de la Iglesia details each manga's publication genesis, its reception in America and Germany, and how said reception relates to manga within western culture.

Throughout the text de la Iglesia returns to technical issues surrounding manga translations and provides example after example of common mistakes, lost meanings, and bewildering choices. Seeing the images from the Japanese, American, and German editions side-by-side is especially helpful in these instances.

Given it began as a dissertation, it is unsurprising the book contains a plethora of references and footnotes. While de la Iglesia's research is well documented throughout

the text, the writing sometimes veers into academic rigidity, slowing the pacing of the text at times. The book also includes a complete online reader survey, created by de la Iglesia, and its results. Unfortunately, the study did not receive a large amount of participation and other inherit methodology problems exist within it, as discussed by de la Iglesia, but it remains an interesting addition for readers.

The heart of the book lies in chapter four with *Akira*. After 100 pages of name dropping and promises of more to come, the reader finally gets to hear the case for *Akira* and learn about the uniqueness of the translation process that set the classic manga apart from its predecessors. The chapter also provides details of its reception in both reviews and sales numbers, including context and comparison sales statistics. While there is no doubt de la Iglesia did copious amounts of research on all four case studies, *Akira* is where he is laser focused. *Akira* is the only one of the four manga examined that receives two additional chapters, one questioning its classification in the Cyberpunk genre, the other discussing the popularity of the *Akira* amine film adaption from 1989 and its potential correlation to the translated manga's success. Despite de le Iglesia's clear appreciation of Akira, he is quick to couch his argument for the manga, making sure to stress its importance while also reminding us it was only a moderate commercial success.

De la Iglesia spends a fair amount of time in the introduction pondering the philosophical question of why it took so long for manga to catch on in western culture. While he does not provide a definitive answer to this question, his research suggests a potentially simple one: money. Manga translation in the late 1980s & 90s commonly involved the processing of "flipping" or "mirroring" pages so they could be read from left-to-right instead of in the original right-to-left format as well as reformatting text

bubbles and adding color to previously black and white pages. All time-consuming endeavors that made manga translation a large up-front investment for publishers. Couple that information with that fact that manga had no proven commercial success with western audiences and it is not difficult to guess why publishers were hesitant to invest.

In his conclusion de la Iglesia only briefly addresses potential reasons *Akira* did not manage to capture the same commercial success as the mega hits like *Dragon Ball* and *Sailor Moon* that would follow soon after it. One hypothesis being both manga were targeted towards children, a more lucrative demographic. But ultimately the book's argument is that *Akira* came first, and its importance should not be overlooked.

Overall, *The Early Reception of Manga in the West* delivers a compelling argument of *Akira*'s impact on early 90s manga publishing. Fans of *Akira* or those interested in the history of manga and its early publishing challenges and reception in America and Germany will find the text engaging.

FITV 1111: Anime Goes to College Syllabus

Emilie Waggoner

Keywords: Anime, Anime Studies, First Year Experience, Student Support, Student

Development Theory, Student Success

Author Bio: Emilie Waggoner is the Director for Student Transitions at the University

of Colorado Denver and an instructor in the First-Year Experience program.

Introduction

Within higher education, there exists certain programs, practices, and guidance informed by decades of research around how faculty, academic affairs offices, and student affairs units can better support first-year students. These practices, known as High-Impact Practices (HIPs), include programs and support practices such as peer mentorship[1] , creating Living Learning Communities that combine multiple engagement points[2] , and implementing First-Year Seminar courses from college success transition topics to special academic themed courses.[34] By incorporating HIPs with academic courses, universities and colleges can create a stronger framework fostering student success throughout various touchpoints of a students' lifecycle at a university.[5] As the "enrollment cliff" of 2025 gets closer, universities and colleges must look at new ways of attracting graduating high school seniors as the pool of available students becomes smaller.[6] In addition, universities and colleges must also look at engaging new audiences and demographics of students and understanding how to position the institution's brand across various types of marketing platforms to reach key demographic groups.[7]

Anime Goes to College as a First Year Seminar

Within my Department of Student Transitions at CU Denver, we leverage our HIPs efforts with our strategic enrollment management team to create a suite of course offerings, peer mentorship, and student support events and workshops that are delivered through our First Year Seminars (FYS) courses. These courses are offered to our incoming first-year students and feature special academic topic courses meant to

engage students with cutting edge research, new knowledge areas of study, and active

participation in critical thinking and analysis of the world around them.

Since 2021, one of the courses we have offered is a course I created and teach,

called FITV 1111: Anime Goes to College. As noted in my course overview in my syllabus:

> The purpose of this course is to provide a history to Japanese anime while focusing on character stereotypes, identities, and development in a variety of popular anime shows, and how that connects to student development theories. Students will learn about a variety of topics related to character development in anime, including college student development theory related to college-age character development, gender and sexuality as it is held in the characters' identities, and the impact of anime characters on the audience. In addition, students will examine how the differences between Japanese and American culture show up through anime.

The course utilizes text from fandom research spaces and interviews from fans on

identity representation in fandom spaces and grounds it through frameworks of student

development theory and identity formation. This course also incorporates college

success skill areas, where students build foundational knowledge around academic

research, time management and study strategies, and career and major exploration. By

exposing students to new ways to analyze, discuss, and study popular media, such as

Japanese animation, students can begin to understand the impact media representation

has on their own development and how Japanese animation and the storytelling within

various shows can align with their own cognitive and psychosocial development in

college.

Anime Goes to College Syllabus

This is a framework of the syllabus I use to teach the course. The readings and

shows listed are ones I have utilized in the past, but I do bring in new shows, articles,

and research each semester into my syllabus as well. In some cases, I have my students

vote on an anime show they want to discuss, which I've noted in the syllabus as "Watch Anime Episode" without a specific show title. This allows for us to apply the theories to shows my students are engaging with outside of the assigned course shows and movies.

In the syllabus week by week overview, I have bolded the CU Denver FYE-specific HIPs lessons and program pieces that are embedded into the course. The learning outcome language and course curriculum core area competencies have been removed, as they are specific to CU Denver course curriculum rules and oversight. I have also removed my grading rubrics to make the syllabus overview less cluttered. If you are interested in utilizing this type of syllabus for a university course and have questions about these programmatic structures, please contact me for more information.

Course Philosophy

We will engage in a combination of short lectures, discussions (seminar-style), and a range of inquiry activities in class. This requires all of us to take ownership of our learning. In other words, please complete the assigned readings and show episodes on time and be ready to engage with course materials.

Course Texts

The following are texts that will supply the readings for this course. Additional articles and readings will be pulled from various peer-reviewed journals and provided either in-class or via Canvas prior to class. Students do not need to purchase the textbook for the course, as excerpts will be provided in class, but they are welcome to do so if they prefer.

Schuh, J. H., Jones, S. R., & Harper, S. R. (Eds.). (2010). Student services: A handbook for the profession. John Wiley & Sons.

Assignments

Journal Reflections and Mini Assignments

You will compile a journal throughout the semester consisting of reflections and mini assignments that you will submit at the end of the semester for a total grade. The breakdown of points is as follows:

- FYE lesson mini assignments/reflections: Four are required (5 points each) = 20 points

- Worksheet reflection stickers to contextualize your experiences watching all of the show and movies for class, and to support your learning. Each worksheet sticker (six worksheets in total) will be worth 5 points and will be graded based on reflection of the characters' development, your , and application of theory being discussed that week =30 points

Participation and Attendance

Students will receive points for both attending class each week and participating in class. Attending class is extremely important. A breakdown of the participation grade for this course can be found below:

Completing the required readings of the course and participating in classroom discussion is extremely important in order to receive full participation points. Students will also have an opportunity to engage in out-of-class reading sessions with the professor and other classmates to ask questions about the readings and engage in deeper discussions on the different topic areas.

Character Development Paper

Purpose: This paper is intended for you to utilize one of the different development theories we have discussed in class and apply it to an analysis of one of your favorite anime characters.

Instructions: This paper should give:

- a description of the theory you have selected, using your own words

- background on the character

- an analysis on how the character's development aligns with the development theory you selected. This means you should walk me through each part of the theory and, using supporting examples from the show, explain how the character moves through the developmental vectors/stages of the theory.

Formatting: The paper should be at least three pages in length, double-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman, and should be formatted using APA formatting.

Quizzes

Instructions: A total of two quizzes will be administered online (Canvas). Each quiz is 20 points. Quiz questions will focus on lectures, class discussions, guest speakers, show episodes, and readings. These will be open-book, timed quizzes. There will be a variety of short-answer and open-ended essay questions on each quiz. These quizzes will emphasize conceptual understanding, and the ability to establish relevant links between topics. In other words, expect questions that will require you to think rather than memorize. Students should expect to write at least three to five paragraphs per question

for their response. On average, it takes students about 30 minutes to complete each quiz. Study guides will not be provided. Office hours with the instructor are strongly recommended if you have questions about course materials. There will be no make- ups for missing a quiz (documented emergencies excepted).

Mentoring (Faculty and Peer)

Each student is expected to a) meet with the course instructor at least once during the semester and b) meet with the course PAL at least once during the semester. Each of these visits must be documented and will be part of your grade. Each visit is worth 5 points for a total of 10 points total.

Workshops

Success at the university is not possible without the development of the scholarly, technical, and professional skills. Some of these skills include research and writing, effective speaking and composition, and efficient scheduling and time management. Students will need to choose and attend at least three workshops from the approved list.

Activities

During the semester, each student is required to attend at least three campus events. Students will be provided with a list of events on/off campus that qualify. Lectures and other events from your other classes do not count. It must also be an event that you are not already involved with e.g. work or religious institution. Try to explore opportunities that might challenge you in some way and/or support your learning in this course. Part of your grade will require you to complete an online evaluation form (Canvas) for each activity.

 Advising

Each student is expected to meet with their college advisor at least once during the

academic semester. Students will receive 5 points for meeting with their college advisor.

This meeting must take place before their registration for spring semester.

Final Project: Anime Show Creation (Group Project)

Instructions: In groups of two, you will create an anime character for a future show.

Your character creation should walk us through your character's background, setting of

the show, plot of the show, and how the character will develop throughout the show

using at least two of the development theories we have discussed in class. You will need

to walk us through how your character moves through each development theory. An

easy way to do this is by creating situations they encounter in the show that they have to

work through, other characters they meet and the impact those characters have on their

development, etc. How you choose to approach that is up to you – these are just some

examples.

Each group will then present their anime show in class during Week 16. The points are

divided as follows: anime show and character content, presentation, and peer

assessment. A grading rubric as well as peer review sheet will be provided to you for this

assignment. Your total presentation time is 10 minutes.

Examples of how to structure your presentation and project: In the past, students have

found that creating a Powerpoint presentation is an easy format to walk the class

through their anime show and character development, but there have also been students

who have created their own drawings of their characters, poster board presentations,

etc. Some have even rendered a trailer for their show! The format you choose is up to

you. To assist in keeping everyone on top of their final project, a final project outline will

be due midway through the semester. More information will be provided in class.

If you are struggling creatively, it can be helpful to think of your favorite anime show or

movie and base your characters/plot/setting using some of those ideas. Don't outright

copy an anime show though – I'll know if it's Black Clover or Naruto. This is your chance

to use those creative muscles and create your own world.

Each group will then present their show in class during Week 16. The points are divided

as follows: anime show and character content (20 points), presentation (15 points), peer

assessment (5 points). A grading rubric (below) as well as peer review sheet will be

provided to you for this assignment. Your total presentation time is 10 minutes.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE & READINGS (subject to change by instructor)			
Week	**Date**	**Topics and Readings**	**Readings/Remarks**
1	August 19th	Introductions, Activities, Class Anime Vote	**PAL and Professor 1:1's begin –** **Schedule sooner rather than later**
	August 21st	History of Anime – Japan to America	Chapter One: A Brief History of Anime and a Briefer History of Cosplay" from Transported to Another World: The Psychology of Anime Fans (pg. 9-20) Watch "Shelter" by Porter Robinson music video and NFL Chargers 2022 schedule commercial

2	August 26th	History of Higher Education Overview What we can learn about being anime fans discussion	Chapter 10-11: Fanship and Fandom and What We Learn from Being Anime Fans. In Transported to Another World: The Psychology of Anime Fans (pg. 225-258
	August 28th	Watch and discuss the readings and episode 1 of Yuri!!! On Ice	*Reflection Sticker #1 in journal*
3	Sept. 2nd	Labor Day – no class	
	Sept. 4th	Watch and discuss the readings and episode 2 of Yuri!!! On Ice **FYE Lesson – Auraria Library and Research 101** Student Development Theory: Introduction	*Student Services Handbook 5th edition, Ch. 8, pg. 149-163* **Auraria Library FYE lesson sticker in journal**
4	Sept. 9th	Watch episode 3 of Yuri!!! On Ice and be prepared to discuss **FYE lesson - Writing Skills**	**Writing Skills FYE lesson sticker in journal** *Stephen Reysen, Courtney N. Plante, Daniel Chadborn, Sharon E. Roberts & Kathleen C. Gerbasi (2022) Intragroup helping as a mediator of the association between fandom identification and self-esteem and well-being, Leisure/Loisir, 46:3, 321-345, DOI: 10.1080/14927713.2021.1971553*

	Sept. 11th	Watch episode 4 of Yuri!!! On Ice and be prepared to discuss Development Theory: Psychosocial Theories	
5	Sept. 16th	Chickering and Reisser: Seven Vectors Theory Overview Watch episode 5 of Yuri!!! On Ice and be prepared to discuss	*Reflection sticker #2 in journal* *Student Services Handbook 5th edition, Ch. 9, pg. 168-172*
	Sept. 18th	Student Development Theory: Cognitive Theory Overview Perry's Schema Watch episode 6 of Yuri!!! On Ice and be prepared to discuss	*Student Services Handbook 5th edition, p. 175-177*
6	Sept. 23rd	Watch episode 7 of Yuri!!! On Ice Baxter-Magolda and Self-Authorship	*Student Services Handbook 5th edition, Ch. 11, pg. 210-214* ***Schedule your Spring academic advising appointment*** ***with your advisor***
	Sept. 25th	Watch episode 8 of Yuri!!! On Ice Student Development Theory: Schlossberg **Wellness FYE Lesson**	*Schlossberg (1981) A model for analyzing human adaptation to transition* *Reflection #3 in journal*

7	Sept. 30th	Watch episode 9 of Yuri!!! On Ice Isekai and transition theory	*Reflection #4 in journal* *Quiz #1 Due Oct. 8th in Canvas*
	Oct. 2nd	Watch episode 9 of Yuri!!! On Ice **FYE Lesson: Academic Planning**	***Academic Planning sticker in journal***
8	Oct. 7th	**FYE Lesson: Diversity and Inclusion** Watch episode 10 of Yuri!!! On Ice **FYE Lesson: Time Management**	*Aurélie Petit (2022) "Do female anime fans exist?" The impact of women-exclusionary discourses on rec.arts.anime, Internet Histories, 6:4, 352-368, DOI: 10.1080/24701475.2022.2109265*
	Oct. 9th	Watch episode 11 of Yuri!!! On Ice Discuss Petit's article Revisit Schlossberg's transition theory, discuss minority stress theory Work on final project outline in class	*Final project outline due Oct. 13th by 11:59pm in Canvas*
9	Oct. 14th	Gender and Sexuality in Anime Watch episode 12 of Yuri!!! On Ice (Finish series)	*Newitz, A. (1995). Magical girls and atomic bomb sperm: Japanese animation in America. Film Quarterly, 49(1), 2-15.*

	Oct. 16th	Discuss Yuri!!! On Ice ending Discuss Newitz reading	*Character Development Paper Due Oct. 18th in Canvas*
10	Oct. 21st	Identity development overview – terms and language	*Read: Consuming Anime, Fennell et al. (2012). Special Section: TV and New Media Audiences.*
	Oct. 23rd	Gender and Sexuality in Anime –Guest Speaker	*Deirdre Clyde (2021) Flying on borrowed feathers: identity formation among gender-variant anime fans in the U.S, Feminist Media Studies, 21:6, 1050-1053, DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2021.1959371* *Reflection #4 sticker in journal*
11	Oct. 28th	Race and Identity Representation in Anime and Manga Watch Neo Yokio episode 1	*Watch "Anime gets blackness wrong, here's how fans are fixing it" interview by The Guardian*
	Oct. 30th	Leadership Development Theory Overview: Discuss Transformational Leadership and Servant Leadership **FYE Lesson – Leadership** **True Colors Activity** Watch Anime episode #3	*Quiz #2 Due Nov. 2nd in Canvas* ***True Colors Assessment Reflection sticker in journal***

12	Nov. 4th	Watch JJK 0: Prequel Discuss group development theory	*Reflection sticker #6 in journal* *Tuckman, B. W., & Jensen, M. A. C. (1977). Stages of small-group development revisited. Group & Organization Studies, 2(4), 419-427.*
	Nov. 6th	Watch JJK 0: Prequel	
13	Nov. 11th	Finish JJK 0 and discuss Sign up for presentation days for final project	
	Nov. 13th	Future of Fandom: A Global Community Discussion Final Anime episode	*Future of Fandom reading in Canvas Reflection sticker #6 in journal* *Full journal is due*
14	Nov. 18th	No class- fall break	

	Nov. 20th	No class – fall break	
15	Nov. 25th	Final Class Discussion Final project presentation work day	
	Nov. 27th	Final project presentations	
16	Dec. 2nd	Final project presentations	*Final projects must be turned in*
	Dec. 4th	Final project presentations	

FINAL S		There is no final exam for this course	

¹ Dixon, Brianne T., Oluwagbenga Agboola, Alexis Hauck, Matthew Argento, Chelsea Miller, and Angela L. Vaughan. "Peer mentoring: Benefits to first-time college students and their peer mentors." *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice* 23, no. 2 (2023).

² Inkelas, Karen Kurotsuchi, Jody E. Jessup-Anger, Mimi Benjamin, and Matthew R. Wawrzynski. "The Living-Learning Community Pyramid." *The Talking Stick* (2018).

³ Friedman, Daniel, and Elizabeth Marsh. "What type of first-year seminar is most effective? A comparison of thematic seminars and college transition/success seminars." *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition* 21, no. 1 (2009): 29-42.

⁴ Shi, Qingmin, John R. Crooker, Christina R. Drum, and Brent M. Drake. "Investigation of the Effect of First-Year Seminars on Student Success." *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition* 33, no. 2 (2021): 65-95.

⁵ Kinzie, Jillian, and George Kuh. "Reframing student success in college: Advancing know-what and know-how." *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 49, no. 3 (2017): 19-27.

⁶ Schuette, Anthony. "Navigating the Enrollment Cliff in Higher Education. Spotlight Report Brief." *Trellis Company* (2023).

⁷ Phillips, Carrie H., and Stephanie J. Jones. "Strategic and Tactical Marketing Strategies for Regional Public Universities to Address the Enrollment Cliff." *The Journal of Higher Education* (2024): 1-25.

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Syllabus: Intro to Manga

LINDSEY STIREK

Keywords*: Syllabus, Manga, Class, Teaching, Education

Author Bio:

Lindsey Stirek is a Teaching Assistant Professor in the School of Art and Design and the Assistant Director of Academic Programming at Japan House at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Stirek earned her Ph.D. from the Ohio State University where she specialized in premodern Japanese literature and manga. Currently, her research centers around how storytelling through manga and anime is used to create models of activism for Ainu people. Dr. Stirek teaches courses on manga, anime, and Japanese artistic practices, including chanoyu and lacquer repair. Her writings can be found in *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Sexuality in Comic Book Studies, Experiments in Art Research: How Do We Live Questions Through Art?*, and the upcoming *Handbook of Japanese Aesthetics*.

PREFACE

This syllabus is a labor of love, and is the first syllabus I ever made, though it is almost unrecognizable from the first draft made nearly a decade ago. The hardest part of making this syllabus was, of course, deciding which manga to include. There are so many wonderful manga to choose from that narrowing it down was a herculean effort, and even having done so, I find myself updating the manga I use in each section every year. This is the beauty of teaching manga—it is ever-evolving, ever-changing, and so far I haven't found any wrong answers for what to include. This is also tragedy of teaching manga—you can never fully represent all the glorious variety there is to read, and some things will always get left out. The challenge then, is deciding what is too important to leave out. For example, I teach a seminar course that focuses exclusively on Queer manga, but I am only able to offer it occasionally, and it felt important to introduce more of these incredible works in the introductory class. My Brother's Husband has long been part of this syllabus, but *Boys Run the Riot* and *I Hear the Sunspot* are fairly recent additions. Replacing some of the more popular, mainstream manga with these more recent works representing diverse viewpoints was more popular with some students than others, but ultimately led to a better representation of the variety of manga available to read and opened space for some transformative conversations in the classroom.

Manga is such a powerful medium, and its influence is constantly expanding. While not as popular in the U.S. as anime, it has a dedicated fan base and Western comics artists often cite manga techniques and styles as influences on their own works. While one doesn't necessarily have to draw manga to understand the genius of manga techniques, playing a part in the creation of a manga is critical to gaining an applied knowledge of how manga works and why it is impactful. In the early versions of this class, I had every student make their own manga, which had some benefits, especially for the students who really had a story they wanted to tell, but on the suggestion of my student and later grading assistant, Jenny Han, I decided to try having the students work in teams to produce their manga. They are now split into groups of 2 or 3, matched based on their interests and have to fulfill the writer, illustrator, and editor roles between them. Not only does this replicate, with obvious limitations, the way many manga are produced, but it gives them a chance to play to their strengths and exchange ideas with teammates. This change resulted in extraordinary quality manga and was the impetus for the creation of the ongoing class zine, *Nenkan 301*.

Although this class has been through hybrid and online versions, the in-person iteration is my favorite way to run the class, as it allows students to work on their manga in a simulated studio setting as well as to see other groups' work and gather feedback and ideas as they go along. It is also a lot easier for me to make edits and gentle suggestions in real time, which I believe creates less stress in the long run of the creative process. This is truly a fun class to teach, and I have been told it is a fun class to take as well. But fun doesn't mean it isn't a serious, deep exploration of a medium that can serve as a window into diverse viewpoints and an expanded worldview. Stories are how humans understand each other and the world around us, and manga are simply stories told in word and image. I offer this syllabus as my own love letter to the medium, and I hope

you will find in it a good foundation to build off of as you incorporate your favorite manga, your students' recommendations, and the many fantastic manga I am sure are just waiting to be published.

SYLLABUS

At UIUC, we are on the lands of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw Nations. These Nations were forcefully removed from these lands upon which UIUC resides, and these lands continue to carry the stories and struggles of these Nations.
These histories are also echoed in the experience of African American, Latinx, Asian American, and Pacific Islander communities, among others. As a land-grant university, it is our responsibility to address our part in the legacies of colonialism, enslavement, and marginalization through actions as well as words. Thus, this statement represents one manifestation of our ongoing commitment to supporting Indigenous scholars and communities and serves as a reminder of the work left to do in pursuit of an equitable future.

ARTJ 301: Manga: The Art of Image and Word (3 credit hours)

Fall 2024	Course Website: Canvas
Room: 316 Art & Design Building	Instructor: L. Stirek
Day/Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays	Email: stirek1@illinois.edu
11:00am-12:20am	Office Hours: Schedule with instructor

This course introduces manga (Japanese comics), its production, and its history in both a Japanese and global context. You will read a variety of manga in translation and scholarly articles to explore the evolution of manga and how it interacts with culture and society. You will learn the fundamentals of manga as an art form and part of the cultural traditions of Japan.

Course Goals:
Our goal is to examine manga from multiple angles and to establish its role as a literary and artistic form. What role does manga play in contemporary society in Japan and abroad? How do we understand the phenomenon of manga in the context of Japanese culture, traditions, and social norms? What unique qualities does manga have that separate it from other forms of visual culture? How are manga similar to and different from Western comics? How do the visual and textual fields interact in manga and what impact does that have on readers? These are some of the main questions we will address by examining manga from a variety of genres.

Course Objectives:
We will examine the history and production of manga before moving on to survey representative works in several thematic categories/genres by reading both primary

readings and secondary scholarship. This course will help you develop the skills necessary to read manga and scholarly articles critically, engaging in constructive application of your own knowledge and of primary readings to evaluate arguments and identify themes and techniques. Through class discussion, we will be interrogating our assumptions about manga and exploring the larger picture of manga as a global phenomenon.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon the completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Interpret manga iconography.
- Explain artistic choices in manga.
- Differentiate between manga genres and identify associated drawing styles.
- Critically evaluate scholarly articles related to manga.
- Identify and discuss social, political, and economic effects on manga as a medium.
- Describe the history of manga and its connections to traditional Japanese culture.
- Work with a team to create an original manga.
- Give constructive feedback on creative works.
- Contribute your perspective during scholarly discussion.

You Will Succeed in This Course If You:

1. Come to class.
2. Do the readings (on time).
3. Participate in class discussion.
4. Complete all assignments.
5. Communicate with the instructor.

The most fruitful learning happens when we engage in open discussion and challenge ourselves to think outside our comfort zones. Successful students are those who contribute to the classroom community of learning and who enrich their own understanding in new ways.

Class Materials (Required)

Available in print:

> *Making Comics* (2006) by Scott McCloud
>> Avg. Price: New: $22.99, Used: around $10)

Available as e-reader or in print:

> *Sailor Moon 1* (1998) by Naoko Takeuchi
>> Avg. Price: New: $9.89, Used: $4.50
> *My Brother's Husband Vol. 1&2* (2017-2018) by Gengoroh Tagame
>> Avg. Price Vol. 1: New: $23.99, e-reader: $12.99, Used: $11
>> Avg. Price Vol. 2: New: $18.55, e-reader: $12.99, Used: $10.50
> *Boys Run the Riot* vol. 1 (2021) by Keito Gaku ISBN-13: 978-1646512485
>> Avg. Price: New: $12.99, e-reader: $7.99, Used: $4.99
> *I Hear the Sunspot* vol. 1 (2017) by Yuki Fumino ISBN-13: 978-1944937300
>> Avg. Price: New: $11.00, e-reader: $10.45, Used: $1.50
> *Chihayafuru* Vol. 2 (2008) by Yuki Suetsugu (e-reader: currently $0.99)

Viz Media access (free)

Grading Policy
Class Participation (20%)
Manga Activities (15%)
Final Project Proposal (5%)
Final Project Draft Presentation (15%)
Final Project Draft Comments (10%)
Final Project (Manga) (15%)
Final Project (Analysis) (10%)
Final Project Editorial Review (5%)
Final Reflection (5%)

100%+	A+
93-100%	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
0-59	F

Weekly Readings:
Weekly reading assignments are listed in the schedule. Readings not listed in the "Class Materials (required)" section above will be provided online via link or on the course website. Readings for each day must be completed BEFORE class that day to assure you can participate in the classroom discussions in a constructive way.

Participation:
Frequent, quality participation in class discussion is expected for maximum points. Quality participation is proactive contribution of unique ideas or constructive questions that further discussion and build off or incorporate the ideas of others. Frequent participation is making such contributions at least once per class.

Manga Activities:
You will be assigned three brief manga creation activities throughout the semester (each worth 5% of your grade). You will not be graded on artistic ability, but rather on your ability to implement the techniques, tropes, and iconography of manga learned in the course.

Final Project Proposal:

As a team, you must come up with a general plot idea for your manga (paragraph 1, this can be the same for each of you). As an individual, you must propose the role(s) you anticipate fulfilling within the team and explain why (paragraph 2, individually written). In total, this assignment should be approximately ½ to 1 page long (double spaced, 12pt font). Each person must turn in this assignment separately on Canvas.

Final Project Pitch Presentation:
Your team will pitch your manga to the magazine editorial board (your classmates) utilizing a visual aid of your choice. Each team will be given ten minutes to present. You should present:
1. Your plot
2. Your main characters and character design
3. The genre of your manga and any ways in which you plan to create interest/novelty
4. A rough storyboard

Final Project Presentation Comments:
As your classmates present their manga draft ideas, you will act as the magazine editorial board and be responsible for commenting on each group's project and making suggestions for improvement. More details on this requirement will be discussed in class.

Final Project (Manga):
Your final project will be a creative project made in a collaborative team of 3 to 4 people. The creative project should be a manga of at least 25 panels of your group's own collaborative creation. You can hand-draw, make a webtoon, etc., but you must make a manga (the definition of which we discuss in class). It must fit into one (or more) of the genres examined in this course and use tropes and/or iconography common to that genre. The final manga from each group will be anthologized in our class manga magazine.

Between you, you must fulfill three roles: writer, illustrator, and editor. You may mix-and-match these roles as suits your team, but no one person should take on all three roles at once and equal effort is expected from all teammates. Play to your strengths, foster each others' creativity, and take risks knowing your teammates are there to help you.

Final Project (Analysis):
Individually, you will also be required to write a 2-3 page critical analysis of your team's manga utilizing a minimum of three course readings (including manga) to evaluate, situate, and comment upon your work. You must include a bibliography of the sources you use.

Final Project Editorial Review:
Acting as an editor for the magazine, propose which order the manga should be in for the final magazine and explain why (1 page).

Final Reflection:
Your final reflection will be due one week after our last course meeting. The prompt is posted in Canvas.

Extra credit:
You may create manga (minimum of 4 panels each) of your own design at any point in the semester for a maximum of 2% towards your final grade. More details on Canvas.

Attendance Policy
Unexcused absences and frequent tardiness (more than 5 minutes late for class) will negatively affect your grade.

Late Assignment Policy
With the exception of the manga for your final project, late assignments will be accepted until all on-time submissions for that assignment have been graded by the instructor and returned. The instructor will make an announcement when they have begun grading submissions for an assignment but will not guarantee how long grading will take to complete and will not provide updates on their progress. Any assignments not submitted by the time the instructor has completed grading will be given a 0 for that assignment.

Accommodation Policy for Attendance and Assignments
Reasonable accommodations will be made for absences and late assignments at the discretion of the instructor. Accommodations for assignments and absences must be discussed with the instructor in advance or as soon as possible after incurring an absence or missing assignment.

Technology Policy
During class, phones must be on silent and put away unless the instructor indicates it is appropriate to use it to take photos of your work.

AI Policy
When used effectively, predictive writing technologies/generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Translate, Grammarly, Midjourney) can be valuable writing tools in many contexts. However, if you use predictive technologies in this class, use them ethically by disclosing how you used them (see, for example, the [MLA citation guidelines for generative AI Links to an external site.](#)). Regardless of whether you use AI for assignments, you are responsible for what you turn in and will be held accountable. For example, including inaccurate citations and sources from predictive technology puts you at risk of academic integrity violations, and overly vague, generalized writing will lose points on assignments.

Schedule

Week 1: **Intro to the Course and History of Manga and Global Comics**
Readings:
Tuesday: None.

Thursday: Read "A Brief Global History of Manga" by Lindsey Stirek.

Week 2: **Making Comics: The Visual Art**
Readings:
Tuesday: Read Introduction and Chapter 1 in *Making Comics*.

Thursday: Read Chapter 2 in *Making Comics*.
Assignments Due: Manga Activity 1

Week 3: **Making Comics: The Written Art**
Readings:
Tuesday: Read Chapters 3 and 4 in *Making Comics*.

Thursday: Read Chapters 5 and 6 in *Making Comics*.
Assignments Due: Manga Activity 2

Week 4: **Traditional Arts/Aesthetics Influence on Anime and Manga**
Readings:
Tuesday: IN-PERSON CALLIGRAPHY LESSON during class hours

Thursday: IN-PERSON CALLIGRAPHY LESSON during class hours
Assignments Due: Manga Activity 3

Week 5: **Manga Categories 1: Shōnen**
Readings:
Tuesday: Read the first chapter of *Naruto, Haikyuu!!*, and *One Piece*

Thursday: Read *Bakuman* vol. 1
Read "What Boys Will Be: A Study of Shōnen Manga" by Angela Drummond
Mathews

Week 6: **Manga Categories 2: Shōjo**
Readings:
Tuesday: Read the first chapter of *Ouran High School Host Club, Skip Beat!,* and
Nana
Read "Chapter 1: The Heart of the Matter" in *Straight from the Heart* by Jennifer
S. Prough on Project MUSE: https://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/15992

Thursday: Team Meeting Day
PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE by 11:59pm

Week 7: **Manga Categories 3: BL and GL**
  Readings:
      Tuesday: Read *Sailor Moon 1*.
      Read Chapter 4 (p. 64-75) of *Beautiful and Innocent Female Same-sex Intimacy in the Japanese Yuri Genre* by Verena Maser: https://img.4plebs.org/boards/tg/image/1494/08/1494087296957.pdf

      Thursday: Read *I Hear the Sunspot* vol. 1.
      Read "An Introduction to 'Boy's Love' in Japan" in *Boys Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture, and Community in Japan* by McClelland and Welkner on Project MUSE: https://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/1477208
      Optional: Read "I Hear You Just Fine": Disability and Queer Identity in Yuki Fumino's I Hear the Sunspot" by Corinna Percy https://doi.org/10.21900/j.jams.v1.233

Week 8: **Manga Categories 4: LGBTQIA+**
  Readings:
      Tuesday: Read *My Brother's Husband Vol. 1&2*

      Thursday: Read *Boys Run the Riot* vol. 1.
      Read "A Really High Hurdle' Japan's Abusive Transgender Legal Recognition Process" https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/03/20/really-high-hurdle/japans-abusive-transgender-legal-recognition-process

Week 9: **Manga Categories 5: Seinen**
  Readings:
      Tuesday: Read chapter 1 of *Tokyo Ghoul* and *Uzumaki*.

      Thursday: Team Work Day

Week 10: **The Relationship between Anime and Manga**
  Readings:
      Tuesday: Read *Chihayafuru* vol. 2.
         In-class: Watch *Chihayafuru* anime ep. 1

      Thursday: Team Work Day

Week 11: **Final Project Draft Presentations**
      Tuesday: Draft Presentations

      Thursday: Draft Presentations

Week 12: **Final Project Draft Presentations**
      Tuesday: Draft Presentations

Thursday: Draft Presentations
COMMENTS DUE Friday by 11:59pm

Week 13: **Manga Production 1**
Tuesday: Team Work Day and Editor-in-Chief Meetings

Thursday: Team Work Day and Editor-in-Chief Meetings

Week 14: **Fall Break!**

Week 15: **Manga Production 2**
Tuesday: Team Work Day
FINAL MANGA DUE BY 11:59PM

Thursday: Final Editing Day
FINAL EDITORIAL REVIEW DUE BY 11:59pm

Week 16: **Final Project Read-Through and Discussion**
Tuesday: Publication Day.
FINAL MANGA ANALYSIS DUE BY 11:59pm

Final Reflection DUE: December 17 BY 11:59PM CST

ASSIGNMENTS/RUBRICS

Manga Activity 1

1. Type "manga page" into Google image search or if you have a favorite manga, choose one page from it.
2. Look at the choices the author made and write one paragraph addressing the following: what transitions did they use between panels? What perspective do they use? What moments were selected and what moments left out?
3. In a rough sketch (hand-drawn or digital), redraw the page but add or remove one moment or panel, adjusting the other panels (size, position on the page, etc.) so the addition or removal is not immediately noticeable.
4. Write one paragraph about how this addition or subtraction changed the flow or even the meaning of the narrative.
5. Upload the unedited original page, your redrawn page, and your responses to questions 2 and 4 to the Manga Activity 1 assignment in Canvas.

Manga Activity 2

Using the unedited original image of the manga page you selected for Manga Activity 1, or a different manga if necessary,

1. Write a paragraph in which you identify the expressions of the characters and how they are shown through body language, facial expressions, words or other context. Be specific!
2. Re-draw the page, but give the characters different expressions, different body language, and/or change the lettering of the words (but don't change the words themselves!).
3. Write a paragraph to explain what you did and the effect it has on the page and how the reader might see it.
4. Make sure to upload both the original and edited images.

Manga Activity 3

Pick one a manga page as in previous manga assignments OR use a manga you have read and answer the following (at least one paragraph for each):
1. How is *ma* (active, empty space) used in the manga (or rather, the volume/chapter you read) as a whole?
2. Pick one or two pages and analyze the use of *ma* (active, empty space) in it/them. Make sure to provide a screenshot or picture of the page and mark (with a draw tool, a text box, or otherwise) each specific visual area you address in your analysis. Upload both the original and the marked image.
3. Other than the concept of ma (active, empty space), what ideas from calligraphy do you see carrying through into manga? Phrased differently, what influence do you think traditional Japanese arts/aesthetics has on manga?
4. (Extra Credit) Attach a picture of your calligraphy from Tuesday's or Thursday's class and write a few sentences describing why/how it embodies the concept of ma.

Grading Rubric for Manga Activity Assignments

Manga Activities				
Criteria	**Ratings**			**Pts**
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Images	1 pts Full Marks Original page and redrawn page provided	0.5 pts Half marks only one image provided	0 pts No Marks no image provided	1 pts

Manga Activities			
Criteria	**Ratings**		**Pts**
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Answers the Prompt	2 pts Full Marks Fully answers all parts of the prompt in detail.	1 pts Half points Answers the prompt but the answer is not thorough or lacks clarity and/or only answers some of the prompts.	0 pts No Marks does not answer the prompt or is extremely vague and unclear	2 pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Analysis	2 pts Full Marks Provides sufficient specific examples from the page to support answer.	1 pts Half points Examples lack specificity and/or sufficiency, or are not applicable to prompt/answer	0 pts No Marks no examples or examples are extremely vague and unconnected to the prompt	2 pts
Total Points: 5			

Project Presentation Comments

As your classmates present their manga draft ideas, you will act as the magazine editorial board and be responsible for commenting on each group's project and making suggestions for improvement. More details on this requirement will be discussed in class.

For this assignment, act as if you are an editor for a manga company.

Give constructive comments on the flow of the story, the panel layout, the dialogue, plot devices, etc. Address the following questions:

  -Is the plot clear?
  -Does the panel layout make sense/flow?
  -Does the dialogue/plot suit the scenes presented?
  -Is the story and the way it is presented impactful?
  -Does the story/art convey emotion well?
  -Does the manga fit into the chosen genre?
  -Will the manga appeal to readers?
  -Is the character design impactful and/or suit the character's role?
  -Does the division of labor in the team make sense?

If the answer to any of these is "no," please provide recommendations on how to improve!

Final Reflection Assignment

1-2 pages, 12 pt font, double spaced
In your reflection, address the following prompts:
1. What are the three main things you would say you learned from creating your own manga?
2. How does manga reflect and comment upon society/"real life" and how does manga push boundaries?
3. Has reading manga and learning about it changed or enhanced your ideas about art, storytelling, Japan, society, and the world?
4. Name and discuss at least one skill you feel you developed or gained from this class.
5. What is one fact, idea, or discussion point that you think you will remember and/or use in the future.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Though I often teach manga and anime separately for the sake of ease, as teaching multiple mediums can be rather challenging, it has been an interesting exercise to incorporate some anime into the course, particularly to compare the manga and anime versions of the same work. There is truly so much room to maneuver in this syllabus based on what direction you want to go with your course. Play with the schedule, the assignments, throw the whole thing out! But please do try your hand at teaching manga, I am sure your students will be thankful for it!

Syllabus: Intro to Japanese Animation

LINDSEY STIREK

Volume 5, Pages 294-314

Keywords*: Syllabus, Anime, Class, Teaching, Education

Author Bio:

Lindsey Stirek is a Teaching Assistant Professor in the School of Art and Design and the Assistant Director of Academic Programming at Japan House at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Stirek earned her Ph.D. from the Ohio State University where she specialized in premodern Japanese literature and manga. Currently, her research centers around how storytelling through manga and anime is used to create models of activism for Ainu people. Dr. Stirek teaches courses on manga, anime, and Japanese artistic practices, including chanoyu and lacquer repair. Her writings can be found in *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Sexuality in Comic Book Studies, Experiments in Art Research: How Do We Live Questions Through Art?*, and the upcoming *Handbook of Japanese Aesthetics*.

PREFACE

Among the several courses I teach, my introduction to Japanese animation class is probably the most sought after, and I am endlessly impressed by my students' drive to go beyond passive consumption of anime in order to connect with Japanese culture. Students crave a deeper understanding of this medium and the contexts from which it arose and within which it exists. I created this course to respond to that demand for knowledge, but it has changed substantially over the years. When I first developed this course, I intended for it to be both a survey of Japanese animation styles and a way to explore philosophical questions, but ultimately it was a critical thinking and writing-focused, lecture-discussion course. Initially, my approach to assignments was quite traditional; there were discussion assignments, a debate assignment, and a final paper. These were not bad assignments at all, and the debate, which centers around the topic of the ethics of fansubbing, continues to feature as a key assignment in the course with many students reporting that they found it fun and less stressful to work with a team on this assignment and that it gave them a chance to re-acquaint themselves with formal debate through a less divisive topic. However, the discussion board posts and final papers seemed to elicit less student engagement in addition to being tedious to grade on my end, and with the advent of generative AI threatening to throw the integrity of written assignments into question, I began to think of ways I could elicit responses to the deep philosophical questions around which I had originally structured the course without relying so heavily on writing prompts.

In my other courses, I had been challenging the primacy of the individual written assignment by prioritizing creative group assignments such as manga creation in my introductory manga class, which led to the online publication of a class zine that has been ongoing since 2022. I measure the success of these assignments by the level of engagement with the materials and with each other, and each semester, students have created high-quality collaborative manga and worked together to edit each others' works and publish the zine, so I count this change of approach to assignments as a huge success. Naturally, I wanted to replicate this success in my anime class, but where my other courses were relatively art-focused from their conception, this animation course had always been "about" anime rather than "making" animation, and since it is a general education course under the category of historical and philosophical perspectives, I couldn't completely change the focus away from those topics.

So, I decided to open up the final project to alternative formats, intending to encourage students to be creative in their response to the course content. The first time I taught it this way, I received mainly video essays, which was fine and many of them were incredibly deep explorations of anime and its role in society, but I had expected more attempts at actual animation than the single one I received. After gathering some student feedback, I realized that in trying to make these changes while avoiding making the course an anime production course, I had neglected to provide any steppingstones for students to create their own animated works. Figuring out where to begin animating can be so intimidating as to create an impassable barrier to entry, so even students who

may have wanted to create their own animations chose instead to do a more familiar type of project.

After considering how to fix this, I decided to replace what had previously been online discussion board assignments, which had begun to become riddled with formulaic, impersonal responses, with beginning animation assignments in order to give students the most basic tools upon which they could build on their own if they wanted to pursue animation for their final projects. I allowed them to use any software they wanted, though I recommended using Blender, which is free, or Adobe Animate, Photoshop, and Premiere Pro since our students have access to those programs through their university fees, and I provided a thorough set of guidelines via the assignment instructions and grading rubric. I gave a short introductory lecture on how to animate using Adobe Animate—in hindsight, perhaps a mistake to have used this program to demonstrate, as saving a file they could upload to the assignment submission page proved more difficult than the animation itself for most of them—and gave very thorough, frame-by-frame feedback after they completed the first assignment. As a scholar and instructor rather than a professional animator, it was intimidating to assign something like this at first, but I designed the assignments carefully so that anyone with skill in visual analysis and knowledge of the basic workings of animation should be able to utilize these assignments in their own anime classes. There are also excellent tutorials available online for each of the programs mentioned above as well as videos explaining some of the most common beginning animation exercises that can supplement the assignments or serve as primers for instructors new to the creation aspect of anime.

I have only taught the course once since making this change, but the effect on including animation assignments was immediate. Not only did I receive more animated assignments than before, but students' work on those beginning animation exercises— the animators among you will be familiar with the bouncing ball, falling brick, and walk sequence exercises—was so excellent that I was able to put together a small student exhibition from their assignment submissions. Perhaps due to having experienced the animation process, even in such a limited context, students also became more engaged in class discussions, especially those about the anime industry, and their visual analysis of the anime assigned each week was much deeper and more thorough than it had been in previous classes.

Incorporating beginning animation assignments into the course has ultimately proven to be an incredible tool to encourage more thorough analysis and deeper understanding of anime, even while the main emphasis of the course has not shifted from its philosophical and historical foci. Students were able to experience the frustration and the joy of animating on a micro level and, in so doing, were able to move from a passive, consumption-based interest in anime into a more informed, experience-based appreciation and understanding of it.

If the rapid speed with which the course fills and the incredible number of emails I get asking for an override into the course each semester is any indication, interest in anime is not slowing down and there are not currently enough courses to respond to that

demand. It is heartbreaking to have to turn down dozens of hopeful students wanting a deeper knowledge of a medium that they find so captivating, and I desperately want more instructors to teach anime classes, but perhaps I have thus far failed to see how, similar to beginning to learn to animate, it can be quite difficult to know where to start teaching anime. So, with my heartfelt thanks to JAMS for suggesting this idea and creating the platform for it, I provide my Introduction to Japanese Animation syllabus in the hope that it can be a steppingstone for you to create your own, amazing anime courses and class sessions.

<u>**SYLLABUS**</u>

At UIUC, we are on the lands of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw Nations. These Nations were forcefully removed from these lands upon which UIUC resides, and these lands continue to carry the stories and struggles of these Nations.
These histories are also echoed in the experience of African American, Latinx, Asian American, and Pacific Islander communities, among others. As a land-grant university, it is our responsibility to address our part in the legacies of colonialism, enslavement, and marginalization through actions as well as words. Thus, this statement represents one manifestation of our ongoing commitment to supporting Indigenous scholars and communities and serves as a reminder of the work left to do in pursuit of an equitable future.

ARTJ 302: Introduction to Japanese Animation (3 credit hours)
Spring 2024   Course Website: Canvas
Room: Online (Zoom, simultaneous)   Instructor: L. Stirek
Day/Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays   Email: stirek1@illinois.edu
from 11am-12:20 pm   Office Hours: Schedule with instructor
                                                  Grading Assistant: Jenny Han

This course introduces anime (Japanese animation) and its history, relevance, and global impact. You will watch a variety of anime (subtitled or dubbed) and read scholarly articles to explore the ways anime impacts and is impacted by its given historical moment and social context. You will also learn about the mechanics of anime creation and examine its interaction with other media including videogames and manga. By moving beyond surface viewing, you will gain deeper insight into this popular Japanese medium and all the history, culture, and philosophy that entails.

<u>Course Goals:</u>
Our goal is to examine anime as a Japanese medium that has crossed boundaries of form and culture to become a global phenomenon. What role does anime play in contemporary society in Japan and abroad? How do we understand anime in the context of Japanese culture, history, and societal norms? What happens when anime is exported to countries outside Japan? What philosophical questions does anime address or bring up and how? How do the visual, musical, linguistic, and textual fields interact in anime and what impact does that have on viewers? What sort of communities has anime given rise to? These are some of the main questions we will address by examining manga from a variety of genres.

<u>Course Objectives:</u>

We will examine the significance of anime as a field of study before moving on to address specific issues within anime, such as cross-media collaboration, approaches to philosophy of mind, and ethics in fandom, by viewing primary sources and reading secondary scholarship. This course will help you develop the skills necessary to view anime critically and to engage in philosophical debate on the subject, engaging in constructive application of your own knowledge and of primary sources to evaluate arguments and develop logical and analytical responses. Through class discussion, we will interrogate assumptions about anime and develop a multi-faceted understanding of this medium and its global impact.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon the completion of this course, you will be able to:
- Interpret anime in terms of Japanese aesthetic traditions.
- Explain philosophical (especially aesthetic, ethical, and philosophy of mind) issues addressed by various anime.
- Critically evaluate scholarly articles related to anime.
- Identify and discuss historical, social, political, and economic effects on anime as a medium.
- Describe the connections between anime and other media.
- Debate ethical issues surrounding anime.
- Contribute your perspective during scholarly discussion.

You Will Succeed in This Course If You:
1. Come to class.
2. Do the readings (on time).
3. Participate in class discussion.
4. Complete all assignments.
5. Communicate with the instructor.

The most fruitful learning happens when we engage in open discussion and challenge ourselves to think outside our comfort zones. Successful students are those who contribute to the classroom community of learning and who enrich their own understanding in new ways.

Class Materials
Required:
The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan's Media Success Story (2013) by Ian Condry
Crunchyroll Premium (Fan tier, $7.99/month)

Available via HBO Max subscription:
Spirited Away (2001) by Hayao Miyazaki
Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind (1984) by Hayao Miyazaki
Only Yesterday (1991) by Isao Takahata
Kingdom of Dreams and Madness (2013) by Mami Sunada

Available for rental or purchase online:
Ghost in the Shell (1995) by Mamoru Oshii (currently free with ads on YouTube Movies: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHil4Y4r3Wk)

Free online with UIUC login:
Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation Updated Edition (2005) by Susan Napier
Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World (2012) by Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, and Izumi Tsuji (JSTOR: https://www-jstor-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/stable/j.ctt1npk9q)

Recommended reading:
Anime: A History (2013) by Jonathon Clements
The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation (2009) by Thomas Lamarre
Interpreting Anime (2018) by Christopher Bolton

Grading Policy
93-100   A
90-93   A-
87-89   B+
84-86   B
80-83   B-
77-79   C+
74-76   C
70-73   C-
67-69   D+
60-66   D
0-60   F

Class Participation (20%)
Animation Practice (15%)
In-Class Debate (5%)
In-Class Debate Outline (10%)
In-Class Debate Evaluation (10%)
Final Project Pitch (5%)
Final Project Draft (10%)
Final Project Presentation (20%)
Final Reflection (5%)

Weekly Readings:
Weekly required readings and viewings can be found in the schedule. All anime are available on Crunchyroll unless given alternative sources in the "required materials" section above. Readings/anime viewings for each day must be completed BEFORE class

that day. This is to assure you can participate in the classroom discussions in a constructive way.

Participation:
Frequent, quality participation in class discussion is expected for maximum points. Quality participation is proactive contribution of unique ideas or constructive questions that further discussion and build off or incorporate the ideas of others. Frequent participation is making such contributions at least once per class.

Animation Practice:
There will be 3 animation practice assignments in which you will practice using animation software to create your own animation. More information will be given in class.

In-Class Debate:
In Week 12, we will be having an in-class debate regarding various stances on the practice of fansubbing.
You will be assigned a debate team, a topic, and stance in Week 10.
Individually, you should prepare your arguments ahead of time by creating a one-page (minimum) outline of your arguments and the evidentiary support, including citations, due Friday the week before the debate.
As a team, you will be given class time to discuss the arguments you will use from your individual outlines and to decide who will fill each role on the debate team before the debate begins.

Debate Evaluation:
After the debate, you will write a 1-2 page evaluation of the debate and your final opinion on the topic. More details will be given in class.

Final Project:
You have many options for the final project.
It can be a moment or scene (15-20 seconds at an average of 6-12 fps) animated from a story of your own creation--you can hand-draw, use computer animation, or even use stop-motion (e.g. claymation), if that interests you. You could also compose a musical introduction or outro for an anime, create a video analysis of an anime, or re-animate existing animation, etc. Whatever you choose, the project must reflect your response to one of the philosophical and/or medium-related topics discussed in class and must demonstrate skills acquired from the animation practice assignments.

Final Project Pitch:
You will be given class time in Week 4 to pitch your idea for your final project. You will have class time to present your idea for your final project. This is a completion grade. Keep your pitch short! Just one minute or less about the following:
- What topic do you hope to address with your project?
- What do you plan to create for your project?
- Any questions or concerns?

Final Project Draft:
A draft of your project will be due by Friday of Week 10.
Drafts should include:
1. An introduction with a thesis statement (for animation/artworks, this is essentially an artist's statement, see below)
2. A thorough outline of your project, e.g. a storyboard with rough illustrations accompanied by commentary and notes on keyframes (most important moments within a given sequence) including timing, transitions, dialogue/sound effects, and actions
3. A complete bibliography in MLA format (at least 2 sources)

For anime/artworks, the introduction pieces should not just tell the plot to the audience, but should explain why you created the piece, how this piece relates to other anime, what issue you are addressing with the piece, and any other pertinent information about how and why you created your project. You should include other anime or secondary sources you reference in your bibliography.

Final Project Presentation:
In Week 14, you will present your project in class. Each person will be given TBD minutes to present their topic and show their project. More details on requirements to be given in class. The grade for this will reflect both the grade for your presentation, which is a completion grade, and the final project itself.

Final Reflection:
Your final reflection will be due one week after our last course meeting. The prompt and requirements will be posted in Canvas.

Policies

Attendance Policy
Unexcused absences, leaving class early, and frequent tardiness (more than 5 minutes late for class) will negatively affect your grade.

Late Assignment Policy
With the exception of the debate and final project, late assignments will be accepted until all on-time submissions for that assignment have been graded by the instructor and returned. The instructor will make an announcement when they have begun grading submissions for an assignment but will not guarantee how long grading will take to complete and will not provide updates on their progress. Any assignments not submitted by the time the instructor has completed grading will be given a 0 for that assignment.

Accommodation Policy for Attendance and Assignments
Reasonable accommodations will be made for absences and late assignments at the discretion of the instructor. Accommodations for assignments and absences must be

discussed with the instructor in advance or as soon as possible after incurring an absence or missing assignment.

Technology Policy
During class, phones must be on silent and put away.

AI Policy
When used effectively, predictive writing technologies/generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Translate, Grammarly, Midjourney) can be valuable writing tools in many contexts. However, if you use predictive technologies in this class, use them ethically by disclosing how you used them (see, for example, the MLA citation guidelines for generative AI Links to an external site.). Regardless of whether you use AI for assignments, you are responsible for what you turn in and will be held accountable. For example, including inaccurate citations and sources from predictive technology puts you at risk of academic integrity violations, and overly vague, generalized writing will lose points on assignments.

Schedule
Week 1. Intro to the Course: Why anime?
     Readings:
     Tues.: Syllabus.

     Thurs.: Read Chapter 1 in Napier, Introduction in Condry.
     In class: Watch *Summer Wars*

Week 2. Who Makes Anime? 1
     Readings**:**
     Tues.: Read Chapter 1 in Condry.
     In class: Continue watching *Summer Wars*.

     Thurs.: Watch *Millennium Actress*
     Read "National History as Otaku Fantasy: Satoshi Kon's Millennium Actress"

Week 3. Who Makes Anime? 2
     Readings:
     Tues.: Watch *Kingdom of Dreams and Madness.*

     Thurs.: Watch *Only Yesterday*
     Read Chapter 2 in Condry.
Animation 1

Week 4. Manga and Anime: What's the difference?
     Readings:
     Tues.: Watch *Astro Boy* Ep. 1 (1963):
     https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpwbNYFvZy4

Watch *What is Manga?* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ASK-c4WTVI&t=143s
Read Chapter 3 in Condry.
In class: Watch *Astro Boy* Ep. 1 (1980)

Thurs.: None.
In-class: Individual class time for Project Pitches

Week 5. How has merchandising co-created the anime phenomenon?
Readings:
Tues.: Watch *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing* Ep. 1 and *Sailor Moon Crystal* Ep. 1
Read Chapter 4 in Condry

Thurs.: Read Chapter 5 in Napier.
In-class: Watch clips from *Neon Genesis Evangelion*
Animation 2

Week 6. Anime and the Body 1: How does anime reflect society?
Readings:
Tues.: Watch *Akira*.

Thurs.: Read Part Two: Body, Metamorphosis, Identity and Chapter 3 in Napier.

Week 7. Anime and the Body 2: How does anime reflect society?
Readings:
Tues.: Watch *Ghost in the Shell*.

Thurs.: Read "Puppet Voices, Cyborg Souls"
Read Chapter 6 in Napier.
Animation 3

Week 8. Gender and Anime 1: How does anime challenge gender norms?
Readings:
Tues.: Watch and *Afro Samurai* Ep. 1 and *Rurouni Kenshin* Ep. 1.
Read "Black Mecha is Built for This: Black Masculine Identity in *Firedance* and *Afro Samurai*" by Alexander Dumas J. Brickler VI here: https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/article/706959

Thurs.: Watch *Yuri!!! On ICE* Ep. 1 and 2 and *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure: Stardust Crusaders* Ep. 1 and 2.
Read Chapter 7 in Napier.

Week 9. Gender and Anime 2: How does anime challenge gender norms?
Readings:
Tues.: Watch *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* Ep. 1, 2 and *Revolutionary Girl Utena* Ep. 1.

Read Ch. 9 in Napier.

Thurs.: Watch *Spirited Away*.
Read Chapter 8 in Napier.

Week 10. Representation in Anime: How do we see the Other?
Readings:
Tues.: Watch *Golden Kamuy* Ep. 1 and 2 and *Samurai Champloo* Ep. 1
Read "Promoting Japanese Cultural Tourism Through Appreciation of Ainu Folktales and Anime"
Optional: "The Indigenous Shôjo: Transmedia Representations of Ainu Femininity in Japan's Samurai Spirits, 1993–2019" here:
https://iopn.library.illinois.edu/journals/jams/article/view/502

Thurs.: Watch *Josee, the Tiger, and the Fish*.
Read Overcoming Barriers: Mobility limitation; "inspirational" disability; and Josee, the Tiger, and the Fish"
DEBATE ASSIGNMENTS ANNOUNCED
PROJECT DRAFTS DUE

Week 11. Anime and the Environment: What can anime do for society?
Readings:
Tues.: Watch *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*.
Read Chapter 13 in Napier
Read "Anime Landscapes as a Tool for Analyzing the Human-Environment Relationship: Hayao Miyazaki Films" here: https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0752/7/2/16/htm
In class: Class time to work on debate

Thurs.: Watch *Pokemon* Ep. 1 and *Mushishi* Ep. 1.
Read "'It is a Pokémon world': The *Pokémon* franchise and the environment" by Jason Bainbridge. Available here:
http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1367877913501240
In class: Class time to work on debate
DEBATE OUTLINES DUE

Week 12. In-Class Debate
Readings:
Tues.: IN-CLASS DEBATE

Thurs.: IN-CLASS DEBATE
DEBATE EVALS DUE

Week 13. Who Watches Anime?: Gaming, Localization, and Otaku Culture
Readings:
Tues.: Watch *Sword Art Online* Ep. 1 and 2.

Read Chapter 6 in Condry.
Read Chapter 3 in Video Games and Japaneseness, available on Canvas
In class: Special Guest Lecture by Jenny Han

Thurs.: Chapter 7 in Condry
Read Chapter 9 in *Fandom Unbound.*
PRESENTATION MATERIALS DUE

Week 14. Presentations 1
Tues.: None. In-class presentations.

Thurs.: None. In-class presentations.

Week 15. Presentations 2 and Wrap-Up
Readings:
Tues.: None. In-class presentations.

FINAL PROJECTS DUE TBD BY 11:59PM CST

ASSIGNMENTS/RUBRICS

Animation Activity 1

This is the bouncing ball exercise, a common exercise for beginning animators.

Some principles of animation this will help you practice are:

1. Speed and spacing

2. Weight

3. Arcs

4. Timing

5. Squash and Stretch

For part one of your assignment, create a bouncing ball animation at no less than 12 frames per second for a minimum of 1 second that continues the animation started in the video linked here

Your animation must include a bounce, a toss, and/or a drop, but do not repeat the same sequence as shown in the animation in the video. Beyond that you have the freedom to animate what you like. You can use any animation software you like, but I recommend Blender, Adobe Animate, or Adobe Photoshop and Premiere Pro. You may also hand draw, if you choose.

For part two of your assignment, once you have created your animation, choose one of the following:

A. Create two more animations that show some kind of variations in the speed of the ball, weight of the ball, etc. This can be the same sequence that you initially animated with those modifications added or it can be a new sequence showing the different quality. Please title each of your additional animations according to the variation you are aiming for (e.g. "Speed").

B. In a word doc, respond to the following prompts:

    1. Explain what your ball animation shows and how you portrayed it.

    2. How has animating your own short sequence given you insight into anime?

Animation Activity 2

This is the falling brick exercise, another common exercise for beginning animators.

Some principles of animation this will help you practice are:

1. Slow in slow out

2. Weight/gravity and speed

3. Spin

4. Momentum and timing

5. Squash and Stretch

For part one of your assignment, create a falling brick animation at no less than 12 frames per second for a minimum of 1 second that continues the animation started in the video linked here

Your animation must include another falling brick falling from a different height and should not repeat the same sequence as shown in the animation in the video. Beyond that you have the freedom to animate what you like. You can use any animation software

you like, but I recommend Blender, Adobe Animate, or Adobe Photoshop and Premiere Pro. You may also hand draw, if you choose.

For part two of your assignment, once you have created your animation, choose one of the following:

A. Create two more animations that show some kind of variations in the height of the fall, weight/size of the brick, force of the spin or impact, etc. This can be the same sequence that you initially animated with those modifications added or it can be a new sequence showing the different quality. Please title each of your additional animations according to the variation you are aiming for (e.g. "Height--higher").

B. In a word doc, respond to the following prompts:

    1. Explain what your brick animation shows and how you portrayed it.

    2. How has animating the falling brick sequence been different from animating the bouncing ball? What did you learn from it?

Animation Assignment 3

This is a walk sequence exercise, another common exercise for beginning animators.

Some principles of animation this will help you practice are:

1. [Key poses and cycles (contact points, recoil, high point)](#)

2. Weight/gravity

3. Timing (offsets, overlap)

4. Momentum (follow-through) and speed

For part one of your assignment, create a walk sequence animation at no less than 8 frames per second for a minimum of 2 seconds and at least two complete walk cycles that continues the animation started in the video linked [here](#)

Your animation must include something or someone walking, and should not repeat the same sequence as shown in the animation in the video. Beyond that you have the freedom to animate what you like. You can use any animation software you like, but I recommend Blender, Adobe Animate, or Adobe Photoshop and Premiere Pro. You may also hand draw, if you choose.

For part two of your assignment, once you have created your animation, choose one of the following:

A. Create two more animations that show some kind of variations in the speed (can start running, slow down, etc.), position (crawling, somersaulting, etc.), terrain (slope, rocky, tall grass, etc.), weight (carrying a heavy backpack, entering a low gravity chamber, etc.), etc. This can be the same sequence that you initially animated with those modifications added or it can be a new sequence showing the different quality. Please title each of your additional animations according to the variation you are aiming for (e.g. "Rocky Terrain").

B. In a word doc, respond to the following prompts:

    1. Explain what your walk sequence shows and how you portrayed it. Be specific.

    2. How has animating the walk sequence been different from animating the brick or the bouncing ball? What did you learn from it?

Grading Rubric for Animation Assignments

Criteria	Ratings			Pts
Part 1 Parameters	1 pts Full Marks Animation is 1 second or more animated at 12fps or more.	0.5 pts Mid Animation is less than 1 second and/or less than 12fps but more than .5 seconds and/or 6fps.	0 pts No Marks Animation is less than .5 seconds and/or 6 fps.	1 pts
Part 1 Content	1 pts Full Marks Clear continuation of the animation sample provided and in accordance with additional requirements without repeating the sample animation.	0.5 pts Mid Clear continuation of the animation sample provided without repeating it, but neglects to animate according to the additional requirements.	0 pts No Marks Repeats or otherwise does not continue the animation provided in the sample.	1 pts

Criteria	Ratings			Pts
Part 2 Parameters	**1 pts** Full Marks For animation option: creates at least two additional animations. For writing option: responds to all prompts.		**0 pts** No Marks	1 pts
Part 2 Content	**2 pts** Full Marks For animation option: animations demonstrate at least two different variations and are appropriately labeled For writing option: demonstrates thorough and thoughtful responses and critical thinking	**1 pts** Mid For animation option: animations demonstrate only one variation and/or is not appropriately labeled For writing option: demonstrates some critical thinking but may neglect some aspects of the prompt or lack thoroughness	**0 pts** No Marks	2 pts
Total Points: 5				

Debate Assignment

Each debate will be 20 minutes long with each team (supporting and opposing) in the debate allotted 10 minutes in total. The supporting and opposing teams will take turns making and rebutting arguments, with the rough debate schedule as follows:

Opening argument (supporting team): 2-3 minutes

Opening argument (opposing team): 2-3 minutes

Further arguments (supporting team): 2-3 minutes

Further arguments (opposing team): 2-3 minutes

Recess to plan rebuttal: 1-2 minutes

Rebuttal (supporting team): 2-3 minutes

Rebuttal (opposing team): 2-3 minutes

Your team should have an opening argument, further arguments, and a rebuttal. You can divide up your time and roles however you like, but each person must speak. You may share your screen to show pictures that are relevant to your argument, but no videos, please. I will have to be fairly strict about time to make sure we get through

everyone's debates. If any group member is missing during the planning stages of your outline/debate, you may have to figure out how to cover that role. You can turn in the same outline for each team member.

Debate Evaluation

At the top of the page, reiterate your topic and assigned stance in the debate. Then, please address the following prompts:

1. What was it like to engage in this type of debate? Did it feel different from classroom discussions?
2. What was challenging about it? What was interesting and/or fun about it?
3. Was it difficult to work with a group for the debate or did it help you form your arguments better?
4. How did your group divide the labor and did it feel fair?
5. What is your final stance on your topic and did the process of the debate and debate prep change any of your opinions on this topic?

Your evaluation should be at least 1 page long.

Final Project Draft Rubric

Criteria	Ratings						Pts
Intro paragraph with defined thesis	3 pts Full Marks	2 pts thesis undefined, intro paragraph		1 pts only thesis or very limited conclusion		0 pts No Marks	3 pts
Bibliography	2 pts Full Marks	1 pts partially done	0 pts No Marks				2 pts
outline of body or storyboard	5 pts Full Marks	4 pts fully outlined, minor issues	3 pts outlined, but with issues	2 pts limited detail, but complete outline	1 pts incomplete outline	0 pts No Marks	5 pts
Total Points: 10							

Final Reflection Assignment

1-2 pages, double spaced, 12 pt font

In your reflection, address the following prompts:

1. How does anime reflect and reflect or comment upon society and how does it push boundaries?

2. Has learning about anime changed or enhanced your ideas about art, storytelling, Japan, society, and the world? Explain.

3. Name and discuss at least one skill you feel you developed or gained from this class.

4. What is one fact, idea, or discussion point that you think you will remember and/or use in the future.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I hope this syllabus and the accompanying assignment descriptions and rubrics proves

useful to you. This course has functioned well in both entirely online and in-person

iterations, but there are, of course, some aspects of it that are unique to the context in

which I teach this course, which is at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, so you

may have to take bits and pieces of it to suit your own contexts and unique situations. I

look forward to seeing many more anime studies courses in coming years!