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FOUNDED BY

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VISUALITY AND FICTIONALITY OF JAPAN AND
EUROPE IN CROSS-CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

EDITED BY

MARCO PELLITTERI & MATTEO FABBRETTI

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A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

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Editorial

Marco PELLITTERI & Matteo FABBRETTI | Kōbe University, Japan; School of Modern Languages, Cardiff University, UK

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Dear readers, students, fellow scholars,
welcome to this third instalment of *Mutual Images*.

This is the output of our fourth yearly international workshop, which our research association organised and held at Aarhus University (Denmark) on 13 and 14 May, 2016.

The common ground of the articles that form this issue is expressed in two notions: *fictionality* and *visuality*, applied in this case to the ways Japan and Europe have been narrated in works of fiction and, either realistically or fictionally, represented by graphical/visual means in recent times. The essays hosted hereby explore these thematic areas keeping as their core framework and conceptual mindset a cross-cultural perspective, declining the two guiding concepts under multiple approaches.

As editors of this issue, what we appreciate the most in the way it presents itself to readers is that its articles (1) propose compelling topics, (2) generously delve into theory, (3) provide well researched reviews of the literature, and finally (4) deploy and recount a number of practical examples, thus avoiding the trick of being well informed on something without diving into concrete cases. In this picture are included the two book reviews in the final section, by Judit E. Magyar and Jamie Tokuno: the choice of the analysed works is perfectly suited to the notions of fictionality and visuality we identified as the issue's *fil rouge*.

What is, in a few words, *fictionality*?

We can briefly define it as a “quality” or a “property” of fiction as opposed to non-fiction, intending the latter as consisting of factual accounts. One of the ideas behind the Aarhus workshop and, overall, one of the notions supporting this issue, was that a great deal of images that are received and consumed in Europe about Japan are based on fictional narratives rather than factual accounts: novels, video games, *manga*,

animation are all literary genres or entertainment forms (or both, depending on the perspectives one wants to adopt) in which there is no guarantee that what we read/watch is grounded in reality; this includes—and this is our primary interest here—all those instances in which Japan, or the Japanese people, or specific aspects of Japan’s culture and populace are represented. On the contrary, situations, images, and narratives that may even be based on factuality can, and often are as a matter of fact, be totally invented, imaginary. Therefore, what we encounter in these narratives, in their being fictional, is to be framed as fantastic or fantasized representations. Factors such as otherness, exoticism, and Orientalistic attitudes are frequent elements of such fictional interpretations of “Japan” or “Japanese things”.

To this end the first article, by Fabio Domenico Palumbo, looks at the rhetorical devices used in a selected group of recent Italian literary works that show three different representations or “narrative uses” of Japan: *Il re dei Giapponesi* (‘The king of the Japanese,’ 1949), an unfinished novel by Pier Paolo Pasolini; *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler* (1979), *Palomar* (1983), and *Collection of Sand* (1984), all novels by Italo Calvino; and *Silk* (1996), a short novel by Alessandro Baricco.

The second umbrella-notion of this issue, *visuality*, is, compared to fictionality, a very different “device” of representation. While fictionality, *ipso facto*, refers to the either written or oral or visual representations of fictional persons, places, and events, *visuality* can instead refer either to images recorded from reality or to pictures invented, drawn, painted, or in one way or another “fabricated” — let us think of digitally retouched photographs. Images of many kinds and natures are gates through which one can form ideas on places, facts, and concepts that have happened in reality; or means of entertainment if those images, if that *visuality*, refer to fiction(ality).

It is therefore very problematic, in some instances, to establish whether a visual contribution, a graphical narrative that declares to be showing facts, is actually plausible and reliable. Which is precisely the case study presented in the article of Oda Tomoko on the use of the manga expression form as a means of political communication by Kobayashi Yoshinori, a famous author and pundit manga creator who in his political manga pamphlet *Sensōron* (1998) carries out a provokingly revisionist discourse on the Japanese military’s involvement in the Nanjing Massacre, which occurred between December 1937 and February 1938. *Sensōron*, theoretically, is a non-fiction manga, a verbo-visual discussion on a historical topic; however, as the article argues, the

rhetorical devices and the selection of information and sources used by Kobayashi as well as the display of images that are not historically grounded make his manga a “suspicious” work, an incisive example of how images can be ambiguous.

Fictionality and visuality intersect in Manuel Hernández-Pérez’s article about the way Spain is depicted in selected examples of Japanese animated works, or *anime*. His argumentations very effectively spell out the subtle ways by which fantasy and facts can be mixed in order to create narratives that, while mainly framed and appreciated as fictional, give the reader/watcher a strong feeling of plausibility and internal consistency. In the article, for example, we shall find a description of how the artistic crew of an animated series depicted a real Spanish town to tell fictional stories, deploying various tropes associated with Spanish culture, such as bullfighting. Again, we see here the use of fictional/rhetorical devices, this time deployed not by European creators to depict Japan, but the other way around.

The ways fictionality and visuality work as filters through which reality can be framed are also at the centre of Azuma Hiroki’s thought in his own analysis of the otaku’s consumption of visual narratives. Dylan Hallingstad O’Brien therefore proposes an analysis of Azuma’s ideas, namely those expressed in his 2001 book *Dōbutsuka suru posutomōdan*, and those that have followed it in more recent years, putting an emphasis on the notion of hypervisuality.

The categories of Azuma Hiroki’s work are also deployed in the last article of the issue, by Luca Paolo Bruno, which focuses on visual novels in form of PC games. Bruno proposes an explanation of the devices behind the construction of characters. The article can be somehow framed as complementary to the first essay of the issue, closing an ideal circle because it deals with *visual* novels that are completely *fictional* and created by Japanese artists, whereas Palumbo’s article deals with non-visual novels in which the depiction of Japan, by non-Japanese authors, however fictional has a solid grasp in documented reality. Moreover, one of the themes of Bruno’s article is the otaku’s interest in the small non-narratives and in the little details described by Azuma as “database consumption” as opposed to the classic approach to narration, which has its core in a teleological conception of narrative in which the details only serve a larger picture, a meaningful story, and are unworthy per se. It is fascinating, in this context, to see where and how perceptions of fictionality (and, up to a point, of reality) do change among consumers whose consumption style is so new and different.

Before inviting readers to dive into this issue, we would like to make them aware of some useful information related to *Mutual Images*, both the journal and the association.

1. Next issue will appear in Spring 2018 and will include papers from the international workshop that was held at Nagoya University on 22-23 April, 2017.
2. The issue after that will be published in Autumn 2018 and will collect papers from the international workshop — imminently upcoming while we write these lines — at Aoyama Gakuin University (Tōkyō), 25 November, 2017.
3. One of the guiding intellectual criteria of *Mutual Images* is scholarly inclusiveness: whilst the journal is a strictly peer-reviewed publication, we consider it a place where young as well as senior scholars can experiment with new ideas and approaches, with some more intellectual freedom than that usually permitted in more institutional journals. Therefore, we invite readers to spread the word and forward information about *Mutual Images* to their undergraduate and graduate students, post-doc researchers, and colleagues at more advanced stages of their careers.

Enjoy *Mutual Images*, 3.

Marco PELLITTERI, *Main Editor*

Matteo FABBRETTI, *Member of the Editorial Board*

Telling stories about the “Land of the Rising Sun”: Contemporary Italian literature re-inventing Japan

Fabio Domenico PALUMBO | University of Messina, Italy

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ABSTRACT

*Eco's A Theory of Semiotics (1975) points out that cultural units are organised networks of meanings, so that semantic fields pertain to a specific culture's world view. Narrative processes participating in sensemaking take place within a cultural context, and can be studied via a diatextual approach to the discursive structures and the tools of Greimasian narrative semiotics. Contextualisation in narrative enunciations means not only using elements of actorialisation, spatialisation and temporalisation, but also 'dramatising' the relationship between Self and Other through «cultural metaphors» (Gannon 2011). This paper explores three authors' texts from post-WWII Italian literature, showing three different representations or 'narrative uses' of Japan: *Il re dei Giapponesi (1949)*, an unfinished novel by Pier Paolo Pasolini; *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler (1979)*, *Palomar (1983)* and *Collection of Sand (1984)* by Italo Calvino; *Silk (1996)*, a short novel by Alessandro Baricco. In these texts, I examine the distinct meaning of Japan's metaphors, highlighting the different levels of exoticism in Japan's description, and the different degrees of the subject's involvement in terms of their relationship with otherness (*embrayage* or *débrayage*). Japan can be used in literary fiction as a 'pretext' (Pasolini), as a setting (Baricco), or as a context (Calvino). In any case, it serves as a cultural metaphor: a rhetorical apparatus conveying portrayals of Japan to Italian contemporary culture with different degrees of verisimilitude, ranging from an almost fable-like scenery to a vague historical background and a peculiar biographical frame.*

KEYWORDS

Italian Literature; Japan; Pasolini; Calvino; Baricco; Semiotics; Greimas.

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Introduction: A diatextual approach to narratives

The main path of this investigation can be summarised in few words: tracing back different representations of Japan and the Japanese in post-WWII Italian literature, highlighting some peculiar narrative uses of a Japanese setting or background in fictional stories. The theoretical frame of this research can be situated in discourse analysis (Mantovani and Spagnolli 2003), including psychosemiotics, narrative psychology (Bruner 2002, 63-87), narrative semiotics or *sémantique structurale* (Greimas 1983, 49-

66) and diatextual¹ analysis (Minnini 1992, 63). Umberto Eco’s *A Theory of Semiotics* (first published in Italy in 1975) points out that cultural units are organised networks of meanings, so that semantic fields pertain to a specific culture’s world view. Accordingly, narrative processes participating in sensemaking and the generation of meanings take place within a cultural context — keeping in mind that meaning refers to sociality and is based upon conventional relationships between signs (Eco 1962).

Contextualisation in narrative enunciations means not only using elements of actorialisation, spatialisation and temporalisation, but also “dramatising” the relationship between Self and Other through “cultural metaphors” (Gannon 2011). Texts can then be conceived as places of intersubjective sensemaking, where generation of sense and organisation of meanings involve discovering the value system and latent rhetorics embedded in a text behind its surface structure (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter 2000, 125). Regarding the rhetorical dimension in diatextual approach, a crucial role is played by the analysis of metaphors as analogical portrayals casting light over a discursive representation of a shared world view or social construction of reality, as in the case of “archetypal metaphor” (Gill and Whedbee 1997, 174). Actually, metaphorical analysis links diatextual perspective to critic discourse analysis and social constructivism (Parker 1998, 1-9).

Clearly, Japan can be used in literary fiction as a cultural metaphor, and that is the case of a rhetorical apparatus conveying more or less extended portrayals of Japan to Italian contemporary culture in narrative form, through the work of three paramount Italian writers. The above mentioned theoretical framework can be applied to this text *corpus* using a syncretic approach. More specifically, a fruitful interaction between the different texts can be achieved by combining the methodological premises of diatextual analysis, narrative semiotics and their broader background.

As it has just been underlined, narrative processes and their rhetorical apparatus can be studied via a diatextual approach to discursive structures, unfolding a creative examination of discourse (Wood and Kroger 2000, 96). In this framework Algirdas Julien Greimas’s model of narrative semiotics² has been freely used as a paradigm offering a structural

¹ «Diatextual approach is a specific methodological orientation within critical discourse analysis specifically aimed at capturing the dynamics between interlocutors, text, and context which characterise any kind of human interaction». See Manuti, A., Traversa, R., Mininni, G. (2012) The dynamics of sense making: a diatextual approach to the intersubjectivity of discourse. *Text & Talk*. Vol. 32 (1), 39.

² Greimas’s narrative semiotics, consisting in a semiotic approach to the study of narrative, was strongly influenced by Saussure’s structural linguistics as well as Levi Strauss’s structural anthropology. For an introduction to semiotics in its intellectual context see Schleifer 2016.

perspective on narrativity. This model, whose narrative component stems from Russian formalism (mainly Roman Jakobson 1963), inherits most of the tenants of Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1958), and still includes psychoanalytic facets in its deep core. Narrative semiotics considers texts as systems of signs consisting of surface structure and deep structure or underlying meanings (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter 2000, 125). Specifically, Greimas's system consists of three levels, since, apart from the semio-narrative structures (deep structure and surface structure), there is a place for discursive structures: Greimas conceives the path from semio-narrative structures to discourses and textual structures as the generative trajectory of signification (Greimas and Courtés 1979).

The present work uses Greimas's theorisation of deep structure to build a semiotic square³ of the representation of Japan in a distant — Western, in this case Italian — cultural tradition. Again, Greimasian surface structure (involving actants, their moods, relationships and narrative programs), as well as discursive structure isotopes⁴ (particularly time and space), is relevant for this textual analysis.

Concerning the set of texts chosen, they are not selected according to any statistical parameter (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter 2000); they are rather considered representative in terms of eminence. The three authors — Pier Paolo Pasolini, Italo Calvino and Alessandro Baricco — produced their works during the second half of the twentieth century, and their diachronic succession follows the post-war history of Italian literature. Even though Pasolini, Calvino and Baricco are stylistically and ideologically very different from one another, they all belong to the tradition of literary prose. Therefore, the present analysis applies to a fundamentally homogeneous type of texts — even if literary critics often debate about Baricco's belonging to a “glossy” or “flowery” literature (Ferroni, Onofri, La Porta and Berardinelli 2006, 9-31).

Presentation of the cases

Pasolini's 'savage Japan'

The first reference to Japan in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *corpus* can be found in his graduation thesis, *Antologia della lirica pascoliana* (1945), where he mentions the *haikai*, a genre of

³ The semiotic square, developed by Greimas and Rastier, is a tool used in structural analysis of the relationships between semiotic signs through the opposition of concepts (e.g. feminine-masculine or spiritual-carnal).

⁴ In a story, an isotopy is a repetition of a basic meaning trait (see Greimas 1966, 69).

Japanese poetry that developed during the sixteenth century out of the earlier *renga*. In relationship to Pascoli's *Myricae*, Pasolini associates the taste for details and incomplete beauty with the conciseness in *haikai* poetry, alluding to “*brevità haikaistica*” or “*sfera haikaistica*” (Doi 2011, 182). Around 1945 Pasolini translates two samples of Japanese poetry into Friulian language: four fragments over seasons from Sei Shōnagon's *Makura no sōshi* (996-1008) and Shioi Ukō's *Iso no fuetake* (included in *Hanamomiji*, Shioi's anthology of prose and poems published in 1896). Pasolini utilises Pacifico Arcangeli's Italian translation of both poems as a support version for his Friulian one (Doi 2011, 187)⁵. *Il re dei Giapponesi* (“*The King of the Japanese*”), written in 1949, is actually incomplete, counting only four chapters instead of the seven planned by the author. The short novel's incompleteness hints to a sort of external context which needs to be reconstructed (Oevermann 1996). Indeed, the main character's journey seems to be a “mental journey” (Martellini 2003, 27). He is likely to be an envoy from Western countries who has to travel through the territories of Mainland China and Korea, in a vaguely determined scenario, flanked by a mysterious Viceroy of a Chinese area, supposedly a province or a colony. The Viceroy's entourage guides the Western visitor to the field of operations, a camp built by the Chinese army, set in a mountain area in the northern part of Korea. In the mountains, a Japanese army is awaiting in hectic activity. *Il re dei Giapponesi* is permeated with Pasolini's love for Emilio Salgari's novels. Salgari was a nineteenth century Italian novelist, author of very popular adventure tales with an exotic setting (his most famous character is undoubtedly Sandokan, hero of best-sellers as *The Tigers of Mompracem* and *The Pirates of Malaysia*). Pasolini seems to borrow Salgari's taste for Far Eastern exoticism, admiring with inner torment “the brutality of azure Oceans and of Eastern skies” (Pasolini 1999, 268)⁶. As Doi points out, there is something alike to a “tropical Japan” in Pasolini's unfinished novel, akin to many works by late nineteenth century's writers or popularisers of Japanese culture. A “sonorously savage Japan” returns in Pasolini's movies from the late Sixties, *Edipo re* (1967) and *Medea* (1969), which respectively adopt traditional *bugaku* (ninth century) and *sōkyoku* (sixteenth century) music (Doi 2001, 194). Assuming Salgari's influence as valid, the Japanese soldiers' almost spectral presence in *Il re dei Giapponesi*

⁵ Sei Shōnagon's *Makura no sōshi* are translated into *Alba di primavera, Not di estat, Sera di autun* and *Di di unvier*; Shioi Ukō's *Iso no fuetake* into *Il zovin pescadour*. Pasolini transliterates Shioi's name into Shivoi Uko. In the first half of the twentieth century Hepburn standard had not yet been adopted in Italy.

⁶ When the source text of the translated version is not indicated, the translation is by the author of the present study.

resembles another version of Oriental exoticism in Italian literature: the military menace from a mysterious army standing out in the distance recalls Dino Buzzati's *Il deserto dei Tartari*, first published in 1940.

Calvino's retelling of Japan: more than a traveller's diary

Calvino visited Japan in 1976, and this experience informed his literary and essayistic production, giving him a new perspective upon topics crucial to his thinking, as the problem of the world's decadence and corruption or the enigma of vision. In this paper we are considering three different expressions of Calvino's retelling of Japan. First, a biographical account, under the guise of a travel journal, published in the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* and put together in *Collection of Sand*, first published in 1984. This work is just useful to define the context of Calvino's fictional portraits of Japan. The section *La forma del tempo* includes nine essays, describing Calvino's relationship with Japanese arts, culture and society. Calvino encounters Japanese aesthetics during his visits to the imperial villas of Kyōto and their gardens, from Sento Imperial Palace to Katsura Imperial Villa. Calvino's intuitions about Japanese aesthetics can be summarised through brief flashes. In *The Obverse of Sublime*, Calvino finds a similitude between poems and gardens: "The garden becomes an indecipherable calligram" (Calvino 1984, 176; Eng. tr. 2013, n.p.)⁷. This is a first metaphorical image of Japan, the coincidence of places and signs: the obvious reference is to Roland Barthes's *Empire of signs* (1970), written after Barthes's journey to Japan. Calvino learns something essential from Japanese gardens: in Japan nature is arranged in order to be mastered by the mind, and this represents the opposite of Kantian dynamic sublime. The admiration is not generated by the terrific spectacles of hurricanes or falls, but it is rather inspired by the minimalistic display of "the simplest means", with "no seeking after sensational effects" (Calvino 1984, 173).

In *The Thousand Gardens* (1984), Calvino describes further traits he distinguishes in Japanese aesthetics: multiplicity and the metamorphosis of nature displayed by seasonal changes based on cyclicity in spatial-temporal becoming: "With its recurring moments time removes the idea of the infinite" (Calvino 1984, 182). Recurring seasonal elements,

⁷ The source text of the English translations of Calvino's *Collection of Sand*, *Palomar* and *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* is from the corresponding digital editions (n.p.). Page numbers for the original Italian version refer to the first edition of "Oscar Opere di Italo Calvino", published in 1994 by Arnoldo Mondadori Editore in Milan.

described in *haiku* poems through the *kigo*, mark Japanese ideas of beauty with the reassuring concept of finiteness. Japanese aesthetic model, according to Calvino in *The Wooden Temple* (1984), is not separated from the material elements it is made of. Temples, palaces, gardens, villas, all is made of wood: antiquity is not made of stone. “As the centuries go”, all the buildings destroyed by the flames of fire or reduced to dust by wood-worms are “continually remade” (Calvino 1984, 179), yet always remain the same. Eternity is entrusted to form and structure, and is gained through its opposite: the ephemerality of materials and the disposition to be replaced. Western idea of being and becoming is of no use, Calvino recognises. Finally, Calvino reckons that Japanese houses, including the royal palace, are “a series of empty rooms and corridors”, like a “theatre stage” (Calvino 1984, 175), where every trace of life seems to have been removed. Calvino wonders how this aesthetic ideal could be possible. Certainly because of other houses “full of people and tools and junk and rubbish” (Calvino 1984, 175). Finally, the Japanese ideal of beauty is interpreted by the Italian writer as aristocratic.

For the purpose of the present study, it is also useful to consider his peculiar novel, *Palomar*, published in 1983, whose main character, Mr Palomar, is just an *alter ego* of Calvino himself. During his journeys, Palomar happens to visit Ryōan-ji Zen temple in Kyōto, as recounted in *L'aiola di sabbia (The sand garden)*, included in the section *The silences of Palomar* (1983). Mr Palomar experiences the distress of trying to contemplate the absolute, “according to the teaching of the Zen monks”, being “crammed on the platform in the midst of hundreds of visitors” (Calvino 1983, 83-84; Eng. tr. 1999, n.p.). How can he see the absolute, since he is excluded from the detached Zen solitude? Nevertheless, Mr Palomar tries “to grasp what the Zen garden can give him” in the only circumstances available nowadays, “craning his neck among other necks” (Calvino 1983, 85). The Zen detachment makes way for another interpretation of the Ryōan-ji garden, seeing the harmony of opposites between the human race, whose individualities are represented by the sea of grains of sand, and the world, indifferent to the fate of mankind, represented by the boulder. Mr Palomar replaces the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness he identifies in the ego’s dissolving into a pure gaze with categories akin to the Western philosophical tradition: the harmonious struggle between History and Nature (Gasparro 2011, 2).

Finally, in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, first published in 1979, Calvino imagines to write the beginning of ten different novels, which are supposed to belong to ten

imaginary authors. *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon*, included in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, is the erotic-perverse novel Calvino writes, by his own admission, inspired by Kawabata and Tanizaki (Calvino 2000, 1406). Indeed, Segre finds resonance with Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's *Kagi (The Key)* and Kawabata Yasunari's *Yama no Oto (The Sound of the Mountain)* (Segre 1984, 171). We have to consider accurately the plot of *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon*, supposed to have been written by the imaginary Japanese author Takakumi Ikoka. In the beginning the main character finds himself watching ginkgo leaves, trying "to distinguish the sensation of each single ginkgo leaf from the sensation of all the others" (Calvino 1979, 233; Eng. tr. 1998, n.p.), which appears like a spiritual activity, whilst he ends up having sexual intercourse with Madame Miyagi, being watched by her daughter, Makiko, and by his master, Mr Okeda, who is Madame Miyagi's husband. Calvino considers the metaphor of vision and space essential to his view of Japanese culture: his encounter with the Japanese humanity and environment is mediated by a visuospatial wonder. Going back to *Collection of Sand* and its *The Old Woman in the Purple Kimono* (1984), we can see Calvino is aware that when one gets used to the country, he "starts not to find anything worthy of note, not to see any more what I am seeing" (Calvino 1984, 164). The stranger becomes predictable or is taken for granted.

Baricco's fictitious Japan in *Silk*

The last Italian writer considered is Alessandro Baricco, author of *Silk*, a short novel first published in 1996. Hervé Joncour, the hero of the story, is a French gentleman married to Hélène. He buys and sells silkworms for a living. Between 1861 and 1865, Hervé Joncour faces perilous journeys to Japan and back to France in order to get the silkworms necessary to the silk mills in Lavilledieu, the village in the south of France where Joncour lives. In Japan he happens to meet Hara Kei, a powerful feudal lord who supplies him with silkworms, then he falls in love with Hara Kei's young lover, a girl whose eyes do not have "an Oriental shape" (Baricco 1996, 25; Eng. tr. 2006, n.p.)⁸. The girl never speaks in Joncour's presence, but she reciprocates Joncour's feelings and manages to let him know. In 1865 Hervé Joncour makes his last journey to Japan, but

⁸ The source text of the English translation of Baricco's *Silk* is from the corresponding digital edition (n.p.). Page numbers for the original Italian version refer to the first edition by BUR La Scala in Milan, published in 1999.

the turmoil in Japan’s political situation overthrows Hara Kei’s power and he misses the chance to see the young lady again or to finally hear her voice. Yet, six months after his return to Europe, Joncour receives a passionate letter written in Japanese which he supposes to have been sent by his young lost love. After H el ene’s death, Joncour understands it had been written by his wife. In his review, Citati mentions that, while writing *Silk*, Baricco “wanted to write ‘a book made of nothingness’” (Citati 1996, n.p.). The concept of nothingness is useful to understand the fictional image of Japan and the Japanese conveyed by *Silk*, as will be clarified below.

Discussion

The Greimasian model and the shifting of the roles

Applying the Greimasian model to the three authors above mentioned, it can be useful to recall the role of the actants in the surface structure of a text. The kinds of actants are designated as follows: the *Destinator*, the force representing the ideology of the text; the *Receiver*, carrying the values of the destinator; the *Subject*, occupying the main role in the narration; the *Object*, representing the goal of the subject; the *Adjuvant*, or the force helping the subject; and the *Traitor*, the force trying to deter the subject from its goal. These actants do not necessarily need to be actors (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter 2000). Destinator, receiver and subject can be performed by one character (this is generally true for receiver and subject). In the general sequence of the narrative, the subject goes in quest of the object, supported by adjuvants and opposed by traitors. The destinator motivates the receiver to act as a subject. Greimas interpreted classical Marxism according to the actantial structure: Subject = Communist Party; Object = classless society; Destinator = history; Receiver = mankind; Opponent = bourgeoisie; Adjuvant = working class (Greimas 1966). A visual scheme of the application of the Greimasian model to *Il re dei Giapponesi* by Pasolini, *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon* (from *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*) by Calvino and *Silk* by Baricco is shown below.

0. Actantial structure

Destinator \Rightarrow Object \Leftarrow Receiver
 \uparrow
Adjuvants \Rightarrow Subject \Leftarrow Opponents

1. *Il re dei Giapponesi*

Western countries \Rightarrow military victory \Leftarrow the envoy
 \uparrow
Viceroy, Chinese army \Rightarrow the envoy \Leftarrow Japanese army

2. *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon (If on a Winter's Night a Traveler)*

Mr Okeda, the disciple \Rightarrow clarity, Makiko, M^{me} Miyagi \Leftarrow the disciple
 \uparrow
Mr Okeda \Rightarrow the disciple \Leftarrow Mr Okeda, Makiko, M^{me} Miyagi

3. *Silk*

Baldabiau, Joncour \Rightarrow silkworms, young lady \Leftarrow Joncour
 \uparrow
Hara Kei, a boy, M^{me} Blanche \Rightarrow Joncour \Leftarrow Hara Kei

We can notice how the change occurring in the relationships between the characters modify the NP (narrative program) of the stories. In *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon*, at the start the disciple wants to free himself from the constraints of Mr Okeda's tutelage to approach more promising academic circles. Being forced to spend more time at Okeda's home, the disciple starts to like Makiko and, to a lesser extent, Madame Miyagi. He apparently obeys to his own sexual desire, yet he falls in the trap of Mr Okeda, who ties the knot around his student's life more tightly. As for Makiko and Madame Miyagi, they help their guest to fulfil his lust, but can become very dangerous to him because of their jealousy.

A change occurs in *Silk*, too. In the beginning, Hervé Joncour is sent to Japan by both Baldabiau and the people from Lavilledieu to get silkworms, a dangerous journey, and Hara Kei is his powerful helper in business. When Joncour falls in love with the young lady, Hara Kei slowly becomes his enemy, while he receives help by a boy leading him to the young lady's whereabouts and by Madame Blanche. In *Il re dei Giapponesi* there is neither a fully developed plot nor a change of narrative program. Nevertheless, one must consider that, as for the actantial structure in Pasolini's short novel, the Receiver (i.e. the envoy) is the delegate of the Western powers and their political interests in the Far East, whereas in *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon*, Mr Okeda teaches

the disciple about the way to achieve mental clarity, then the disciple himself turns his attention to Makiko and M.me Miyagi, while Mr Okeda surreptitiously facilitates his student’s inclinations. These different scenarios imply a different meaning of the Receiver’s function (Object⇐Receiver) in the actantial structure of the two novels. The Receiver’s role in *Silk* poses no particular difficulties.

Moving from the semio-narrative structures to the discursive ones, there is a shift from *langue* to *parole*, or from the virtual dimension to the actual one: a whole context is evoked thanks to the procedures of spatialisation, temporalisation and actorialisation, or the dissemination of narrative themes and figures (Floch 1985). Focusing over space and time, these are isotopes, or categorisations of the environment and time axis of the narrated story. Through the isotopic characterisation Japan can be reinvented in literary fiction according to different narratives. We first consider the isotope of spatialisation, or the internal (utopian) and external (heterotopian) representation of space (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter 2000). As regards *Il re dei Giapponesi*, Pasolini’s image of the East Asian countries and his evocation of Japan and the Japanese, from the incisive title to the final lines, serve as a “pretext”, being a projection of the young writer’s exotic phantasies over the impressive spaces of Far East (Doi 2011, 194): “Towards the South I saw *a sea of mountains*, a grey sea, violet and ochre, made of crystal and wax [...]” (Pasolini 1949, 21)⁹.

Baricco’s depiction of space in *Silk* is quite essential, so that in this work Japan is a kind of loose setting or figurative “scenario”. The “inner chambers” have Japanese traits: “A rice paper panel slid open [...]. In the evening, they accompanied him into the largest room of the house, which had a stone floor, and where the ritual of bathing was performed” (Baricco 1996, 24, 33). Differently, the external surroundings are rather anonymous: “Hervé Concur began walking again, in the thick of the wood, and when he came out he was on the edge of the lake” (Baricco 1996, 31). As for toponymy, Hervé Joncour’s journey starts from a fictitious Cape Teraya, then moves from west to east, through the real Japanese prefectures of Ishikawa, Toyama, Niigata and Fukushima, ending up in Shirakawa, where Hara Kei’s feudal domain resides. The area of the actual Shirakawa in Fukushima was indeed the centre of the Shirakawa Domain, but in the Edo period it was rather a castle city (Komine-jō) than a proper city. Shirakawa was the location of a famous barrier on the Ōshū Kaidō, and the actual border between the

⁹ Page numbers for the original Italian version refer to the first edition published by Via del Vento in Pistoia in 2003.

regions of “proper Japan” and the northern regions. In the world of *Silk*, Hara Kei’s headquarters are settled east of Shirakawa. More importantly, Fukushima was one of the main centres of Japanese sericulture.

As already explained, Calvino’s *The sand garden* (1983) takes place in Ryōan-ji garden. In a very different way, *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon* is a scenic design for an erotic novel, presenting Mr Okeda’s house and its surroundings as a stage for charming and romantic scenes. The story is, to Calvino’s own admission, inspired to the Japanese novelists of the early twentieth century or else to the Western literary and artistic imaginary upon Japan, and this is reflected by the setting: “The ginkgo leaves fell like fine rain from the boughs and dotted the lawn with yellow. [...] In the centre of the lake, two fleshy flowers of an autumn-blooming water lily had opened [...]” (Calvino 1979, 233-235). Sometimes it seems to assist to a scene taken from *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu (11th century), whom Calvino himself cites in *Collection of sand*, since the atmosphere is permeated with a Heian elegance: “It was a serene autumn. As the November full moon approached, I find myself conversing one afternoon with Makiko about the most suitable place for observing the moon through the branches of the trees. I insisted that on the mat under the ginkgo tree the carpet of fallen leaves would spread the moon’s reflected glow in a suspended luminosity” (Calvino 1979, 240).

In the three authors examined, temporality varies from an almost uchronic scenery (as in Pasolini’s works) to a just outlined historical background (the late Tokugawa period in Baricco’s *Silk*) or to what seems to be a certain year of the early twentieth century, even though it is not specified by Calvino in *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler*. Actually, in Pasolini’s *Il re dei Giapponesi*, exoticism diverts time in a sort of mythical dimension, with mixtures of past and modernity (the raft, the Viceroy’s palace, the fantastic city vs the cars’ parade), of nature and culture (virgin animality vs sentimental education), within Far East Asia’s environment and mankind. One can say Pasolini hints to the winds of war of the late Forties around Korea, while mentioning the northern part of Korea (the novel was written in 1949), still the enemies are the Japanese, as in the just concluded WWII.

Silk is set in the late Tokugawa period (1603-1868), when Japan is compelled by Western powers to open up its harbours — Commodore Matthew C. Perry is explicitly mentioned. There are some interesting connections between fiction and history in Baricco’s work worth highlighting. Joncour’s travels take place between 1861 and

1865, and they are described as rather dangerous. Indeed, a radical movement, *sonnō jōi* (“Revere the Emperor, expel the barbarians”), aroused in Japan during the late Tokugawa shogunate, led to the killing of Charles Lennox Richardson, an English merchant, in 1862. The Boshin War between the shogunate and the partisans of the Imperial Court was fought in 1868-1869, whilst the fiction seems to backdate its start to 1864: “They say in Japan war has begun, this time for real” (Baricco 1996, 64). During the Boshin War, Shirakawa joined Ōuetsu Reppan Dōmei (‘Northern Alliance’) on behalf of the shogunate; in the same way, in *Silk*, Hara Kei, the feudal lord from Shirakawa, appears to be implicated in the war. Baricco briefly adds up some rather accurate details about the economic history of silk commerce, concerning the legalisation in Japan of silkworms’ export and trading to the West, and the invention of artificial silk by Chardonnet; these pieces of information help to contextualise the story, while linking Japanese relationships with Western powers to the traditional commerce of silk, characterising the trade between Europe and Asia for two millennia.

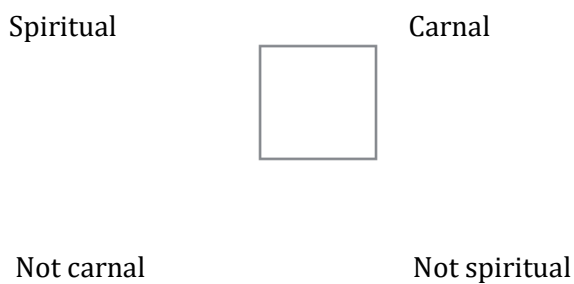
In Calvino’s works so far analysed, the temporal dimension swings between autobiography (*Collection of sand, Palomar*) and the fictionalised time of *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon*. Actually Calvino builds up a story of Chinese boxes on three levels: Calvino, the author of *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler*, who speaks directly to the reader and creates a second-person narrative; Ikoka, the fictional author of *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon* that Calvino “imagines to become”; the main character of *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon*, who makes a first-person narrative. This, as well as temporalisation and spatialisation, is obviously connected to practices of *embrayage* or *débrayage* (Greimas and Courtés 1979), in terms of involvement of the narrator with the other and the world, included the Japanese other.

Building a semiotic square: a spiritual, carnal and exotic Japan

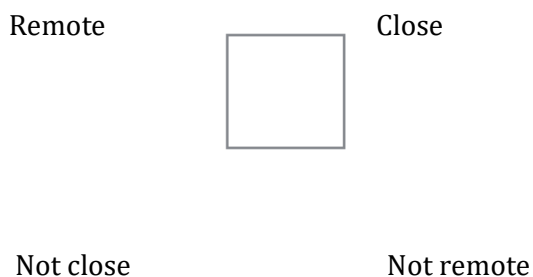
Different narrative structures may stem from a common deep structure (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter 2000). In order to represent the text’s deep structure, it is necessary to identify the values hidden behind surface structure. Greimasian model includes the visualisation of key concepts of the deep structure in the shape of a semiotic square, where the horizontal relationship refers to opposites, and the diagonal one to contradictories. Placing the underlying values of the text in the semiotic square is based upon the previous analysis of actants and their relationships or

corresponding narrative programs as well as isotopes of space and time. According to the actants' goals and the related narratives, it is possible to indicate a pertinent semiotic square (See fig. 1 below). Another semiotic square can be built around actorialisation, the isotopes of space and time and their representation in the above mentioned texts (See fig. 2 below). This part of the research requires a disposition to formalisation and conceptual generalisation, and, to a certain extent, can be considered as rule-free. Having considered the discursive structures and surface level of the semio-narrative structures, the following step is exploring the deep level of the texts.

1.



2.



We need to consider the semiotic square connected to the actantial roles subsequently, in relation to a deeper analysis of the narratives. As for the semiotic square related to actorialisation, space and time, it is possible to explicit a relation of implication-complementarity between remote and not close (extraneous) or close and not remote (familiar); furthermore, a relation of contrariety between remote and close (*déjà-vu*) or not close and not remote (acquaintance).

remote	<i>déjà-vu</i>	close
extraneous		familiar
not close	acquaintance	not remote

The semiotic square based on the contraries remote-close can be connected to the objects of the worlds and the isotopes of space and time via two other sets of contraries: exotic-domestic and mythical-historical. Indeed, ‘remote’ refers to exotic-mythical objects and space-time, while ‘close’ refers to domestic-historical ones. The concepts in the semiotic square pertain to a connotative set of meanings or a semantic differential (Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum 1957).

remote-exotic-mythical \Leftrightarrow close-domestic-historical

Applying the latter semiotic square to the texts, it is possible to reinterpret the representation of Japan and the Japanese at work within them according to the concepts of remote and close and their semantic connotation. In *Il re dei Giapponesi*, Pasolini expresses the feeling of extraneousness and unfamiliarity (remote and not close) in front of the Japanese soldiers, who are connoted as mysterious: “I wanted to drink with one look all the mystery, which was so marvellously soft” (Pasolini 1949, 26). Still, the main character perceives a “childish terror” thinking of them, which has to be related to an inner memory or awareness of the other’s nature. In this sense, the Japanese soldiers represent something remote and yet close (a *déjà-vu*). This is confirmed by the feeling of “envy” their vision inspires in the protagonist-narrator, since envy arouses because of something good perceived in the other, which the other himself denies to the subject. Envy presumes some degree of relationship established with the other (if not too close, at least not too remote). It is remarkable how Pasolini’s literary prose is able to convey such a wide semantic field in a few lines of text.

The mixture of remote and close elements is what Calvino makes explicit in *The Old Woman in the Purple* from *Collection of Sand*. The old lady at the station platform in Tōkyō, dressed up in a “rich, pale-purple kimono”, bears “few Western or rather American elements — glasses with a silver frame, the blush perm straight from the hairdresser’s — which sit on top of the traditional costume” providing “a clear snapshot of modern Japan” (Calvino 1984, 163-165). This feeling of *déjà-vu* is not a

juxtaposition; it is rather an inner feeling of extraneous yet familiar. Calvino, watching the cheerful young lady serving devoutly the apparently arrogant old woman, makes an unconscious comparison with the condition of the elders in Western societies:

Don't you know, you fool, that where we come from, in the West, it will never again be possible for anyone to be waited on as you have been? Don't you know that in the West no old person will ever be treated with so much devotion by the young?
(Calvino 1984, 169)

When some notions about specific traits of Japanese culture become conscious, Japan itself can be seen by the foreigner as not close but not remote. Mr Palomar has rather precise expectations about what Zen asks to his adepts, "contemplation of the absolute" (Calvino 1983, 83). Furthermore, the familiarity with the twentieth-century Japanese novelists' works in their Western translations allows Calvino to identify himself with the Japanese fictitious novelist Takakumi Ikoka and to introduce in *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon* a collection of *topoi* from Japanese narrative: the falling of the (ginkgo) leaves, the flowers of water lily, the reflection of the moon on the water of a lake. Still, Mr Okeda's silent or laconic remarks to his disciple's theories, warn him not to let himself "go in hasty conjectures" (Calvino 1979, 234), for example when he tries to compare the reading of a novel with the sensation of naturalistic elements: the equation signs-nature does not seem to be straightforward. Okeda's disciple somehow incarnates the point of view of the novice who has not fully grasped (and maybe will not ever grasp) Japanese culture's deep spirit (actually the story does not say whether Mr Okeda's student is Japanese or not, but his attitude towards the "deepest secrets" of the Japanese culture is that of a novice). To the novice, Japan, as the young lady of *The Old Woman in the Purple*, maintains its remote-exotic-mythical connotation: "This girl has nothing Western about her; she is an apparition from another age (who knows which?) [...]" (Calvino 1984, 164-165).

The idea of remoteness is largely present in *Silk*, mainly at a metaphorical level: "Tiny circular waves deposited the lake water on the shore, as if they had been sent there, from afar" (Baricco 1996, 32). That which is remote and not close is the extraneous, and the corresponding feeling is the estrangement when facing the other. Japan is described according to the metaphor of "the end of the world": "And where, exactly, might it be, this Japan? [...] 'Straight that way'. He said. 'At the end of the world'" (Baricco 1996, 16). Again: "The world seemed centuries away" (Baricco 1996, 33). In

other passages of the book, the Japanese element is connoted with a feeling of relative closeness. For example, Hervé Concur seems to have some knowledge of the Oriental traditions: “He recalled having read in a book that it was costume for Oriental men to honour the faithfulness of their lovers by giving them not jewels but the most beautiful, elegant birds” (Baricco 1996, 37). The young lady herself is a bridge between the European world and the Japanese one: she has Western looks, and still her language is Japanese, therefore she is the hybrid element of the story. In the end, through the mediation of the young lady’s love, Hervé Joncour becomes to some extent “familiar” to Japan, so that people from Lavilledieu see him changed and admire his way of life, even though they do not ascribe that to the Japanese experience: “They said that he had been like that even as a young man, before Japan” (Baricco 1996, 93).

A diatextual analysis applies to rhetoric procedures of sensemaking. It investigates texts as events charged with meaning. A narrative program situated at a superficial level can be traced back to its deep structure, exploring the way of sensemaking. When connecting the texts in a virtuous interaction, it is possible to clarify the latent narratives at work behind the curtain of the surface discourse. Considering Pasolini’s, Calvino’s and Baricco’s works above mentioned, at least three narratives can be detected.

The “Sensuality” narrative: this is connected to the semiotic square (See fig. 1 above) and to the actants’ narrative programs related to the lust for a young and graceful lady. Japanese eroticism as depicted in the texts considered has complex and multifaceted traits (as affirmed in *Eros and Discontinuity* from *Collection of Sand*). Sexuality is even akin to spiritualism, even though it often assumes perverse shades (Calvino defines *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon* as the perverse novel of the series). Sexuality can pass through a mediated and indirect contact, being a sort of short or long distance eroticism. The role of sight is essential, for example in *Silk*: “[...] those eyes [...] were fixed with disconcerting intensity, on him: as if from the start, from under the eyelids, they had done nothing else” (Baricco 1996, 25). Sight can be associated to a perverted eroticism, as in the voyeurism of Mr Okeda in *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler*: “He was staring hard, not at his wife and me but at his daughter watching us. In his cold pupil, in the firm twist of his lips, was reflected Madame Miyagi’s orgasm reflected in her daughter’s gaze” (Calvino 1979, 244). Touch is as much important for the definition of sensuality. A character can touch the other through a third one:

She approached, took one hand, brought it to her face, touched it with her lips, and then, holding it tight, place it on the hand of the girl who was beside her, and held it there, so that it couldn't escape (Baricco 1996, 55).

Or again in *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon*: “[...] with Makiko's apparition in my eyes and Madame Miyagi's contact on my skin I was about to be overcome by voluptuousness” (Calvino 1979, 243). Characters can kiss each other indirectly: “Slowly, she rotated it [the cup] until she had her lips at the exact point where he had drunk” (Baricco 1996, 27). Their touch can be light: “The last thing was a hand that opened his and placed something in a palm” (Baricco 1996, 38); or furtive: “I realized that through a rare and sweet chance, I had been grazed at the same moment by the left nipple of the daughter and there might nipple of the mother [...]” (Calvino 1979, 236).

The combination of sight and touch takes the form of synaesthesia in *Silk*: “A wet cloth was laid over his eyes. [...] And the hands of a woman [...] dried him, caressing his skin, everywhere: those hands, and that fabric woven of nothing” (Baricco 1996, 38). A woman writes to Hervé Joncour a letter where she imagines that he caresses himself thinking of her: “[...] don't open your eyes if you can, and caress yourself, your hands are beautiful” (Baricco 1996, 89). Hélène's sensuality takes on a Japanese nuance.

Seeing with the mind's eyes or being able to “perceive the distance between one leaf and another, the empty” (Calvino 1979, 237) links sensation and sensibility to spirituality: “How is the end of the world?” asked Baldabiau. ‘Invisible’” (Baricco 1996, 29). Both sensuality and spirituality stress the importance of going beyond the mere perception: this leads us to the “Zen” narrative. It is the theme of *Palomar*: the contemplation of absolute. There is a shift in the actantial roles. The object is no more a woman but rather clarity of mind, concentration, refinement of perception and a new grace in gestures: “[...] an absence of sensations over a broad part of the perceptive field is the condition necessary for our sensitivity to concentrate locally and temporally” (Calvino 1979, 237); “Makiko, the youngest Okeda daughter, came to serve the tea, with her self-possessed movements and her still slightly childish grace” (Calvino 1979, 234); “That man [...] always moved within a bubble of emptiness” (Baricco 1996, 35). The grace and precision in movements is associated in *Silk* to the Japanese culture's rituals: “They said that that island produced the most beautiful silk in the world. It had been

doing so for more than a thousand years, following rites and secrets that had achieved a mystic precision” (Baricco 1996, 19).

The environment turns into a Chinese shadow play, a “floating world” made of nothingness, as the feeling evoked by the Japanese silk: “If you held it between your fingers, it was like grasping nothing” (Baricco 1996, 19). Again:

The dwelling of Hara Kei seemed to be drowning in a lake of silence. [...] There were no doors, and on the paper walls shadows appeared and disappeared without a sound. It did not seem like life: if there was a name for all that, it was: theatre (Baricco 1996, 37).

The third narrative refers to the Japanese as put in the actantial role of opponents. They are perceived as a rival force (“They were the Japanese! The enemies! That was the enemy’s field!”), in the role of the exotic enemy *par excellence*. They are “crumbling and full of fascination” (Pasolini 1949, 26). Elsewhere, the Japanese move with “a cunning languor, like a hunted animal in its den” (Baricco 1996, 33). Their plans are sly: “I realized that it was he, Mr Okeda, who kept tightening, strand by strand, the net that held me” (Calvino 1979, 240). The “Enemy” narrative is less extensively represented than the “Sensuality” and the “Zen” narratives, yet it is as much present in the subtext of the *corpus* we have considered.

Conclusion

We can finally try to outline the possible connections or relationships among the above mentioned narratives. It can be argued that there is a tendency from remoteness to closeness starting from the Enemy narrative and ending with the “Sensuality” and “Zen” narrative. What is meant here is that whilst the depiction of the Japanese “Enemy” is connoted in terms of extraneousness, the “Sensuality” narrative implies some sort of relationship with the Japanese Other, and the “Zen” narrative, for its part, refers to a set of expectations about the Japanese concept of mental clarity or enlightenment. Nevertheless, one must not forget that the Japanese “Enemy”, as portrayed in Pasolini’s novel, preserves its fascinating traits, while the sensual attraction towards the Japanese women in both *On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon* and *Silk* is not exempt from envy or conflict as unavoidable consequences of approaching the Other. Moreover, while the dimension of “Sensuality” seems to refer to the concepts of remote and not close (*déjà-vu*), or to an unconscious short circuit in perception, the “Zen” experience

implies something like an extended state of consciousness. This concept is not too distant, at least in Calvino's novels, from the Western idea of contemplation, so that Japanese tradition appears to the traveller or to the disciple as not too remote, if not too close.

In the set of texts examined, one can easily notice a shift from the spiritual to the carnal dimension, moving from the "Sensuality" narrative to the "Enemy" and "Zen" ones, even if the Japanese enemies are surrounded by a halo of ghostly mystery (they can be mistaken for phantoms!) and the Japanese women are often enveloped in an aura of ethereal sensuality. There is time for a final consideration about the differences between the two semantic axes that guided our analysis of the deep structure and of the latent narratives of the three authors' texts. If it can be said that, as for the continuum remote-close, the text *corpus* considered in this study is unbalanced towards remoteness and exoticism, even if there is no lack of examples of relationship and "hybridisation" with the Japanese Other. Differently, about the continuum spiritual-carnal, the three authors stress the co-implication and intertwining between corporeal and incorporeal elements.

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Alternative narratives of Japan in contemporary media: Kobayashi Yoshinori's *Sensōron*

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ABSTRACT

In the best-selling comic book Sensōron (1998), Kobayashi Yoshinori (b. 1953) develops his own "discourse on war" through the medium of manga, using a provocative discourse that has since been widely criticised for its potential to incite attitudes of exclusionary nationalism. Kobayashi's discourse on the Nanjing Massacre in Sensōron criticises the illiberal tendency of Japanese media, newspaper-publishing companies in particular, to select information they prefer and distort the past by using suspicious photos and captions. It is thus of value to reconsider this war-related debate from the perspective of Ien Ang's concept of "emotional realism," which refers to the tendency of viewers to be moved emotionally and empathise with the human events presented by TV dramas, regardless of whether or not they are accurately grounded in historical facts. Through close readings of Sensōron and related critiques of the volume, I will examine how Kobayashi Yoshinori challenges the dominant World War II narratives in Japan, which tend to overlook the actual wartime period and instead focus on the prewar and postwar periods. Then I will argue that, although Sensōron might lack meticulous research when compared to general academic scholarship, it functions to a certain extent as an alternative voice that critically points out contemporary Japan's neglect to reflect on World War II and apply the lessons of the past to the present.

KEYWORDS

Kobayashi Yoshinori; *Sensōron*; Manga; Emotional Realism; World War II; Postwar Democracy; Japanese Media.

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Introduction

Kobayashi Yoshinori (b. 1953) is one of several *manga* artists who have been actively involved in debate on the topic of postwar Japan.¹ He has been mostly successful both commercially and critically since his debut in 1976 as a cartoonist of gag *manga*, which mainly targeted young readers. Since the first publication of serial-form *Gōmanizumu sengen* (Haughtiness/Insolence Manifesto) in 1992, he has continued to share with his

¹ For a recent example, Kobayashi was invited to the Lower House Judicial Affairs Committee on 25 May 2017 by the Democratic Party to insist on the importance of free speech and democracy, arguing that Japanese democracy would be rendered unviable by incorporation of an anti-conspiracy clause to the ongoing amendment of the Act for Punishment of Organised Crimes, Control of Crime Proceeds and Other Matters (The Asahi Shimbun 2017, n.p.).

readers his own opinions principally concerning politics, economics and morals in contemporary Japan. His works seem to contain more verbal texts than other *manga* because he tends to include his own philological research on issues that he deals with and, in the case of his best-selling *manga Sensōron* (1998), quotations from the writings of deceased soldiers. Despite receiving harsh criticisms from international scholars and reviewers, examples of which will be considered in the following section, his unique style of representing historical and social issues in gag cartoons has resulted in a sensational hit.

His *Sensōron* in particular created considerable discussion both domestically and internationally.² The primary target audience of this *manga* is younger readers who have little idea what it was like in wartime Japan, partly attributable to the history curriculum in schools and general apathy. Nevertheless, the work was read widely by not only youths but also older readers, which led to a social phenomenon.³ The contents range from wartime episodes told by the war generation and the author's own childhood memories, to his interpretations of war-related issues and Japan's current situation. Specifically, a large portion of the work proclaims the high spirits of Japanese troops who were conscripted and engaged in warfare. It concentrates on positive depictions of the image of Japan at the time, when public opinion in Japan tended to view the Japanese capture of other Asian countries positively as the termination of Western powers' occupation in the region and, according to Yorimitsu Hashimoto, approved of the idea that the supposedly "racially-inferior" Japanese had begun to threaten Western nations (Hashimoto 2009, 203). Combining a comical drawing style with academic historical research, Kobayashi develops his own provocative "discourse on war" through *manga*, which has since been widely criticised for its potential to incite militaristic attitudes in the public.

Moreover, today, at a time when the formerly young readers of *Sensōron* have grown up to be adults, Japan confronts the emergence of another young generation that may not know even the name of Kobayashi as a cartoonist. The present Cabinet of Japan has reinterpreted the Constitution to justify use of military (Self-Defense Forces, or SDF) in

² Regarding the reaction to the work, domestically, for example, Kobayashi and a left-wing intellectual Uesugi Satoshi battled in court: Uesugi inserted a number of pictures from Kobayashi's *Sensōron* to his book, to which Kobayashi voiced opposition. Firstly, Uesugi won the case (Tōkyō District Court 1997, n.p.), but later the court ordered him to revise some of his citations from *Sensōron* (Tōkyō Supreme Court 1997, n.p.). This legal incident brought Kobayashi and his *manga* additional fame. Internationally, the second edition of *Sources of Japanese Tradition: 1600 to 2000, Vol. 2.*, a collection of primary publications from the publisher, explores Kobayashi and his *Sensōron* (de Bary et al. 2005, 1290-1296).

³ According to Rumi Sakamoto, the sales were 650,000 copies as of the day she made research on it (Sakamoto 2007, 79).

emergency situations and has generated a national debate on whether or not Japan should change the Constitution to grant greater recognition to the SDF/army. Japanese people are again being pressed to evaluate the master narrative—the historical statements made by authoritative figures and positively broadcast by mainstream media, which is reminiscent of the “grand narrative” as defined by Jean-François Lyotard in *La condition postmoderne* (1979)—regarding World War II and related political issues. Revisiting Kobayashi’s “discourse on war” might be of significance in that the *manga* can create an opportunity for the new generation as well as contemporary readers to confront war-related issues. It is thus imperative, through a reconsideration of Kobayashi’s sensational *manga*, to discuss this topic.

The facticity of the Nanjing Massacre is one of the vital issues Kobayashi deals with in *Sensōron*. The Nanjing Massacre refers to the actions carried out by members of the Japanese Imperial Army during its capture and ensuing occupation of the then capital of China beginning in December 1937. The factual details and interpretation of the atrocity remain a highly contentious issue both domestically and in international relations.⁴ In his chapter on the incident, the main target of Kobayashi’s criticism is journalism in Japan. Above all, he questions a number of renowned newspapers publishing companies, including the Asahi Shimbun, for having an incoherent stance and exerting overwhelming influence.⁵ Writer Motohiko Izawa asserts that the structure of Japanese journalism remains positive about distorting the truth for its benefit (Kobayashi and Izawa 1999, 47). Satō Takahiko’s meticulous research points out that a sense of discrimination towards Japanese people possibly prompted two American journalists—Frank Tillman Durdin, foreign correspondent for *The New York Times*, and Archibald Trojan Steele, pressman for *The Chicago Daily News*—to fabricate

⁴ Although the numbers are contested, the vast majority of historians both in and outside of Japan agree that tens of thousands of unarmed soldiers and civilians were killed by the Japanese Imperial Army during its occupation of Nanjing, in addition to committing other acts of atrocity including rape. For representative views, see Hata (2007), Higashinakano *et al.* (2005), Kasahara (2007), Kennedy (1998), etc.

⁵ For instance, Kobayashi introduces a morning issue of the Asahi (31 October 1984) in which a photo of columns of smoke was published with the caption describing Japanese soldiers proliferating poison gases. Citing Takeshi Inagaki, former Asahi journalist, Kobayashi explains that the Asahi eventually corrected the caption to state that the photo shows smokescreen crossing the river as had been uncovered by the Sankei Shimbun. Kobayashi, however, deplores the Asahi Shimbun for failing to learn from this lesson, and claims that it has continued to publish inaccurate reports regarding World War II, on issues including “comfort women,” without making corrections or apologies (Kobayashi 1998, 160-161). Later in 2014, the Asahi Shimbun Company corrected this particular article based on inaccurate information and apologised for it (The Asahi Shimbun 2014, n.p.).

and broadcast the Japanese atrocity to the world, which contained no documentary proof (Satō 2013, 50-55, 200-207).

Thus, what Kobayashi's discourse on the Nanjing Massacre in *Sensōron* does is that it attempts to indicate the illiberal tendency of Japanese media, newspaper publishing companies in particular, which selected information they preferred and distorted the past by using suspicious photos and captions. Roland Barthes asserts that a photograph conveys a message due to the multilayered process from the moment the photo is taken to its development. With a caption, a photograph can even "change its meaning" (Barthes 1977, 15). Susan Sontag also argues that a photo gradually needs an explanation to show its origin as time passes. A person's memory, however, is vulnerable to the passing of time, and it is possible for a caption to express a certain ideology that is not intended by the photo-taker (Sontag 2003, 25-27). Thus, it is arguably common knowledge that a photo does not necessarily reflect the truth. The problem of captions is a common issue related to photography, and is relevant regarding the presentation of the Nanjing Massacre in *Sensōron*.

In light of this, I will adopt Ien Ang's concept of "emotional realism" in discussing this topic. Her meticulous analysis of the American television series *Dallas* (1978-1991) shows that viewers tend to be affected by television soap operas not as a result of the factual aspects of their settings but due to the emotional ups and downs they incite (Ang 1985, 44-45). Through analysis of photos and captions exhibited in Ōsaka International Peace Center (Peace Ōsaka) and published in mainstream media, *Sensōron* claims the falsity of the Nanjing Massacre. Kobayashi's own interpretation and description of war history in *Sensōron* corresponds to Ang's notion of "emotional realism," in the way he displays his information so that readers are moved emotionally to empathise with the human events that his *manga* portrays.

Through close readings of *Sensōron* and related critiques of the volume, I will examine how Kobayashi Yoshinori challenges the dominant narratives regarding World War II in Japan. Then I will argue that, although *Sensōron* might lack meticulous research when compared to general academic scholarship, it functions to a certain extent as an alternative voice that critically points out contemporary Japan's neglect to reconsider World War II and to apply the lessons of the past to the present.

Circumstances and Discussions Surrounding *Sensōron*

The responses of critics generally show unfavourable views towards *Sensōron*. Sakamoto Rumi, for example, indicates that the volume overemphasises glorious aspects of the war, such as *kamikaze* pilots' high degree of loyalty to Japan and the patriotic feelings that ordinary citizens expressed during the wartime period, rather than aggressions carried out by the Japanese Army (Sakamoto 2007, 79-81). Eric Johnston assertively calls Kobayashi the "acknowledged king of right-wing manga artists" and *Sensōron* a "historical revisionist manga" (Johnston 2007, 115). Rebecca Clifford articulates that *Sensōron* propagandises the concept of moral purification just as wartime Japan did (Clifford 2004, 7). Shimazu Naoko criticises Kobayashi's myopic sense of history and his positivistic narrative development (Shimazu 2003, 114). Furthermore, most of them point out his selective use of reference material and the lack of credibility of his arguments. Kobayashi's oversimplified style of *manga* drawing is also targeted often.⁶ Kobayashi himself recalls a large number of objections from intellectuals against this volume (Kobayashi 2000, 14).⁷

Sensōron, however, has played a certain role as a trigger for Japanese readers to think more about Japan's past and present through its appeal to the emotions of contemporary readers. Kobayashi, as a cartoonist who is intensely interested in Japanese historical issues, chooses the medium of *manga* to represent his stance on such topics. As these historical issues remain highly contentious, it is necessary to reconsider objectively the nature of Kobayashi's strategy, despite the fact that a remarkable number of intellectuals have denounced *Sensōron* in a reactionary manner, as discussed below, insisting that it is merely a reproduction of popular culture which does not contribute to academic research on war history. The ideology expressed in Kobayashi's *manga*, as James Shields contends, "looks to reconstruct a (national) identity via individual conversion" by "a visual and emotive process as a cognitive one" (Shields 2013, n.p.). That is part of the reason why Kobayashi appears as "intimate, frank, ironic, wry, puzzled, judgmental, even self-mocking—qualities

⁶ Examples of the criticism include: the pictures might convey some provocative messages (Shimazu 2004, 114); the work reinforces gender norms through the heavy use of submissive, sexy women (Clifford 2004, 12); oversimplification of the history and previous research might be at work (Sakamoto 2007, 80).

⁷ Other criticisms include the concern that the graphic deformation of the enemy characters and the protagonist narrator, Kobayashi himself, who advocates his views intensely, might influence unduly the understanding of young readers. Kobayashi disagrees with this idea and says it looks down on the readers' comprehensive abilities. He also points out that many objections to *Sensōron* exhibit a plethora of illogical reasoning and cites Susumu Nishibe's remark, "excreta bombs of words," as a metaphor for the intellectuals' irrelevant complaints against him (Kobayashi 2000, 22).

academics and daily news reporters dutifully avoid as unprofessional and unobjective,” which explains characteristics of a “narrator of literary journalism” as defined by Paul Many (Strecher 2014, 168). Although Kobayashi’s *manga* has been criticised for its biased use of sources and propagandistic tones, an exploration of *Sensōron* and Kobayashi’s strategies can nevertheless shed light upon the reasons why his work has had such a great impact in postwar Japan, which could be said to rival well-documented historical sources in size.

Kobayashi’s approach has clearly created a stir in media-dominated Japan. Mainstream war-related representations, such as photos exhibited in war museums, TV dramas and textbooks of history, tend to focus on Japanese victimhood as those representations have politically neutral nature (Seaton 2007, 34). As Sakamoto has argued, *Sensōron* opposes that hegemonic narrative by highlighting hidden, small voices of the wartime generation. Sakamoto has maintained that Kobayashi questions the ignorant stance of the Japanese towards the concepts of individuality and nationalism/patriotism. Sakamoto also claims that Kobayashi utilises historical resources to demonstrate how the young wartime generation thought about these concepts in order to test contemporary readers’ sense of self within the context of history and community (Sakamoto 2007, 82). James Wertsch, in addition, has written that the accuracy of a war-related memory can be secondary to the possible functions it may serve (Wertsch 2009, 123). Thus, it is possible to consider alternatively Kobayashi’s “discourse on war” as a catalyst; his depictions of war history, regardless of their accuracy, have the potential to prompt empathic responses among his readers.

This evokes research on “emotional realism,” a conceptual term coined by Ien Ang. Her study asserts the expanding range of the definition of realism: namely, that the audience can also respond to the realism of TV dramas “at a connotative level” rather than just at a denotative level (1985, 43). As Julia Halam and Margaret Marshment add, viewers treat their emotional response to the text “as a catalyst . . . because it enables a release of emotion comparable to that experienced in real life situations” (Halam and Marshment 2000, 124). In this point, “emotional realism” in Ang’s terms can be applied to Kobayashi’s challenge in *Sensōron*. In a similar way to *Dallas*, Kobayashi’s *manga* seems to rely on common aspects that contemporary readers can find in the specific case of the mainstream media’s treatment of the Nanjing Massacre and the individual experiences of the war era he portrays.

Kobayashi's re-presentation of the Nanjing Massacre

The Nanjing Massacre is one of the most controversial historical and political issues related to World War II. The main dispute regards whether such a massacre actually occurred and the number of victims, the interpretation of which varies among researchers. For example, Higashinakano Shūdō concludes that no official historical record supports the interpretation of mass slaughter (Higashinakano 1998, 78). Many critics and historians, however, maintain that the Japanese army committed many acts of atrocity during the period of Japanese occupation of Asian nations. Barbara Hartley, for example, shows “irrefutable evidence of widespread abuses of power at the time by Japanese civil and military authorities” to demonstrate specific instances of mass murder and rape (Hartley 2007, 95).

Kobayashi's stance towards the Nanjing Massacre is simple and consistent. He argues that left-wing activists have used fake photos to fabricate the atrocity, going so far as to suggest that the entire fabrication was engineered by the Chinese. He also asserts that such extreme efforts to fabricate the past are almost cult-like (Kobayashi 1998, 152). His analyses of famous photos related to this incident support his argument. In this section, I will scrutinise the difference between Kobayashi's argument in *Sensōron* and some common views about the Nanjing Massacre. I will then demonstrate that, in spite of Kobayashi's selective examination, the work can still be appraised for the way it attempts to reveal the mechanism of propaganda, which can affect the set of public opinion unconsciously but greatly.

Sensōron dedicates twenty-one pages to scrutinising photos related to the Nanjing Massacre. First of all, it introduces a horrific picture of many chopped heads that was exhibited at Ōsaka International Peace Center (Peace Ōsaka), a public peace museum that is visited by a large number of schoolchildren as part of their extra-curricular studies. The exhibition panel explained that the photo was taken when the Japanese army murdered Koreans who were operating an independence movement in 1920. Nevertheless, as this chapter demonstrates, the same photo was also used as a depiction of the Nanjing Massacre in the *Asahi Shimbun*. The explanation of this photo depends on the time and space where it is employed. Then, Kobayashi introduces research by Tanaka Masaaki, a critic of modern history and current events, who contends that the original photo had an imprint stating, “The heads of the mounted bandits shot and killed in Tieling, Manchuria” (Kobayashi 1998, 154; Tanaka 1987,

128). *Sensōron* thus claims that this photo does not evidence the occurrence of the Nanjing Massacre.

The next photo in this chapter shows several dead bodies around a flight of stairs. Peace Ōsaka explained that the victims of the Japanese army's bombings in Chongqing appeared in this photo. However, it was published as evidence of the Nanjing Massacre on *Bungei Shunjū*, a traditional-conservative political magazine, in 1956 and had since been cited by multiple Japanese media sources for nearly thirty years. In 1984, *Asahi Journal*, the weekly magazine of Asahi Shimbun, introduced the same photo as "Chongqing bombing" and had since been known as such. Masaaki Tanaka revealed the falsity of both explanations and discovered the true background of the photo: the victims were actually suffocated to death in an underground vault in Chongqing. The original photo was taken by Carl Mydans, a photo journalist, who dedicated it to *LIFE History of World War II: China-Burma-India* (1979) (Tanaka 1987, 121). Kobayashi argues that this photo of dead bodies shows neither the victims of bombing committed by the Japanese army nor the Nanjing Massacre, which demonstrates a neglect for doing research before exhibiting and publishing on the part of both Peace Ōsaka and other sources (Kobayashi 1998, 156).

The same chapter introduces another photo displayed in a peace museum in Ōsaka with a caption of "Dead Bodies Abandoned in the Yangtze River," which was used as evidence of the Nanjing Massacre. One can see an Asian trooper standing on the right side of the photo looking down at a number of abandoned bodies. Kobayashi explains how this photo appears to be a fake. Where the bodies are abandoned, according to the cartoonist, appears too narrow to be the third longest river in the world by a considerable width. In addition, he points out that the trooper's helmet and military uniform has nothing in common with Japanese ones used at that time. Although it is evidently hard even for a layman to say that this photo shows the Nanjing Massacre, as Kobayashi deplores, an authorised Japanese professor, Tomio Hora, adopts this photo for the background picture of his book named *The Nanjing Massacre: the Definite Edition* published in 1982 (Kobayashi 1998, 164). Among the target of Kobayashi's criticism is a photo captioned as "Chinese women abducted by the Japanese army." He disagrees with the caption, saying that this photo shows Japanese troops guarding Chinese women against being robbed by the Chinese army. According to Hata Ikuhiko, the photo was originally taken by photographer Kumazaki Tamaki and published in *Asahi Graph 10*

November 1937, with the caption noting “a bundle of women going back to their home quarter after farm labour, protected by Japanese soldiers” (Hata 1998, 43-45).

Through these examples, Kobayashi exposes the significant and often deceiving influence exerted by captions, a topic that has been discussed theoretically in scholarship by Roland Barthes (1977) and Susan Sontag (2003), as noted earlier. Kobayashi criticises certain quarters of the Japanese media, peace museums, and the academic arena for dismissing the danger of photos with inaccurate captions, and repeating critical misreadings and misunderstandings of what those photos actually convey (Kobayashi 1998, 160-165).

Throughout the chapter, Kobayashi consistently insists on the use of inscrutable accuracy by the Japanese press. Above all, he harshly criticises Asahi Shimbun Company’s simplistic adoptions of Chinese testimonies of the Nanjing Massacre gathered in interviews by journalist Katsuichi Honda, the contents of which were serialised without corroborating coverage as “Travels to China” (*Chūgoku no tabi*, 1971) in the company’s various print media (Kobayashi 2000, 162). In this way, *Sensōron* provides many examples of what aspects of media broadcasting Kobayashi considers to be hindering readers’ impartial historical recognition.

It is true, as Sakamoto indicates, that the mere revelation of the fake photos is not enough to deny the occurrence of the Nanjing Massacre as *Sensōron* does (Sakamoto 2007, 86). Nevertheless, what Kobayashi’s discourse on the Nanjing Massacre in *Sensōron* does is that it attempts to indicate the illiberal tendency of the Japanese media, newspaper publishing companies in particular, which select information they prefer and distort the past by using suspicious photos and captions. In order to warn readers of the danger of being unconsciously influenced by such biased accounts, Kobayashi even uses provocative words like “brainwashing.” Although critics have said Kobayashi himself attempts propaganda by means of such offensive words, his desperate stance could also be interpreted as a reaction to what he considers to be the critical state of contemporary public opinion regarding Japanese historical consciousness. It could be said that Kobayashi is being courageous in voicing his opinion, knowing that he will be treated as a villain by the press.

This is how *Sensōron* utilises what Ang calls “emotional realism.” As Glen Creeber explains, taking the globally-renowned drama *Roots* (1977) as an example, “emotional realism” “translate[s] and humanise[s] historical facts for a contemporary audience”

into more recognisable, digestible narrative (Creeber 2004, 29). Kobayashi's challenge is to be seen not as a quality academic text but as a *manga* of "emotional realism." Regardless of the "side effects" of Kobayashi's provocative narrative as indicated by his critics, the emotional characteristic might help to explain the work's massive sales.

The elaborate depiction of wartime memories

Kobayashi devotes many pages of *Sensōron* to portray the wartime generation's episodes based on their memories. He aims to describe the experiences of "his grandfathers," which he argues has been oppressed by the postwar "war-phobic" mood (Kobayashi 2000, 26). Most of these episodes abound in renowned figures of the Imperial Army and show the Japanese troops' allegiance to the nation. Although this aspect of the *manga* is the main object of condemnation due to its "revisionist" mood, Kobayashi is defiant in his preaching of the value of such storytelling as a means to break through what he sees as the long-term stagnation of post-war democracy. This section analyses the significance of these wartime memories pictured in *Sensōron*. It will consider the possibility of such depictions to question the master narrative, providing readers with alternative perspectives with which to view the past.

Sensōron depicts a wide range of war experiences that veterans and ex-troops had in the war. It details their ranks, the locations of the battlefields they were stationed at, the period of their detachments, and their personalities (Kobayashi 1998, 273). For example, Kobayashi shows a long letter from an elderly woman named Ms Ito, one of his readers, who recalls the memory of Mr Ogawa, a company employee who was drafted for the second Sino-Japanese war. A three-page section of her letter conveys the heartwarming nature of Mr Ogawa, who she says was witty and gentle enough to call a grasshopper on his shoulder "Mr Grasshopper (*batta-kun*)," in spite of his brave actions as a commander in the capture of Nanjing (1998, 46-48).

Another chapter of *Sensōron* introduces Kobayashi's super-optimistic relative, who went to the Mainland China to join the army. He cheerfully describes his war experience as something like travelling abroad. He remembers various kinds of tasty food that he had in China both on duty and after the war. When he came back home, he was chubby, carrying a lot of excellent blankets, which he got from Chinese people by barter trade, on his back (Kobayashi 1998, 273-275).

The longest episode of the war veterans in *Sensōron* is based on a diary kept by Takamura Takehito during his period on duty. Kobayashi dedicates as many as sixty-four pages to the retelling of his war memory. Takamura was a company commander of division artillery, who took the field seven times and survived intact. Kobayashi's detailed depiction of Takamura's autobiographical episode includes his desire to be a soldier in his childhood, his skilful tactics in battle as an excellent commander, the brave troops of his division, his compassion towards the Japanese hostages that he rescued, his extraordinary sense of responsibility, and his unswerving loyalty to his country. Kobayashi focuses on the glorious aspect of Takamura's war experience and emphasises uplifting feelings and a sense of fulfilment that he encountered in the front of the army (Kobayashi 1998, 209-272). Thus, it could be said that *Sensōron* contains a large volume of positive representations of war experiences.

Criticism of such positive portrayals of the war experience tends to focus on Kobayashi's victimisation of the war generation. Sakamoto analyses that Kobayashi's representation of ex-soldiers' positive experiences just repeats the familiar logic of victimisation: as some activists insist on the war victims' rights to speak out, Kobayashi also victimises the war generation and privileges their right to speak out (Sakamoto 2007, 82-83). Clifford also argues that Kobayashi's scenario is worn out and classic in its concentration on the victimisation of the war generation as a group unjustifiably accused, and in the way he tries to outline how the master narrative colludes to keep the counterargument secret (Clifford 2004, 14-15). Shimazu considers Kobayashi's glorified depiction of war episodes as a personalisation of these histories, made manageable through the medium of *manga* (Shimazu 2003, 114).

It would be more accurate to say, however, that *Sensōron* is less concerned with victimisation and personalisation than in striving to achieve a balancing act for the public opinion. Here the master narrative can be also called the collective memory of Japan. As Saito Hiro notes, changes of historical circumstances urge the members of a group to reconstruct their collective memory (Saito 2006, 353). In general, however, collective memory is tragic, and it easily becomes the "eternal truth" and "eternal identity" of a group (Wertsch 2009, 126). Once the collective memory is fixed, it is chiefly invulnerable to any other memories, which are typically expelled from public discourse. This is partly because, as Jan Assmann notes, the discourse of politics readily draws from the contents of collective memory, thereby strengthening it (Assmann

2006, 7). It could be possible to read *Sensōron* as an attempt to prevent Japan's collective memory from becoming too one-sided and to adjust the public opinion for a fairer discussion about historical consciousness.

Sakamoto and Clifford also challenge Kobayashi's overemphasised representation of the war's honourable aspects and neglect of the negative dimensions the war that people were forced to experience, such as post-war poverty, misery, and their sense of relief at the end of the hopeless war (Sakamoto 2007, 80; Clifford 2004, 17). This critique can be attributed to the emphasis *Sensōron* places on the public rather than the private. As Kobayashi himself argues, postwar Japan has suppressed any positive discourses of those who went to the war as part of the military (Kobayashi 2000, 132). Moreover, he considers that such negative aspects, such as some troops not wanting to go to the war and ordinary people's postwar hardship, do not need to be included in his *manga* because they are already well-documented elsewhere.⁸ This choice made by Kobayashi tests the power of imagination to look at the past while thinking about a set of values at that time, which is different from the contemporary one. Kobayashi criticises the existing condition of postwar Japan for lacking these patterns of thinking (1998, 99).

Therefore, through the representation of the war veterans and ex-troops, who are easily regarded as "aggressors" and the "shame of Japan" in the atmosphere of postwar democracy, *Sensōron* attempts to provide readers with another viewpoint and the opportunity to contemplate the difference between postwar and prewar values. Although the great portion of the glorious depiction may look personalised or revisionist, this sense of discomfort could be said to demonstrate the absolute dominance of a master narrative in Japan that actually victimises the Japanese military.⁹ As Elizabeth Lozano and Arvind Singhal argue, in order to change the current of society, not merely information but also flexibility is demanded (1993, 124). *Sensōron* might exemplify this action of reading a wide variety of (so-called) "left" and "right" media to look at the past multilaterally and think about it flexibly.

⁸ Here, other *manga* volumes on war should also be taken into account, which depict different ideas and situations of war (e.g. *Hadashi no Gen* by Keiji Nakazawa, the war stories by Shigeru Mizuki). Further research will explore in more detail how these works deal with postwar hardship experienced by ordinary people.

⁹ This process may well be at work in other areas of debate in Japanese society as well (e.g. survivors of the Eastern Japan Great Earthquake Disaster in 2011, who are struggling for their own dignified survival/life in a society that apparently is not so willing to reintegrate them), which I will explore further in another time and place.

Once again, the significant role of “emotional realism” lies in the wartime memories portrayed by Kobayashi. Whether or not these episodes told by the elderly people are true is not a relevant question within the discussion of the concept. Leigh H. Edwards, explaining Ang’s terms, notes that, while the readers of an “emotional-realistic” medium are in the midst of such uncertainty, they still find a certain realism in the fiction (Edwards 2013, 171). Anna McCarthy also accounts for Ang’s concept, saying that the viewers of *Dallas* “derived a sense of realism from the show’s apparently true-to-life depiction of psychological situations” (Creeber 2015, 76). Similarly, Kobayashi’s elaborate representation of wartime episodes in *Sensōron* can persuade contemporary readers to think about what they have in common with the older generation who survived the war era. After being emotionally enjoyed first, *Sensōron* can introduce the readers to the higher level of discussion on how they can take the lesson of the war generation and apply it in the debate of their time.

Conclusion

I have considered, with mention of on the concept of “emotional realism,” why the *manga Sensōron* has generated great publicity and significant commercial success, in spite of Kobayashi’s controversial stance. I have specified the difference of outlook between Kobayashi and the mainstream media through the examination of his depiction of the Nanjing Massacre and his representation of war veterans’ memories. Then, I have demonstrated how *Sensōron* sets out to offer resistance against what Kobayashi perceives to be a self-tormenting sense of guilt and victimising way of thinking, nurtured by the mood of postwar democracy. Through the adoption of “emotional realism,” the *manga* provides a minor discourse of the war through which certain lessons can be handed down to future readers. It can be said that this method aims not to lead Japan back towards militarism but to reconsider current society by learning from individual experience and memory and by relying upon the emotional aspects of readers’ perceptions. This beneficial quality of the work can be attributed to Kobayashi’s storytelling and drawing, in relation to the notion of “emotional realism.”

While Kobayashi’s interpretation entails some risk of being regarded as right-wing, his stance should be understood as being more nuanced; he disagrees with Tōjō Hideki’s *Senjinkun* military code (Kobayashi 1998, 280) and rejects militarism and fascism (Kobayashi 2000, 30). He regards both the Great Tōkyō Air Raid and the atomic

bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as merciless “demons” (Kobayashi 1998, 318-339). He admits that the principle of preferring honourable death of *kamikaze* corps radically caused useless deaths (1998, 279). He denies having a close relationship with the Liberal Historiography Study Group (Kobayashi 2000, 46, 240).¹⁰ He clearly denies that he desires Japan to start another war (Kobayashi 1998, 271, 374). Despite these vindications, Kobayashi has been easily labelled an extreme nationalist agitator for the provocative appearance of his *manga*, which seems partly to show the influence of the opposition political class of postwar Japanese democracy.

More importantly, what Kobayashi emphasises most is the importance of distinguishing credible sources from fakes (1998, 171). As Murakami Hatsuichi, the curator of the Ōkunoshima Toxic Gas Museum,¹¹ notes, simply looking at the wartime history from the victim’s perspective raises nothing productive for the future (Buruma 1995, 111). *Sensōron* strives to outline the necessity for the present generation to appreciate the magnitude of this controversial dispute by enabling them to exert imagination properly.

After the publication of *Sensōron*, the prolific *manga* artist published several *manga* volumes related to Japanese historical consciousness. Among them is *Yasukuniron* (2005), which outlines the misperception of the origin and concept of Yasukuni Shrine in the political and public arena. Also, the *manga* laments how postwar Japan lacks a consciousness of Shinto ethos. Kobayashi writes that although Shintoism unifies the nation, because people do not appreciate it consciously many politicians have even disregarded the concept entirely and proposed creating another public cemetery with no religious conception in order to appease criticism from neighbouring countries (Kobayashi 2005, 38-47). Kobayashi’s stance towards the nation and its traditions seems to be similar to that expressed by war veteran Onoda Hiroo,¹² who was appalled by the Japanese public’s blind submission to commercialism and reluctance to respect

¹⁰ The Liberal Historiography Study Group (*Jiyū-shugi Shikan Kenkyūkai*) is an intellectual organization that views the Japanese wartime history from positive and nationalistic perspectives (Clifford 2004, 1, 3). Although Clifford repeatedly asserts Kobayashi’s connection to Fujioka Nobukatsu, a central member of this group, it is, at the same time, repeatedly denied by Kobayashi himself as noted above.

¹¹ Ōkunoshima Toxic Gas Museum was inaugurated in 1988 in the hope of remembering the history that, during World War II, the Imperial Japanese Army produced toxic gas for the warfare secretly in Ōkunoshima island, Hiroshima.

¹² Onoda Hiroo (1922-2014) was a soldier of the Imperial Japanese Army, sent to the Lubang Islands, Philippines, as an intelligence officer in 1944. Even after the World War II was terminated, he believed in the continuity of the war and stayed there, conducting espionage. He returned to Japan in 1974 on orders from his previous supervisor.

the war dead and the Yasukuni Shrine (Trefalt 2003, 158-159). This volume, like *Sensōron*, consistently conveys Kobayashi's argument: he encourages individual readers of the *manga* to doubt what is said to be true and meet the problems related to history and the past head-on.

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“Thinking of Spain in a flat way”: Visiting Spain and Spanish cultural heritage through contemporary Japanese anime

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ABSTRACT

This article contextualizes the representation of Spain and Spanish culture among Japanese cultural producers, particularly through the production of Japanese commercial animation (commonly named anime). Toward that goal, it provides a historical background of Japan-Spain relations within the context of the tourism industry, as well as some examples of the diverse forms of representation within several creative industries. Subsequently, the article reviews the ways in which popular culture has been contributed to national branding. There is special attention to the Spanish case and the proliferation of such images sometimes resulting in the (mis)representation of Spain's tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Internationally-distributed anime productions will be examined as a reflection of Spanish national branding on Japanese audiences and this global industry. Three cases among contemporary anime productions (Nasu: Andarushia no Natsu, 2003; So · Ra · No · Wo · To, 2010 and Crayon Shin Chan, 1992-) have been selected due to the combination of fictional and misrepresented Spanish cultural features in their narratives.

KEYWORDS

Spain; Japan; Japanese Anime; *Fictionality*; Construction; Misrepresentations; National Branding.

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Introduction: The narrative and its role in national branding

Audiences all over the world may differ in the way they perceive a particular country or cultural tradition. Literature, philosophies and popular cultures converge in the creation of mutual images. Individuals of every country tend to think that their own culture is especially influential or popular. We rejoice when we notice reflections of our narratives, our philosophies or our histories that are represented in other countries' media productions. When the individuals adopt the role of referee, this pleasure might change to annoyance as they judge the accuracy of the representation of their own cultures. In a pure form of essentialism, international audiences assume that there is only one 'true' way of representing a culture, one that must be faithful to one's own 'native' perception and entails the essence of that culture. Therefore, we usually find

ourselves annoyed or even outraged when of our native culture is portrayed via stereotypical forms. In Spain, where I was born and raised, we have long found being the object of foreign interest to be appealing, even when that interest is critical:

(...) The poet did as she bade him, and left her without a shred of reputation, and she was satisfied by getting fame though it was infamy.
(In *Don Quixote*, Vol 1 by Miguel de Cervantes, 1605).

However, at heart, not all countries enjoy the same reputation and some of them hardly evoke positive images among international audiences. On the other hand, some countries continue to have a more relevant presence. Accurate sources of a country's reputation may be unclear, as it might be the result of military, economic or cultural influence over decades. In the recent history of the social sciences, concepts such as 'soft power' (Nye 1990) or 'national branding' (Anholt 2013), have reframed the role of culture and national identity, creating a method of comparing nations through a multifactorial index and international rankings.

The role that cultural industry and their productions play in the construction of these international reputations remains ambiguous. Visual media industries (cinema, comics, video games, etc.) are relevant international industries that many countries often promote due to the associated economic benefits. These cultural industries are considered one of the primary avenues through which national images are consolidated among international audiences and markets.

In this article, I propose some core elements for the depiction and understanding of 'Spain' and 'the Spanish' overseas. My hypothesis is that tourism and international media reception share similar processes in the creation of 'desirable images.' In this sense, tourism marketing and, specifically, cognitive approaches (Kim and Perdue 2011; Jetter and Chen 2011; Frías *et al.* 2012) have already produced a considerable amount of research on the relevance of strategies based on this image construction. Also, media studies have addressed these questions through the conflictive aspect of representation/misrepresentation, an aspect that has been discussed extensively in the case of Spanish culture (see, for example, Mestre *et al.* 2008).

These national images can be also discussed on a self-reflexive level, as societies offer space for several national identities and self-constructions. However, in this paper, I will focus exclusively on the construction and reception of images surrounding Spain from a

foreign perspective. That is to say, to consider cognitive, narrative and marketing perspectives, we must be interested in the way these products can evoke different meanings about Spanish cultural heritage among international audiences. As I explore in this article, in the case of Japanese animation movies, Spanish identity is constructed around particular Spanish regional visual identities, such as the Andalusian.

Other relevant aspects of Japanese media and its representation of Spain address the role of *fictionality* in the construction of these narratives. Fiction cannot be isolated from any kind of representational form, and communicational genres (advertising, news, entertainment, etc.) present significant variability in the way they incorporate narrative features and construct representations of reality and fiction. For example, a commercial adopting a form of storytelling would not be considered a fictional genre because, even when representing a false reality, their communicational purpose is clearly different from other common fictional genres in visual media, such as movies. Some authors have employed the term '*Fictionality*' (Gjerlevsen 2016; Zhao 2011), in order to delimitate this aspect within genres and differentiate these forms from the more comprehensive 'narrative,' which may include non-fictional constructions.

As I will show for both the media and tourism industries, Spain is, for Japanese audiences and markets, a desirable destination where *fictionality* plays an essential role in the representation of spaces and cultural artefacts. This *fictionality* includes also the depiction of some intangible elements of Spanish culture such as rites and traditions. Media and tourism (promotional) images produced for Japanese audiences construct a similar image of Spain and the Spanish. In order to support this idea, I will review previous research in the tourism sphere, attending to the special case of Japanese inbound tourism to Spain and representations of the Spanish through international visual media for entertainment. As anime is the Japanese visual industry with the largest presence in international markets, I will explore some examples of these processes through the study of three contemporary Japanese anime productions.

Representations of Spain and the Spanish in the Japanese visual media industries

Constructions of Spain and the Spanish through media and tourism images

In the past, there have been several attempts to measure the influence of a country. These methods are usually of some complexity and based on multiple factors and interactions. For example, the *Anholt-GfK Nation Brand Index* (GfK, 2017) incorporates six dimensions in its survey: governance, exports, tourism, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, and people. While influence is something other than the projected image of a country in terms of relevance and valence (positive, negative or neutral), I assume that reputation is an essential component. Other components may not be directly related to reputation (i.e. two countries can be important exporters of a commodity without being equally reputed as producers). In this sense, both its tourism industry's success and its cultural exports may be a direct reflection of the appeal and the reputation of a country, to some extent. Other studies on Spain's image in Japan have considered human (Japanese people living in or visiting Spain), economic (imports, exports) and cultural factors (Spanish arts and language) (Noya 2004, 42).

Reports from Spanish tourism agencies and Japanese institutions present some differences. Regarding Spanish institutions (Instituto de Turismo de España 2016 & 2013), Japan was the most important market for the Asian continent in 2012, in terms of expenditure and number of visitors. Japanese daily expenditure was greater than any other international visitor (317 euros per day), although this started a negative trend (Instituto de Turismo de España 2013, 147). While numbers have been increasing moderately since 2009, Spain seemed to reach its maximum popularity at the end of the decade, when 1.2 million Japanese visitors travelled to Spain (JTB Tourism Research 2017). While Spain may not be the favourite destination in Europe for the Japanese, it still has relevant numbers. Regarding data from the Japan National Tourism Organization from 2010, there was a huge increase of Japanese visitors in 2010 (up to 44%). It was, despite significant annual variations, the third-most visited country in Europe during the period between 2010-2014, following Germany and France (Japan National Tourism Organization 2017).

Spanish agencies describe the Japanese visitor as a 'cosmopolitan tourist' (Instituto de Turismo de España 2016, 25). The category is defined by several interests, including 'cultural tourism, gastronomy and shopping.' This description seems to fit with

previous evidence on the motivations of Japanese travellers, who seek out historic buildings, nice weather, high hygiene standards, availability of pre-trip information, personal safety, diversity of shopping areas, good public transportation and inexpensive restaurants, among other factors (You *et al.* 2000). A study from ElCano Institute (Noya 2004, 276) summarized the attraction of Spain as its monumental buildings (74%), culture and traditions (74%), and good cuisine (70%).

Moreover, it is necessary to state that Japanese tourism not only covers aspects of tangible heritage but also intangible cultural heritage, to use the UNESCO classification. Therefore, I refer here to both cultural artefacts and their use, the rituals, which are usually linked to the existence of communities that practice those skills. While they can be constructed through representations and mediatized, they are supposed to be reproduced through imitation and not free interpretation. Understanding this intangible cultural heritage provides an avenue for other cultural knowledge and memorable encounters, a part of the touristic experience that is common all over the world, not unique to Japanese tourists. However, some scholars nevertheless project a spiritual meaning onto the Japanese tourist's experience and identify Japanese curiosity as an international singularity: 'flamenco acts as an art derivative of Zen and provides a deep experience that becomes part of personal identity' (Vidal González 2008, 808).

As mentioned, tourism is an industry with strong implications in the arts and culture sector, which is considered another main area related to the construction of national branding (Ahn and Wu 2015, 162). Thus, narratives of tourism can share traits with other narratives about a nation, such as the characteristics exported through other cultural industries. As an example, Rodao (2001) has pointed out the work of Osamu Takeda, who resides in Spain and is the author of *Los 100 pueblos más bellos de España* (lit. *The most 100 beautiful villages in Spain*), a travel guide published in Japan in 1999. Takeda is a journalist and entrepreneur who contributes to publications released by the Japanese and Spanish Commercial Chamber. He is also the author of other books about Spanish history, language and culture.¹ In summary, he is a relevant figure who has contributed significantly to the promotion of Spain and particularly Andalusia. Conflating Spanish and Andalusian cultural iconography is a constant in the creation of

¹ *Don kihōte no kuni kara – todokō nishi 20 yū yonen no nihonjin ga mita Supein* (1991), lit. *From the Don Quixote of the country - 20-odd years of Japanese memories from Spain and Supeinjin to nihonjin, or Spanish and Japanese* (1993).

local and transnational images of Spain since the eighteenth century. This has its origin in the Peninsular War (1808-1814) and the subsequent restoration of the Bourbons. With the French occupation and the imposition of French high culture, Spaniards reacted by embracing vernacular culture, specifically the indigenous Andalusian culture, also known as '*majismo*' (Josephs 1983). This romanticist trend is linked with other traditions such as the '*toreo*' (bullfighting) and 'flamenco' dance also popular in that area. It is no coincidence that since then, foreign literature started to equate '*majismo*' and its iconography with the whole of Spanish identity. In particular, *maja* dress, the typical female costume, was popularized through stage productions, ballet performances and Bizet's opera *Carmen*, which helped to strengthen this association (Worth and Sibley 1994, 51).

Visual media industries are key components in the construction of identities mainly because of their global reach and economic importance. Although the Spanish film industry has a limited economic impact, it still has some international prestige. Spanish directors (Almodóvar, Medem, Amenábar, etc.) are highly appreciated overseas and have assured Spanish presence at international festivals and other commercial circuits. Filmmaker can embrace nation's societal values but also react to particular aspects of his/her society. An example of this could be Pedro Almodóvar, who has created most of his imaginary through the deconstruction of Spanish iconicity (passionate lovers, catholic nuns, *el matador*...).

Some studies have argued that films can work as an unofficial form of touristic promotion. In this regard, three types of films have been distinguished: *iconic films*, *pastiches* and *tourist poster films* (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 185). These are films in which the discursive object is Spain, independent of the nationality of the producers or filmmakers. These categories also include some works that depend on the support of Spanish institutions and/or regions. In this classification, both iconic films and pastiches work as representations of the cultural values of Spain that we might call 'intangible heritage'. They seem to differ, however, in the coherence and quality of this representation. Iconic films are supposed to "arise from the deep knowledge of the country and their people that the filmmaker has" (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 186). In contrast, pastiche films mix cultural artefacts and spaces without an established sociological or historical context. It has been argued that *Mission Impossible II* (2000) is a good example of 'pastiche' film (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 189). In fact, the movie alters the

meaning and iconography of several Spanish traditions (including Holy Week in Sevilla and Fallas of Valencia), and it mixes artefacts and spaces from different parts of the country (north, east and south) as though the narration had taken place in a single region. Finally, poster films include in their narratives' landscapes and scenarios from an identifiable region, and scholars argue that in comparison to iconic films and pastiches, these may work better as a form of "publicity" (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 191).

The problem with this classification is it confuses the definition of iconic films as an essentialist representation of Spain with the strength or popularity of this representation of the Spanish culture overseas. For example, most of the representations of Spain should be classified in this system under the pastiche label, a condition that inherently relates to their non-Spanish origins. The main exception seems to be Almodóvar's films which can be classified as iconic films (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 188). However, while Almodóvar's films create a strong and consistent image of Spanish culture (bullfighters, passionate lovers), that image might be considered by many Spaniards (including myself) an inaccurate representation of Spanish culture and society that is ideologically biased and more a parody than an ethnographic portrait.

This classification based on the real Spain versus the misrepresented Spain is unclear, and in fact, the authors acknowledge that all the films might mix elements of the three categories (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 186); so, purely iconic films might not actually exist for Spain. The definition of fictionality that underpins this classification is also unclear. It is assumed (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 186) that cinema establishes new realities when in fact, as I argued before, *fictionality* is an agreement between the audience and the creator. If movies can be considered a form of persuasion (assuming that kind of pure communication exists), their effectiveness is not due to their level of verisimilitude, but rather to their emotional properties. More specifically, the audience's emotional involvement with the film drives their tourism experience (Kim 2012, 387).

Once again, Spain has a clear and distinguished national brand, as tourism is the main industry in the country, generating 10.2 percent of its GDP in 2016 (World Travel & Tourism Council 2017). There is a large amount of scholarship production about this topic and consequently, Spanish scholars have already focused on the most specific features of Japanese tourism in Spain.

Gómez Aragón (2013) studied the phenomenon of international long-distance tourism, with special mention of the Japanese case. The findings of her work emphasize the global

relevance of tourism not only as an industry but also as a necessity, which is rooted in the creation and re-creation of cultural identities. Thus, the consumption of a foreign culture is always producing other forms of culture, in unique and unrepeatable experiences, as tourism is a performance. However, these travel experiences are usually developed in a controlled environment. As described by this scholar (Gomez-Aragon 2013), as well as other Spanish institutions (Noya 2004), the majority of Japanese tourists visiting Spain hire Japanese travel agencies. Their trips consist of short visits to urban areas where they do a small number of overnight stays in high-quality accommodations. Through these practices, Japanese tourists attempt to minimize the associated cultural impact of travelling, constructing what has been described as a ‘cultural bubble’ (Gómez Aragón 2008, 14). The motives and conditions of the Japanese tourism industry can be also explored through local theme parks and their narratives. These spaces successfully combine the concept of a ‘national cultural image’ and recreational bubbles to offer a unique space experience that aims to simulate touristic travel. *Gaikoku mura* or foreign villages are quite common in Japan. Around the country, local tourists can visit domestic versions of Germany (*Gliks Königreich*), *The Canadian World*, Denmark (*Marine Park Xixe*), *Tazawako Swiss Village*, Russia (*Rosilla Mura* or ‘Russian village’) and the Netherlands (*Iluis ten Bosch One*), among others. While having some features in common with other theme parks such as those found in the U.S., some scholars differentiate these from postmodern interpretations of Disneyland theme parks and connect them with pre-existing Japanese traditions such as botanical gardens and international exposition fairs (Hendry 2000).

The *Supein Mura* (lit. *Spanish Village in Shima*), was opened in 1993 in the city of Shima (Mie prefecture). This resort, with hotels and geothermal baths, contains numerous references to major Spanish cities and monuments such as the Alhambra from Granada or the Plaza Mayor in Madrid. Gómez-Aragón (2011, 167) has pointed out how the visual identity and artefacts of the park can be assimilated into Spain’s national image as constructed by the Japanese, with references to national colours, typical musical genres and even terms associated with the Spanish brand. Other elements of this park aim directly at the existence of fictional narratives. A literary figure such as *El Quixote* here acquires, not surprisingly, the form of a mascot, an ambassador of the park. Finally, the conclusion of Gomez-Aragon is that these

distortions and adaptations of the image of the Spanish are common to the narrative offered in tourist texts, such as brochures promoting Spain as a destination.

Like the earlier examples, the *Supein Mura* case shows how the motivations of tourists can be reflected in tangible and intangible aspects of their cultural consumption. The park not only offers a synthetic image of Spain's cultural artefacts but also tries to offer to the visitor the experience of a real visit to Spain. In this, gastronomy plays an essential role, because 'tasting new flavours' is usually one of the main pleasures searched by those aforementioned 'cosmopolitan' tourists.

Certainly, this space offers a simplified and distorted view of the cultural reality of Spain. It would be impossible not to do so, since creating a condensed experience necessarily involves skewed portrayal. Yet in this cross-cultural adaptation, it is the visitor who has the responsibility of 'contextualizing' this information. Representations of Spain in *Supein Mura* work in consonance with other representations of Spain in Japanese society, whether they are related to Spanish literature, traditions or spaces. All together, these representations conform to the image of Spain held by Japanese tourists. A visit is an act of reading that does not depend entirely on the text.

Another main highlight in the case of *Supein Mura* is what Gomez-Aragon (2011) calls 'bubbles,' which can be understood as a form of 'domestication.' The concept of domestication is derived from translation studies and designates strategies adopted to reduce the 'strangeness' of the original text (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997, 44). The use of the domestication is quite appropriate in the case of *Supein Mura*. In this case, it is not merely terms but rather cultural forms that must be reproduced in a way that is understandable to the target local audience. The most unsafe or uncomfortable elements are adapted to Japanese taste, without sacrificing the exotic appeal of the foreign culture. That is the case for gastronomy in the park. The use of spices, the size of the portions, and the lack of Spanish native ingredients illustrate the way that dishes are often domesticated for local taste. In *Supein Mura*, musical performances are also a product of this process. Despite being inspired by Spanish dances (in this case, possibly *jota* and *flamenco*), they acquire here the form of group dances while also incorporating theatrical speeches and remixes of J-pop music.

Dimensions of Japanese perceptions of Spain

Having considered the conditions and the agents involved in the construction of national images through both the tourism and the media industries, I will establish some dimensions of the national image of Spain abroad. I'm working here under the assumption that cultural industries share common representational tools with Media Industry. Therefore, in the study of a specific cultural product, such as anime, we may be able to find a strong interest in cultural and urban elements. These should not be understood as merely iconographic approaches but also as performances and experiences. That is, we should be able to find examples of representations, even if they are biased, simplified or caricatured, of other forms of tangible and intangible heritage. Participation in rituals is a symbolic form of complex nature, and therefore a tendency to de-contextualize can also be expected. Examples of this are portrayals of the worlds of bullfighting and flamenco. I expect to find examples of these traditions due to their international appeal. Other examples may also appear, although they might not be as idiosyncratic to Spanish heritage, that are part of a shared heritage (i.e. religious rituals such as Catholic weddings can be found in the representations of other countries with Catholic backgrounds).

Secondly, representations of iconic Spanish landscapes, including both rural and urban settings may be found on anime text representing Spanish culture. According to previous research on the representation of the most iconic Spanish landscapes including rural and urban locations, the most appealing locations for media products are typically those associated with Toledo, Madrid, Barcelona and the south of Spain (Andalucía), as they are the main regions of interest for Japanese tourism (Noya 2004, 43). Depending on the combination of tangible and intangible elements, these media products may fall within the category of poster films or iconic films (Mestre et al 2008). Also, as may be expected, some of them will present a de-contextualized space and/or misrepresentation of cultural artefacts. These products may fit into the category of pastiche films.

Finally, in terms of *fictionality*, images related to other fictional discourses can be expected. Traditional and conventional anime genres can also affect the way in which content is constructed. If speeches around tourism are a part of the whole genre family (Calvi 2010), we may have to confront some examples of genre hybridization together with other, more discrete genre forms of anime.

Case Studies

So far, I have shown a number of examples in relation to images of Spain as a tourist destination in different international media forms, including film, theme parks and travel literature. Examining all of them with the necessary rigour is beyond the scope of this text. Moreover, I do not want to focus on the issue of effectiveness in creating these images, because my goal is to study their narratives, regardless of the usefulness of that form (official or otherwise) for the purpose of tourism marketing. However, of all industries and professional sectors related to Japanese popular culture, anime is one that deserves a deeper exploration.

Japanese animation may offer the most possibilities regarding a national image's reflection in Japanese popular media narratives. Anime is a relevant multinational industry that offers through narrative a unique combination of cross-cultural and cross-media elements (Hernández-Pérez 2017). Most of anime TV productions are adaptations from manga (Japanese comic) which offer a huge thematic diversity that it offers, despite being strongly determined by its subgenre (i.e. *shonen*², *shojo*³, etc.). This is a feature inherited in the case of Japanese anime adaptations of manga, the most common form of anime for TV. These anime productions usually explore different settings for their stories as a way to create appealing stories with a certain exoticism. Spain is just one of the landscapes and narratives that have been explored through Japanese popular culture⁴. Some of these adaptations adopt the form of historical tales with backgrounds based in Spanish history. *Taiyo no ko Esteban* (1982) or *The Mysterious Cities of Gold*, produced by NHK (Japan), Antenne 2 (France-Luxembourg) and Studio Pierrot, introduces the Spanish boy Esteban and his adventures with other *conquistadores*, set during Francisco Pizarro's expedition in 1532. *Ritoru Eru Shido no bouken* (1983), translated as a *The Little Cid*, is a free interpretation of the childhood of the famous historical Spanish character. This production was the result of an agreement between Nippon Animation and the Spanish BRB International, which included other titles for their co-production and European distribution (Santiago

² (Lit. "boys") Manga magazines addressed to male teenager audiences, between 14 and 18 years-old but actually consumed by all kinds of audiences.

³ (Lit. "young woman") Manga magazines addressed to female teenager audiences, between 14 and 18 years-old.

⁴ This may not be a relevant number, if we compare it with the amount of productions portraying elements from German or English culture and literature. See Deninson (2010) for a commentary on the relevance of Victorian English heritage to Japanese popular culture.

Iglesias and Hernández-Pérez, WORKING PAPER). Although the style of the animation and the design of personages corresponds with the framework of the industry of that time, *The Little Cid* story was written by the Spanish company. In a private interview, Claudio Biern, creator justified its apocryphal character: “There is no information at all about El Cid’s childhood so we could really do whatever we wanted”. However, according to the author, the series was documented rigorously in terms of locations, buildings and custom design.

While the aforementioned case might warrant closer study, in this study I have opted for the analysis of more recent case studies. The reason for this is these three selected cases were produced after the Spanish touristic boom in the 1990s. In this sense, they also offer potential commentary through their narratives, in relation to the topics studied in this paper, including the mixture of national branding, *fictionality* and how stereotypical representations work in the construction of Spanish identity overseas.

Crayon Shin-chan (1992-)

Of all the Spanish cities, it is certainly Barcelona that has managed to export its image in a more recognizable way in cultural productions around the world. As a backdrop, Barcelona has shone through the years, mainly in the video game world with productions such as *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* (2000), *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* (2001) and *The Wheelman* (2009), among others. Japanese anime has also contributed to the exportation of an image of Barcelona that is usually rendered around Gaudi’s architecture, mainly the Sagrada Familia and Parque Güell. The franchise and particularly the anime *Trinity Blood* (2005) depicts a post-apocalyptic Barcelona. Recently in manga, Hanazawa's *I am a hero* (2009-2017), a post-apocalyptic story about zombies published by Shogakukan, portrays the city in two of its chapters (217, 218).

However, in the case of the *Crayon Shin-chan* anime, the representation of Barcelona goes beyond the creation of poster films or the (mis-) representation of spaces. In these cartoons, the authors create a portrait (whether it is accurate or not) of both customs and people.

Shin-chan was created in 1992 by Usui Yoshito and began to be published in *Manga Weekly Action* (Futabasha Publishers). The story constructs an acid portrait of Japanese society through the Noharas, a local family residing in Kasukabe, Saitama prefecture. Stories are structured around the eldest of their children, Shinnosuke (Shin Chan), a

naughty five-year-old who is somewhat rude but always much too honest. The story can be, in this sense, a reflection of the social norms and how these regulations usually enter in conflict with our natural instincts. The franchise continues to generate stories even after the author's death in 2009, through the work of his team of assistants at Futabasha and other anime producers.

The franchise is one of the great successes of Japanese anime in the Spanish market over the last years. Its story is not so different from another TV anime. It followed the classic Japanese model of a transmedia franchise, and both manga and anime were exported to the West. However, in few other countries as geographically distant from Japan has *Shin-chan* achieved the success and social impact that it has had in Spain.

In Spain, fifteen *Shin-chan* feature films have been released, four of them cinematically. This is quite relevant as, in Spain, only franchises that target younger audiences, like *Pokémon* or *Doraemon*, have managed to dominate the domestic and film markets (Santiago Iglesias and Hernández-Pérez, WORKING PAPER). TV anime has been broadcast since 2000, having passed through different regional and national TV stations. The Catalan market has been particularly important since the release of the anime. The publication of the manga was relaunched with the success of the anime and had editions released in Catalan and Spanish. In 2000, the anime distributor Luk International opted for the cinematographic release of the first feature film of the franchise in 2000 (*Crayon Shin-chan: Pursuit of the Balls of Darkness*, 1997). In an unusual decision, this included also a version dubbed in Catalan for regional cinemas, which reveals the engagement of these audiences with the series.

On 29th May 2004, *Shin-chan* visited Barcelona on Japanese TV. It was episode 501 of the series, and was titled “*Ōra, Supein ryokō dazo*” or “*Hola! Hey, I’m travelling to Spain*”. The plot, according to comments posted on amateur forums, can be considered a combination of other manga stories including his trip to the island of Owai and South Korea. In fact, this process of recycling by combining several narrative elements for the creation of new plots is not uncommon in manga-to-anime adaptations (Hernandez-Perez 2017). The resulting story presents Shin-chan and his family on a visit to the city as a prize for a drawing organized by an anti-odour foot insole brand. At first, they are received by Carmen, a Spanish guide and later joined by Ushito Yoshii, an anagram of manga author Usui Yoshito who also works for the publishing company Futabasha and a secondary character in the series. Yoshii, Shin-chan and Shin-chan’s father compete

for the attention of Carmen while they visit Barcelona. During a day trip, Shin-chan gets lost and is hosted by a local family, until eventually he is found by the group.

This was not the last time the character visits Barcelona. On 11th November 2013, TV Asahi released the episode “*Supein de otakara getto dazo*” or “Hey, we found a Spanish treasure”. Unlike the first visit, in this case the story was the adaptation of a manga issue, published in 2008. The plot brings the family back to the capital, after winning (again) a contest. This time, instead of Carmen the family is received by Marc Bernabé⁵, who speaks with a Japanese regional accent from Kansai, where he spent some years working. The episode then continues with the search for Gaudi's treasure in Parc Güell, although unfortunately, this happens to be just an advertising campaign. Bernabé, who had a good relationship with Usui, explains the story of his cameo on his own blog (Bernabé 2008 & 2013).

The first discussed episode has more interest for our study, at least in terms of a “poster film”. A number of clearly recognizable tourist areas of the city are presented as part of the group's day trip, including the Columbus statue, Las Ramblas, the Sagrada Familia and Parc Güell. This is a contextualized representation since they are real spaces and (despite the limitations of the anime style) quite realistic. It is not surprising that the Sagrada Familia and Parc Güell work as focal points of this representation of Barcelona. The so-called “*Barcelona posa't guapa*” (lit. “Barcelona, get pretty”) urban restoration campaigns carried out between 1986 and 1999 were aimed at preserving and strengthening the modernist image of the city, which became the main theme for tourism discourse (Smith 2005). This representation also combines fictional spaces such as the hotel or the restaurant (“La Catalunya”).

More relevant is the representation of other intangible aspects of Spanish cultural heritage, such as the performing arts and its gastronomy. In the restaurant scene, the characters dance flamenco with Spanish guitar music. Shin-chan joins the dance carrying a rose in his mouth, although it is Carmen the Spanish woman who leads while his mother exclaims “Oh, ‘real flamenco’”. At the end of the day, the experiences portrayed by the Nohara family are similar to those of the average tourist. Like any other tourist, Hiroshi, Shin-Chan's father, comments on how good the cured ham and wine are. The representation of Spain is not so much a realistic depiction as a constructed space for

⁵ Marc Bernabé (Barcelona, 1976-) is a Japanese-Spanish and Japanese-Catalan translator and one of the main figures in Manga distribution and popularization in Spain.

tourism. This text is addressed to an audience that seeks coherence with the predefined image of a particular national brand. There are some examples of this: in the hotel room of the artist Usuto Yoshii we can see an alarm clock next to a bullfighter and a bull; and the Spanish families seem to eat paella on a daily basis. The response of the Japanese family is kind and full of curiosity. In the episode, the Nohara family speaks some words in Spanish, like "*buenas noches*" or "*adiós*", and even in Catalan. In this other official language, which is also spoken in Barcelona, Shin-chan says "*culet culet*" (lit. "little ass"), an adaptation of his catch-phrase, and qualifies the paella as モルボ (morubo), the Japanese adaptation of "*molt bo*" (lit. "very good"). Finally, aspects related to the psychology and personality of the Spanish people are reflected in the episode. Particularly the character of Carmen, who is clearly friendly and proactive in social dealings, which closely aligns with the description other studies have done on Japanese perceptions of Spanish people (Noya 2004).

Nasu: Andarushia no Natsu (2003)

Among the examples studied, this might be the case that best represents the fusion of fictional narrative with the stereotypical representation of the Spanish national image by a Japanese media product. *Nasu: Andarushia no Natsu (2003)* is an anime adapted from one of the arcs of Kuroda Iō's manga *Nasu (2000)*. Kuroda's work is a choral story in which a number of characters are linked by a common component: the eggplant (which is also the original title of this work in Japanese). Cultivation and elaboration of eggplant recipes allow a symbolic reading through different, apparently unconnected stories. Eggplant is a humble vegetable, usually presented as a side dish. It is described by one character as a thankless fruit and the result of much effort and dedication. More precisely, the stories collected in this short work offer a contrast between characters, with some choosing to sacrifice while others choose more short-term happiness and an easier life. The work was collected in only three volumes (twenty-four chapters). This is not extraordinary in comparison to other *seinen*⁶ compilations, which are typically shorter than *shōnen* series; but in this case, the series was cut due to lack of success and was cancelled before the release of the film. While it may be a risk to draw conclusions, it can be argued that the majority of its stories have the same fatalistic tone, usually in

⁶ (lit. "youth") Manga magazines addressed to male adult audiences, older than 18 years-old.

the form of unconsummated love relationships, with few exceptions of more self-conclusive slice of life comedies.

One of these stories tells us about the sacrifice of Pepe Benengeli, a young Spanish man who make sacrifices in his personal life for a long career in cycling. The story takes place in one of the stages of the ‘*Vuelta a España*’⁷ that is taking place near his town, during the same day as the wedding of his former girlfriend Carmen to Pepe’s older brother. The link here with the symbolic narrative engine of the series is the pickled eggplant recipe, so typical of the area of Almagro, Castilla-la Mancha, and also in southern Spain. Kuroda employs pages of volume two of his work to explain the recipes, and acknowledges that all his knowledge of Spain comes from Japanese books.

On the other hand, the anime offers more possibilities for exploration in relation to this research. *Nasu: Andarushia no Natsu* (2003) was produced by Madhouse and directed by Kōsaka Kitarō. The film, which is medium-length with only 47 minutes of run-time became the first anime to be officially selected for the Cannes film festival in the history of the festival⁸ (Mes and Kōsaka 2003). An amateur cyclist, Kōsaka knew how to fill the composition with large groups of characters (the so-called ‘*Pelotón*’) as it is usually shown in TV cycling spectacles. He also succeeds in time management, conveying the duration of cycling stages (usually hours) by combining it with the use of the flashback.

The portrayal of Spain and the Spanish, especially the landscapes, acquires a realistic tone in this anime. In this sense, the film is successful as a poster film due to the realism of accurate Andalusian scenery. Kōsaka’s realistic depiction, which resembles TV sporting event broadcasting, covers the landscapes located between Malaga and Córdoba. The director acknowledges how this attempt at realism was constrained by the requirements of the fictional genre,

I decided to make the image of the area slightly more spacious in the film because it would allow the viewer to focus on the action without being distracted by the landscape too much. I wanted to remain true to reality of course, but above all, I wanted to focus on the characters, so this is the only sacrifice we made with regards to capturing reality. (Mes and Kōsaka 2003)

⁷ An annual cycling race consisting of several stages. It is arguably the most important event in the world of cycling after the *Tour de France* and *Il Giro d’Italia*.

⁸ Kōsaka is a recognized figure in the anime industry, who has been linked to many important projects in the past, including some Miyazaki Hayao films (i.e. *Princess Mononoke* and *Spirited Away*), as an animation director.

The use of colour played a significant role in achieving these levels of credibility. It is, for example, a core element in the creation of fake brands, so common of this sport.⁹ Anime's visual style also contributes, through its bright and vivid palette, to recreating the warm weather common in the south of Spain.

While the representation of space is quite realistic, it is less clear that the portrayal of the characters can succeed in maintaining that level of verisimilitude. Here Kōsaka's adaptation is faithful to the manga. The choice of Spain as the setting, however, is an arbitrary fact that turns out to be the biggest advantage (and probably the greatest justification) for the subsequent anime adaptation, as it represents a desirable tourist destination. Pepe's story is one of sacrifice, with a strong inclination to nostalgia and character-driven drama, which is not unusual in the context of the manga industry. We must remember that *Nasu* is after all a *seinen*, or a manga for adults, and this sports story is just one of the many ways in which the author paints a bigger canvas.

However, there is no doubt that Spain and the Spanish are also the discursive objects. The story connects Pepe's goals to his past and in that sense, also to locations and people from his hometown. In this way, the script chooses a typical south Spanish location ('Bar Hernandez') to bring the family and friends together.

In opposition to the recreation of Spanish locations, which is quite accurate in the film, the representation of intangible heritage presents a succession of clichés of southern Spain. These ascribe a more international and recognizable form, but at the same time, they offer an inaccurate portrait. For example, it is relatively uncommon (while not rare) to eat paella in the south of Spain, which is actually an East/Mediterranean meal. Other depictions are just comic relief but may conceal the domestication of Spanish cultural signs. For example, Spanish people do not drink wine directly from the bottle. This can be an example of domestication as in the restaurants and pubs of some Asian countries (Japan, South Korea), beer can be served and drunk from large bottles. The bride and groom dancing flamenco at their wedding is also quite revealing, as it connects with the iconicity of flamenco as a main component of the image of the Spanish overseas. Other postcards are more related to the depiction of the cycling world and particularly '*La Vuelta*', offering common recycled images from these

⁹ Multiples references are made by the author of the manga, explaining which real cycling teams inspired the story. He also dedicated a couple of pages to the Spanish figure of Oscar Sevilla (1979), who worked for the Kelme-Costa Blanca team (Kelcio in the manga) in *Nasu*, volume two.

events (i.e. excited onlookers, The Devil¹⁰ of the Tour de France) in a montage with other Andalusian postcards (i.e. a *cortijo* or typical southern Spanish house, the shepherd and his sheep, etc.).

These examples are not intended to be evidence of accuracy or inaccuracy. Here, defining the Spanish culture is not the issue, but rather how genre conventions (such as those of sports TV or *seinen* anime) and *fictionality* drive the creation of images of Spain and the Spanish. In that sense, the story aspires to be an iconic film by trying to capture an image from ‘Andalusia’, and it uses depictions of intangible heritage such as gastronomy or music by presenting them as typical, or at least portrays them more frequently than they actually are used. This sense of ‘real Andalusia’ is also explicitly stated in the dialogue. As real natives, characters talk with a sense of belonging and are even protective in relation to their culture (‘Look at me, this is the right way of eating pickled eggplants’ or ‘If you are a true Andalusian cat you should dance like this’). With this, they show a weird nationalism that might be more a reflection of what Japanese people think ‘proud’ citizens would say than of authentic Spanish/Andalusian feelings.

In conclusion, a ‘Spanish national image’ results from *Andalusia no Natsu*, and this image is built through other texts. In this case, there is the clear influence of other narratives (the tourist speech) over a fictional form (anime). Its deep visual research shaped also the form of touristic film posters. The iconic film label fails due to its inherent subjectivity and its attempt to encapsulate an essentialist form of (Spanish) culture. The film cannot be considered a ‘pastiche’ due to the high level of its production and art direction which construct a coherent Spanish space. However, this film might be considered an indication of the high number of *clichés* surrounding southern Spanish culture. In that sense, in relation to representation of intangible heritage there’s a kind of anthropological pastiche).

So · Ra · No · Wo · To (*Sora no woto* 2010)

So · Ra · No · Wo · To (lit. *Sound of the Sky*) was an anime created by A-1 Pictures and Aniplex that premiered in 2010. The plot revolves around Sorami Kanata, who wants to become a cornet player and enlists in the army with this goal. The story takes place

¹⁰ Dieter "Didi" Senft is a German fan known for his performances dressed as a red devil during competitions.

in the imaginary city of Seize, where she meets Kazumiya Rio, her instructor, and the rest of the squad members.

The uniqueness of this case is in the way the creators combine a fantastic story-world with a particular location, inspired by a realistic landscape replicating the most famous spots in the city of Cuenca (Spain).¹¹ The narrative of the series points to an idealized past in a fictional fantasy genre scenario. Seize is part of a post-apocalyptic world, one of the remaining safe points amidst a background of everlasting war. This idea of 'sanctuary' is reinforced by the medieval architecture of the city as well as the plot. The story develops very slowly over thirteen episodes, which concentrate on main turning points that occur at the very end. There is a focus on the personal intimacy of its characters, in this case, the daily life of a military brass band.

The inspiration provided by the Spanish city is anything but subtle, and in fact, this was actually acknowledged by the authors. In October 2011, Cuenca's Chamber of Commerce gave Aniplex Inc./Sony Music the Honorary Award for the Promotion of Cuenca City. In response, the producer of the anime sent a recording accepting the award. In the message, the producer explained how, in March 2009, the team did a tour in the area over four days in order to locate areas around Cuenca's old city centre and Paradores de Alarcón.¹² As stated by Yokoyama (Cámara de Comercio de Cuenca, 2011):

(...)The reason why Cuenca was chosen is because of the scriptwriter; Hiroyuki Yoshino showed us a DVD that featured world architecture and we were very amazed by Cuenca's wonderful architecture: "Casas Colgadas".

The success of *So · Ra · No · Wo · To* connects with other occasions in which the media representations influences the audience directly, eliciting other forms of transmedia consumption. This phenomenon has been named "Media Pilgrimage" and has been studied in other forms of popular culture, although serial forms seem to stimulate greater emotional engagement (Crouch *et al.* 2005). Anime and manga tourism are phenomena that have already been explored, although most cases are linked to tourism to Japanese locations depicted in anime (Seaton and Yamamura 2015) or places relevant

¹¹ Interestingly, this is not the first Japanese animation inspired by Cuenca. The theatrical movie *Tales of Vesperia: The First Strike* (2009) also features backgrounds depicting the city.

¹² It is still unclear why the pseudonym "Paradores" (Spanish word for "inns", but also name of the most famous old hotel in the area, an ancient castle from the twelfth century) was used in the credits of the manga version.

to *otaku* culture, such as Akihabara, which are promoted by national and local institutions (Sabre 2016). In the case of Cuenca, tours were managed by specialized Japanese agencies that started to notice how Cuenca became more in demand as a touristic destination after the success of the series. This resulted in bringing more than 4,000 Japanese visitors to the city (an increase of 48% from 2009), following the launch of the series (Hosteltur 2012). Through the series, the image of Cuenca is framed in a fictional setting, but it is not out of context. Characters develop throughout the story in a perfectly recognisable environment that includes St. Paul’s Bridge, Bezudo Arch, Alarcón Castle, Ronda del Júcar viewpoint, and the landscape of the Julian Romero area, among other neighbourhoods. The scenes set in Cuenca are so abundant and so faithfully rendered that one could say that the series is ‘shot’ in the city¹³ as if it were live-action.

There is no space here to discuss the intentional representation or misrepresentation of Spain in the line of icon films. As far as the series is framed on the fantasy genre, we are discussing *fictionality*. Moreover, it is difficult to argue that the series promotes in any sense an image of national identity. On the contrary, here the Spanish identity is actually hidden by the iconicity of a single space, the charm of a charismatic city that connects with the aforementioned ‘poster films.’ Only these well-known spaces are recognizable as part of tangible Spanish heritage. Yet, despite not being an image of national identity, the sense of this storytelling works perfectly from a tourist perspective, similar to the way it is portrayed in poster films. Journalistic sources describe groups of Japanese tourists taking photocopies of the anime on their visits to Cuenca. There is in their performance a motivation, similar to a ‘tourist video game’, in which the aim consists of completing a list of checkpoints. *Fictionality* and engagement (similar to those of “gamification” environments) are both parts of the tourism narrative.

Conclusion

The literature review and case study have pointed to the existence of recurrent Spanish ‘national images’ and the way these images remain in Japanese transnational narratives. In some cases, the iconic portrait of well-known spaces passes to a secondary plane, making the anthropological portrayal an accessory. The clearest

¹³ Fan projects on web communities collected hundreds of photographs of the city, which were compared with screenshots of the series. See for example: (<https://infinitemirai.wordpress.com/2012/02/25/cuenca-spain-home-of-sora-no-woto/>)

example of this type of representation is given by urban and monumental spaces that coincide with images that other audiences (i.e. tourists) use to search out Spanish heritage. In the selected examples, rural spaces were much more important than urban locations. These types of studies in the future could cover in a deeper way other contemporary cases in which Spanish cities (i.e. Barcelona, Madrid, Segovia, etc.) are represented in Japanese anime.

I have also noted tendencies toward stereotyping and de-contextualization. In both processes, the iconography derived from Andalusian indigenous culture (*majismo*) plays an essential role. Finally, I pointed out the idiosyncrasies of the images of Spain and the Spanish constructed in Japanese media products. These are aspects that are intended to be shared with tourism, such as a special interest in performative cultural signs and other forms of intangible legacy. It should be emphasized, once again, that the existence of these 'national images' is not a direct result of tools and institutional strategies. The origin of these images is uncertain, although institutional agents assume some capacity. Governments, through their agencies, can feed these images or contribute to their reduction (Anholt 2013; Ahn & Wu 2015), supported by the mobility and reach of international cultural industries.

It is also necessary to remember that, in the context of Japanese cultural studies, there is a long tradition in relation to the construction of mutual images with the West and its influence in the media (Carrier 1995), and particularly anime (Miyake 2013; Deninson 2010). Traditions of Occidentalism and Orientalism should not monopolize the discourse on the representation of transnational images, but for better or worse, they have a prominent place in the understanding of these forms of mutual Otherness and exoticism.

National images of Spain in Japanese media products present an intriguing feature: for Japan, Spain is not part of the Western image as other European countries are. This may be due to historical reasons such as the delay of Spanish social and economic development in earlier periods. This may have affected the remaining 'national images'. For some experts, the term 'Otherness' is key in order to explain the mutual attraction between these countries (Gómez Aragón 2011, 159). Japan's gaze to Spain is influenced by this Otherness in cultural production but also by other parallel industries such as tourism. However, in many aspects, this image could be a generalization of other

Mediterranean countries, and other studies have indicated how similar the images of Italian and Spanish individuals are among Japanese perceptions (Noya 2004, 66).

Other works have deeply examined the similarity between different forms of fiction and tourist language that we could find in brochures and travel books (Moeran 1983; Gómez Aragón 2011). From this research, I also pointed out some cases in which fictional forms replicate Spanish ‘national images’, and it is expected that the tourist discourse shares such fictional features. In the future, studies framed in the theory of communicational genres will provide more evidence, establishing relations of familiarity or belonging among these discourses. Despite the progress that has been made in the field, it is unclear if the understanding and enjoyment of contemporary Spanish culture are constructed in a form similar to other touristic speech; that is, I question if appreciation for Spanish national identity among Japanese visitors is acquired through the vivid and performative representation of tourists’ memories or expectations. Fortunately, Spain and Japan will be valid case studies, as long as they remain appealing as tourist destinations, offering increasing evidence to the study of narrative and the construction of national images.



Fig. 1. Screenshots from *Crayon Shin-Chan*. On the top, a scene from the episode "Hola! Hey, I travel to Spain" (2008); on the right, Parc Guell as depicted in "Hey, we search for a Spanish treasure" (2013). © Futabasha, Shin-Ei Animation & TV Asahi (2008 & 2013)



Fig. 2. Screenshots from *Andalusia no Natsu* or “*Summer in Andalusia*” (2003). © Madhouse (2013)



Fig. 3. Promotional image of So · Ra · No · Wo · To (2010). © Aniplex (2010)

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Twice hypervisual: Expanding on North American and Western European critiques of the Visual via Azuma Hiroki's theory of postmodern hypervisuality

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I contend that attending to the intersections of embodiment and cultural experience is especially fruitful in considering Azuma Hiroki's postulation of hypervisuality. Putting hypervisuality into dialogue with North American and Western European work on the visual, and senses more broadly, I argue, offers a chance to see how the culturally and historically contextual privileging of sight and processes of representation coincide to help produce a modality of narrative engagement that conflates an individual's singular reading with the potentiality for such a reading's universal experience.

*While Azuma Hiroki's *Dōbutsuka suru posutomodan: otaku kara mita nihon shakai* (2001) has often been considered in Anglophone reception as a work examining a specific Japanese subculture, I turn in this article to his theory of the 'hypervisual,' and place it into relation with work on the cultural contours of the visual. Herein, I place such an idea of hypervisuality in relation work that is critical of North American and Western European cultural elevation of the visual as the most valued sense and preeminent way of knowing. Together, I hold, these bodies of work push us further towards an understanding of processes of interpretation and narrative engagement in the present.*

KEYWORDS

Hypervisuality; Media Studies; Cultural Theory; Sensory Studies; Embodiment; Consumption.

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Introduction

The conception of sight as deeply beholden to cultural and historical context (Classen 1993; Nanay 2016), along with the material reality of ocular perception and its ability to be cultivated in certain ways (Jacob and Jeannerod 2003; McLuhan 1963; Ong 1991; Soltis 1966), may be quite familiar to those acquainted with work on the embodied nature of sight in Anglo- and Francophone (Jay 1993 & 1999) academic and philosophical discourses. In short, scholars reflecting on the 'hegemony of vision' (Levin 1993) in North American and Western European¹ contexts have importantly argued that there is never a

¹ While somewhat broad, throughout the article I refer often to North American and Western European contexts. I wish to note that here, North American is meant to refer as shorthand to U.S. America and

“view from nowhere” (Fredriksson 2015, 12-13), rather, the experience of viewing must be processed through a living viewer and their consciousness (Fredriksson 2015, 13; Burnett 2004, 23-24), and via aspects of personal experience, ideology, and context (Aumont 1990 & 1997).

Coinciding with assertions that the contours of sight are inextricably intertwined with varied contexts of experience has been a body of burgeoning work on how technological advancements do not merely reorient sensory experience, but also how the adoption of technologies is determined in part by sensory hierarchies already at play in cultures. Scholars have thus begun to argue for further integrating embodiment – a conceptualisation of the interworking of the mind and body – into scholarship, in order to realise the culturally constructed nature of everyday, embodied experience, and the role of not merely the mind, but the body as well, in determining the specificities of cultural processes and social structures.

Taking impetus from pushes to understand the interface between embodiment and cultural experience, I herein place Azuma Hiroki's theory of hypervisuality into conversation with North American and Western European scholarship on the visual. Doing so, I contend, offers a chance to see how the cultural privileging of sight and processes of representation coincide to help produce a modality of narrative engagement that conflates an individual's singular reading with the potentiality for universal experience – something that occurs along the fault lines of already at-play embodied experience and cultural hierarchies of sensory experience. Reading Azuma's work in the above manner complements his departure from works focusing on narrow readings of intertextuality and narrative structure to situate these elements in relation to a (culturally and historically contextual) modality of readership and its attendant processes.

Azuma Hiroki's exploration of changes in everyday engagement with narratives and their elements is outlined in *Dōbutsuka suru posutomodan: otaku kara mita nihon shakai* (2001; hereafter *Dōbutsuka*)². In *Dōbutsuka*, Azuma charts a substantial shift in how consumers around the world are engaging with the proliferating multimedia

Canada. While Western Europe is a broad net to cast, and one may wonder why designate West instead of including the whole of Europe, myriad scholarship on ocularcentrism has examined how the roots of the modern version of this tendency arise with specific Western European (namely English, French, German, and Italian authors), whilst noting the presence of privileging the visual as far back as the ancient Greeks (see Classen 1993, for example).

² The original Japanese edition was published in 2001, followed by Korean (2006), French (2008), English (2009), and Italian (2010) translations.

products that inundate everyday life. Azuma develops a theory of how, within post-modern contexts – for Azuma, those following the 1970s and characterised by a significant rupture precipitated by reorganisations of political power, and disillusionment with various vaunted fixtures of modernity (see Azuma 2009, 7-9) – readers engage with narratives in profoundly new, and fragmented ways.

Key to Azuma’s explanation of these changes is his elaboration by way of *otaku*, perhaps best understood here as an avid fan of Japanese *anime* (animation) and *manga* (comics), but applicable to fans elsewhere as well (see Azuma 2009, 3-7; Saitō 2011, 11-19). Azuma builds upon prior commentators on *otaku*, such as Okada Toshio (1996) and Ōtsuka Eiji (1989) to situate *otaku* as a new type of consumer, as for Azuma they are not merely technology savvy and plugged into the latest trends, but they engage in a fundamentally new relationship to narratives themselves, consuming narratives in pieces. Drawing upon Ōtsuka Eiji’s theory of narrative consumption, and connectedly, Francois Lyotard’s (1979 & 1984) arguments for a shift in knowledge transmission roughly contiguous to post-modernity, Azuma argues that no longer do consumers such as the *otaku* seek out “grand narratives” which will give them ideals to live their lives by, nor even engage in Ōtsuka’s model of narrative consumption – the fervent consuming of many “small” narratives that, taken together, provide a window into a larger one.

Rather, Azuma proposes that the *otaku* represent a form of relationship to narratives gaining more purchase by the second in postmodern society, one that he says is based on affective investment in the tropes that compose Ōtsuka’s small narratives, and endless re-assembly and intertextuality. In *Dōbutsuka*, Azuma argues that consumers such as *otaku* are not drawn to a specific work but *the elements that compose it*, and that such elements are found in innumerable similar products. Yet each tropological element cannot be thought outside of a realisation, thus promoting a *hypervisual* paradox – one that we will examine subsequently in much more detail.

And while Azuma’s work has mainly been used within the Anglophone context to examine Japanese subculture, his work provides fertile ground to think through other aspects of a postmodern context. Key amongst the contributions *Dōbutsuka* can offer to numerous fields of inquiry are Azuma’s multifaceted consideration of how changes in culture and society have reconfigured everyday engagement with cultural products and

the narratives these products represent, and also how postmodernity promotes a specific modality of engaging with the visual - taken here as a realm of human sensory experience, enmeshed with the other senses and not in isolation (Howes 1991 & 2003).

Dōbutsuka and subsequent commentary on it have often used examples of richly visual projects such as anime and manga, as well as presenting numerous pieces of visual evidence for the theory contained within, such as charts and visual models. While within *Dōbutsuka* there is not a direct consideration of the material reality of visual perception, sensory experience, and embodied engagement with culture more directly, contemporaneous work suggests the fruitfulness of integrating Azuma's theory with observations on postmodern culture's sensory dimensions. Numerous contemporaries that Azuma in part responds to, namely Saitō Tamaki, Murakami Takashi, and Okada Toshio mention in different ways the role of visual attention in their theories of a post-modern cultural context and the viewing of manga and anime (Saitō 2000 & 2011, 136-144; Murakami 2000, 8-25; Okada 1996). These aforementioned authors' arguments about specific modes of visual attention for the reading of manga and popular (Japanese) visual culture as a whole, while not located in an ever-growing body of work on sensory experience and embodiment, deftly (albeit briefly in some cases) point to the ways looking is socially and culturally constructed.

Drawing upon prior work in cultural studies, the social sciences, and philosophy of sensory experience and embodiment, particularly related to vision, herein I contend that further theorising and observing the embodied nature of viewers in the postmodern context that Azuma theorises is critical for understanding concepts such as the hypervisual side-slip in an even broader context (Azuma 2009, 104-105). Thus, I argue that attending to the relationship between body and technological developments, vision and engagement with representation, make the points in *Dōbutsuka* relevant to an even larger array of research agendas, as we can approach an understanding of how the postmodern context promotes a specific engagement with narrative and images alike, one that is hypervisual in two ways; at once privileging the visual and suggesting the potential for universal experience of the subjective. In sum, by understanding the processes of reading up (Azuma 2009, 30-33) and the hypervisual side-slip as not solely textual nor metaphorical, but having a dimension that is made up of literal, tangible, embodied engagements with cultural products crucially impacted by socio-cultural changes, both the salience, importance of *Dōbutsuka's* conclusions are extended and explicitly related to work on spectatorship elsewhere.

Changes in Postmodernity, Viewing, and Contextual Sensoriums

From its outset, *Dōbutsuka* is chiefly concerned with mapping how the shift from modernity to postmodernity has produced a markedly different form of everyday engagement with narratives, and for that matter, how narratives are assembled. Central to the motivation for the present essay is that *Dōbutsuka* sees Azuma elucidate how postmodernity does not signal merely a change in the construction and ‘consumption’ of narrative, but narrative’s relationship to the visual.

Here, I find it prudent to attempt, with some degree of brevity to summarise the points in *Dōbutsuka*³, particularly in relation to their commonalities and utility to other extant criticism, most particularly, work on the visual. Central to Azuma’s arguments is that postmodernity is a context that can be characterised by a shift in the engagement with narratives, and the increasing construction of narratives by tropological elements that reference previous iterations of themselves; such elements are tied explicitly to visual or aural elements, Azuma suggests (2009, 42). Drawing on Ōtsuka Eiji’s conclusions in *Monogatari Shōhiron* (1989), Azuma contends that while there has indeed been the decline of grand narratives that Lyotard (1984) writes of, small narratives’ have not replaced grand narratives’ predominance, but rather a mode of engagement characterised by valuing tropes over narrative is now dominant. Consequently, he argues, a new process of engaging with narratives has come about, one characterised by tropological engagement with pieces of small narratives – narratives that do not provide an entry point into a larger world, but are valued for their relationship to prior depictions of that same trope.

This conception of small narratives is indebted to Ōtsuka’s discussion in *Monogatari Shōhiron*, where Ōtsuka contends that consumers are no longer interested in solely the product being bought, but a larger “grand narrative” that the small narrative offers a window into (Azuma 2009, 31; Ōtsuka 1989, 105-107). Upon observing numerous cases of Japanese subcultural consumption, Ōtsuka writes,

What is being consumed is not an individual drama or thing but the system itself that was supposedly concealed in the background. However since it’s quite impossible to sell the system (i.e., the grand narrative) itself, consumers are tricked into consuming a single cross-section of the system in the form of one episode of the drama, or a

³ Herein, I do not attempt to exhaustively chronicle Azuma’s arguments in *Dōbutsuka*, rather, I here examine those that correlate or expand upon ideas of subjective visual engagement in North American and Western European scholarship, and at the same time, suggesting the embodied nature of some central characteristics of postmodernity that *Dōbutsuka* presents.

single fragment of the system in the form of a thing. I would like to call this state of affairs “narrative consumption.” (Ōtsuka 1989, 109)

Azuma expands upon this in *Dōbutsuka*, suggesting that while the postmodern context does indeed instil a desire for narrative consumption, the reality is that there is no monolithic grand narrative that viewers can easily ‘revert’ (Azuma 2009, 30-33 & 104-106) back and forth from (the system that Ōtsuka speaks of above – entered through numerous “small” narratives). Rather, the consumption of small narratives is increasingly compulsive, and not reliant on them tying into larger grand narratives, such as ideology. Azuma thus introduces the concept of ‘database consumption’ (Azuma 2009, 53-55) as reliant upon an interest in consuming works much akin to how Ōtsuka describes narrative consumption. However, database consumption suggests there is no interest in an underlying narrative; rather, consumers are interested in a work’s tropes (Azuma 2009, 47-55). Whereas Ōtsuka’s narrative consumption captured a desire of readers to ‘consume’ the larger narrative that small narratives provided a window into, Azuma’s conceptualisation of database consumption speaks to a desire to consume and reiterate endlessly the fragments that make up small narratives, with no illusion of a narrative in the background that unites them all.

The key change that leads Azuma to depart from Ōtsuka’s conclusion is the change from what he labels a ‘tree model’ to ‘database model’ of narrative engagement. That is to say, rather than a cohesive body such as ideology determining a largely uniform engagement of work or construction thereof, he defines postmodernity by locating agency within the spectator engaging a narrative; they are the one making the meaning (Azuma 2009, 30-33). Similarly, as the consumption of narratives, and cultural products more generally, is dependent on spectators developing contextual, subjective readings, moving between a level of overarching societal discourses and the small narratives being consumed everyday becomes impossible (Azuma 2009, 30-33). Reflecting on modernity’s difference from postmodernity, Azuma notes that in modernity,

...[P]eople were able to revert back from the former [small narratives] into the latter [grand narratives]. To use the metaphors of “the visible” and “the invisible,” there were first small, visible things in modernity and behind them there was a large, invisible thing; the model of understanding of this world was to revert back from the former to the latter, by turning the invisible into visible one after another (Figure 21a). Modern transcendence is, first and foremost, such a visual movement. (Azuma 2009, 105)

Here, we find Azuma's contention that modernity cannot simply be defined as the age of the dominance of grand narratives, but rather, it is characterised by an analogous relationship between small and grand narratives, where the former offers an *entry point* into the latter.

Azuma explicitly contrasts the above with a postmodern situation,

In the database world of postmodernity, however, these two are no longer directly connected. Reading the grand nonnarrative partially creates small narratives, but numerous different small narratives can be created from the same nonnarrative, and no agency exists that determines which is superior. In other words, one can revert back from small narratives to a grand nonnarrative...Unlike in the visual, modern transcendence, one reverts from one layer to another but will never reach a stable final level of agency in the hypervisual, postmodern transcendence. (Azuma 2009, 105-106)

I would note forthrightly, although I will address this in more detail below, that such a conception of meaning making as in the hands of the spectator connects clearly to critical scholarship on visual perception and engagement.

As I have noted in the introduction, a key part of what I wish to accomplish with this piece is contributing to a preliminary theory of how, in the postmodern context, the cultural effects outlined in *Dōbutsuka* are experienced, and engaged, by embodied subjects⁴. Of course, the body in and of is not the focus in *Dōbutsuka*, rather, the work is more of an address as to how society has changed (and thus consumers engagement with its cultural products). As such, we are not dealing here with an omission, but rather, using Azuma's work as a platform to construct a more robust model of the relationship consumers have to narrative, and the co-constitutive role of the visual therein.

Integral to the ideas of *Dōbutsuka* is that technological changes such as the Internet, and computers at large, have mediated a series of changes to human engagement with narrative. For instance, *Dōbutsuka* routinely returns to a database model to describe the referential modality of narrative engagement Azuma terms 'reading-up.' Expounding upon the relationship of reading up to a database model, he writes,

...[N]o hidden grand narrative regulates all Web pages...On the internet, rather, there is distinct *double-layer structure*, wherein, on the one hand, there is an accumulation of encoded information, and, on the other hand, there are individual Web pages made in accordance with the users "reading them up." (Azuma 2009, 31)

⁴ I note that this may at times be somewhat implicit rather than explicit.

Exemplifying the prominent usage of models derived from the Web and computers, Azuma points to how a line of text in a computer can be 'read' differently by different programs, and displayed in numerous ways (2009, 98-99 & 102-104). These changes brought upon by technology, and the modes of spectatorship they enable, are fundamental to Azuma's contention that otaku subculture reflects 'animalization', or an affect-driven impulse to consume the tropes that make up small narratives. Such a mode of consumption hinges on otaku's usage of technology to sort out tropes (2009 42-47) and technology that itself promotes referential engagement through repetition (Azuma 2009, 78-83), both of which then enable and mutually inform their distinct mode of spectatorship. Summarily, technology has helped to cultivate a specific relationship to narrative in postmodernity.

Such ideas of technology as integral to cultural change are ultimately not unprecedented. For example, Marshall McLuhan (1963), in his influential *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, makes the argument that technological changes can deeply reorder not only society but also human bodily and sensory experience. To expound on McLuhan's ideas in particular, he outlines how not only can the relationship between the senses change, but the human experience of them can be altered by new technologies that promote specific usages of the senses. McLuhan's primary example is how the printing press not only prioritised the visual as a key way of knowing and observing, but also installed a textual mode of understanding and engagement with the world in Western culture. Following McLuhan, this strand of his work has been further developed as technological determinism, for instance in the work of authors such as Derrick de Kerckhove (1991 & 1995; for reviews of this body of work, see Heilbroner 1994; McNally 1986)⁵.

Returning to Azuma's contentions around how a certain view of our world, a hyper-flat one, is enabled by the flatness of the computer screen and its lining up of parallel information (2009, 102) it becomes quite easy to imagine the role of peoples' bodies and sensory perception in such a process. Namely, if authors have already contended that the television and culture in its wake have taught us to anchor our gaze to observe the whole of television (and subsequently, computer screens), rather than looking at individual aspects (McLuhan 1963; Soltis 1966, 30-36), we can apply such ideas of learned, contextual bodily engagement to how *Dōbutsuka* looks at the hyperflat.

⁵ My thanks to an anonymous peer-reviewer for suggesting I mention technological determinism explicitly.

The sensorial dimensions of narrative engagement

Pertinent to our discussion is that Azuma proposes peoples' relationships to narratives are increasingly mediated by the visual. Above I have noted how he draws upon Ōtsuka's conception of small narratives – ones that offer no overarching, life-orienting narratives, but rather, are episodic and offer glimpses in to larger worlds. For Azuma in *Dōbutsuka*, the postmodern context relies increasingly not only on viewers' subjective readings, but their understanding of elements of small narratives in relationship to each other (Azuma 2009, 38-54). More specifically, he argues that narratives are engaged with referentially and digested in pieces, right down to elements of the characters' appearance. This reality comes about, he contends, because what we traditionally conceive of as a narrative – story, setting, etc. – becomes secondary to an incredibly heightened environment of referentiality that relies on visual, aural, and affective queues, directing viewers' of any given small narrative to process its tropological elements in relation to prior iterations of them (Azuma 2009, 38-54).

I note this change in narratological engagement in large part because of how Azuma defines a new form of reading, largely contiguous with a move to postmodernity, as largely reliant on sensory queues that viewers must engage with, and use to build their own understandings of the work; such a conception deeply echoes ideas of how spectators are always engaged in subjective interpretations of images, reliant on other factors such as context (Aumont 1997, 2). But, *Dōbutsuka's* theory goes a bit further than aforementioned work, as Azuma suggests what has typically been true for images is now becoming true for *narratives*.

When we consider that the interrelationship between the senses, the cultural valuation of them, and even the human experience of sensory data, is subject to change, the changes in narrative engagement outlined in *Dōbutsuka* become more concrete, and more applicable to everyday life. Specifically, if we take the computer and its screen, the inundation of everyday life with images, as helping to cultivate a distinctly embodied form of spectatorship, *Dōbutsuka's* more abstract discussion of changes in engagement with narrative and images, that is anchored only in broad observations of a specific subculture, becomes understandable in part by recognising that *embodied* consumers are the ones who are having their relationship to stories and visuals alike reconfigured.

Ultimately, the analysis of postmodern engagement with narrative that *Dōbutsuka* contains is expressly important and relevant beyond subcultural studies as it illuminates a *process* of consumption and calls into question an enterprise of analysing texts in and of themselves due equally to the contours of their construction and consumption. One can find wide import in *Dōbutsuka's* conclusions due to the delineation of how viewers create the meaning of small narratives in fragments, always already in reference to tropes' manifestations elsewhere; in short, reading small narratives in isolation will prove an address of fleeting meaning, specific to a singular reading only. This is due equally to works being assembled with tropological elements first, and then the story as a sort of connect-the-dots filler, and also that each work cannot be taken apart from others. In this way, a sort of genealogy of tropes and excavation of processes of reading-up could be more illuminating in studying postmodern works.

What I also find key to note here is that the engagement with narratives which Azuma outlines as characteristic of postmodernity calls to mind a sort of frontal, textual, rationalcentric spectator that U.S. American, Canadian, French, and German authors have written of – and its pitfalls. That is, in *Dōbutsuka* we are given an outline of a modality of engaging with narrative that tends to extol shared experience whilst the spectator is located in a context marked by the impossibility of such shared experiences. Similarly, North American and Western European scholars of visual culture have continually pointed to a widespread cultural impetus to treat the visual as holding meaning within itself, as well as retaining possibility for a monolithic experience thereof, and the actual impossibility of this (Buck-Morss 1996; Burnett 2004, 23-24; Fredriksson 2015). Similarly, such a conclusion has deep implications for the analysis of 'texts' (many of which would fall under the umbrella of small narratives); per *Dōbutsuka*, given the referential, subjective nature of not only reading/spectatorship in the postmodern context, but of the composition of small narratives, an approach to analysing culture that relies on texts clearly demarcated from each other is decidedly outmoded. As I see these points and the contentions around them quite important and enriching for discussions more widespread in American and European academic literature, I wish to elaborate on this a bit more.

The relationship of the Visual and Narrative

A significant part of *Dōbutsuka's* pertinence to, and intersection of, discussions elsewhere is the relationship between the visual and narrative that Azuma sketches out.

Namely, Azuma argues that visual stimuli reference various ‘databases’ of tropes, and that spectators’ experience of tropological assemblies is always a subjective one (Azuma 2009, 102-106); while many spectators may have similar ideas, the act of viewing a postmodern multimedia project does not permit some insight into a universal grand narrative, but rather, provides the ground for a subjective ‘reading up.’ As such, we see a commonality emerge in how Azuma posits the visual as referential and the grounds for always already subjective, personalised engagement, and how North American and Western European scholars have suggested the visual can never be universally experienced, rather it is always about spectators’ mediated relationships to images (Burnett 2004; Fredriksson 2015; Soltis 1966, 30-36).

Azuma repeatedly notes how the visual and narratological tropes that comprise postmodern multimedia projects (Azuma 2009, 38-47 & 98-106), and thus viewers’ affective engagement with cultural products, increasingly take on a deeply subconscious, perhaps preobjective, tilt; that before viewers can think consciously of their relationship to tropes on display, they are processing them referentially in relation to other instances of the same trope (Azuma 2009, 60-62). This interplay of the context of viewing, the medium of the image (whether manga, television, figurine, etc.), personal experience, and ideology at the level of the (embodied) viewer intersects North American and Western European discussions of how the visual is never transmitting information directly to spectators, rather, providing visual stimuli that are interpreted by a confluence of factors (Aumont 1997; Burnett 2004). Yet, the conceptualisation of reading up narratives and images as not just an embodied, subjective encounter, but a deeply affective one (Azuma 2009, 74-79) and subjected to a specific mode of referentiality and intertextuality in the digital age further builds on discussions of spectatorship I have referenced above.

Taking the above similarities and changes in mind, I want to move in the next section towards analysing and expanding upon what is cast as the ‘hypervisual’ in *Dōbutsuka*, and also, North American and Western European work on visual culture. Specifically, given the intersection of numerous points in *Dōbutsuka* with ideas of how sensory experience and processing of information are variable with regards to sociocultural and temporal context, what does the changing engagement of spectators’ signal?

Hypervisual, Two Ways

Thus far I have attempted to elucidate how the postulations of changing engagement in *Dōbutsuka* bears much in mind with theory from outside of the Japanese (subcultural) context in attempt to extend further relevance to the points in *Dōbutsuka* beyond subcultural studies. I have also noted how there is a marked relevance in Azuma's arguments of an increasing move towards tropological construction of narratives, once again, echoed in work commenting on other contexts. Namely, postmodernity sees not only a decline in grand narratives, but a move towards the hyper-consumption of what he terms small narratives, and the underlying, unstated cultural assumption that the meaning viewers take from narratives can be shared.

This final point underlines what is cast as 'hypervisual' in *Dōbutsuka*. While Azuma does not outline the hypervisual at great length in *Dōbutsuka*, its capacity to explain myriad parts of the processes and changes wrought by changes characterised by postmodernity, and also its promise outside of the analysis of otaku culture, is significant. To understand the definition of 'hypervisual' offered in *Dōbutsuka*, it is helpful to return first to the idea of a 'hyperflat' context. Such a context, as outlined above, collapses difference between different narratives and suggests the connectivity of different works through recurrent tropes, all the while promoting a certain accessibility to tropes, and encouraging subjective modes of readership; or in other words, consumers are drawn to specific tropes embedded in small narratives and encouraged to read them in relation to those tropes' realisations in other small narratives. However, as noted above and also by Azuma, viewing images is always a subjective experience, yet the differences between subjective viewings is flattened by a hyperflat context and a set of technologies that suggest the possibility of transcendence, or the ability to easily share the totality of one's subjective experience with others – but as an objective one (Azuma 2009, 104-105).

In reference to the idea of tropes that are animated in relation to prior iterations, Azuma suggests that the tropes realised anew by subjective readings can be seen as the invisible, inner-layer of a database, and the subjective, agential readings as the visible "outer surface layer" (2009, 30-33). On the paradox of people wanting to share their subjective experiences as objective, drawn to the idea of universal and decontextualised ideals of tropes, Azuma notes,

Furthermore, such a hyperflat world provokes a paradox, in which one cannot help pursuing the invisible *precisely because* the invisible is turned into the visible and lined up on the same plane one after another. (Azuma 2009, 104)

To expound, as one pursues some sort of objective, universal version of a trope, the minute one articulates it, it becomes yet another subjective, contextual representation, and thus, the grounds for a different person to conduct a subjective, contextual reading-up. Azuma labels such a phenomenon as a ‘side-slip’ (2009, 104), which closely informs the hypervisual, or the “excessively visible.” (Azuma 2009, 105).

I use the term [hypervisual] to mean to be “excessively visible,” pointing to the quagmire in which one tries to turn the invisible into the visible endlessly and ceaselessly...This trying without success to go back from the visibles (small narratives, i.e., simulacra) to the invisible (the grand nonnarrative, i.e., database) and, instead, slipping sideways at the level of small narratives is the structure of misfire that I call “hypervisuality.” (Azuma 2009, 105)

The hypervisual, Azuma presents, is thus the ‘structure’ (2009, 105) of attempting to represent referential tropes discussed above, yet in the attempt to construct a monolithic, universal experience for other spectators, one only creates the ground for other divergent readings.

The conceptualisation of the hypervisual side-slip as a distinct problem of the post-modern context, when coupled and set into a mutually dialoguing relationship with perspectives on embodied experience, offers a particularly trenchant insight into post-modern engagement with images and narrative, as well as their myriad intersections. Hypervisuality, as I take it here, is a culturally and historically contextual structure of engaging with narrative by way of tropological fragments, underwritten by a cultural sense of individual readings as able to be universalised. In *Dōbutsuka*, the outlining of the hypervisual read-up we are given is one of a process that is determined by the deluge of information in the digital age, the flattening, and erasure of distinction between original and derivative works, and spectators’ treatment of images as inherently beholden to their subjective experiences thereof. As such, hypervisuality in *Dōbutsuka* primarily structures a mode of spectatorship: a process of treating tropological fragments of small narratives as reproducible in their exactness, but always already the result of a subjective reading-up, and their further representation always the ground for further drift from the initial premise.

However, I would like to propose treating hypervisuality as both a structure and a context, through bringing together two complementary and supplementary ways: both in the manner that David Howes (1991 & 2003) suggests of a cultural context that privileges the visual sense over all others, affording it a large degree of objectivity as well as a (or perhaps, *the*) foundational role in determining knowledge (Classen 1993, 6; Fredrikkson 2015, 86-89; Howes 2003, xii-xiii; van Ede 2009, 62-63), and in Azuma's sense of a specific modality of engaging with narrative and images (2009, 104-106).

The paramount status afforded to the visual in North American and Western European cultures has constructed the visual as a central way of not simply knowing, but *knowing objectively*. Historian Constance Classen (1993) describes the objective status often afforded to the visual, remarking that,

...[A]n emphasis on visual metaphors for intellectual functions, such as one finds in scholarly writing, for example, has to do in part with a desire to have or convey a certain detachment from the subject under consideration: to be objective. (Classen 1993, 58)

Classen continues to note that a means of knowing predicated on the visual promises a certain *accessibility* of objects being observed through the adoption of a top-down, objectifying view. Such a mode of spectatorship is in numerous ways analogous to Azuma's contentions of the hypervisual as promising a transcendence that in the end escapes consumers.

While North American and Western European scholarship on the visual may seem markedly separate from Azuma, if we turn to the discussion of the hypervisual in *Dōbutsuka*, the case for expanding upon both discussions is easily discernible. Azuma's defining of the hypervisual as an attempt to retain control over meaning, to construct a stable representation viewable by others, and move seamlessly between the levels of consumable cultural products and ideologies – all items that Azuma suggests are not possible in the postmodern, hyperflat context – recalls myriad criticisms of the treatment of the visual in North American and Western European modernity.

To draw this out further, the definition of the hypervisual pursuit offered in *Dōbutsuka* undoubtedly enriches one that is used by Howes (1991) and other theorists commenting on what is also termed an ocularcentrist (Levin 1993; Jay 1993 & 1999) context. Namely, Azuma's contribution to discussing (visual) culture in a context beset by the Internet and inundated by images is the illumination of a specific process that closely aligns with macro-

theorisation and criticism of North American and Western European sensoriums that have installed vision as the most privileged sense. Azuma notably suggests that a key trait of the hyperflat context is that controlling meaning appears possible to consumers and producers alike, yet, remains an impossibility: the foundation underlying the hypervisual pursuit.

The importance of the Hypervisual Paradox in larger context

Ultimately, the labelling of such a pursuit as hypervisual in *Dōbutsuka* may be disconnected from critical discourse on visual culture in North America and Western Europe, but it can certainly help to enrich this discourse in several ways. To this point, *Dōbutsuka* intersects and expounds upon the usage of hypervisual in a sense that alludes to the place of the visual in a hierarchy; the nature of the hypervisual in *Dōbutsuka* is not merely a context, but an outlook on how consumers can interact with visuals and narratives alike, and the control they have over them. Further, *Dōbutsuka* presents the hypervisual pursuit as one that seeks recovery of that which is cast as authentic and true, laying just behind the image, waiting to be recovered and wielded – except that it is always already simulacra, another subjective representation that will be there. This criticism of seeking what is cast as transcendently true, or perhaps what has elsewhere been scrutinised as the ‘objective,’ bears much similarity to critical scholarship on North American and Western European treatment of the visual. On this point, Azuma writes,

...[W]hen we write a text ourselves, the dominant approach is to think of it as pouring meaning into concrete strings of text – in other words, “turning the invisible into the visible. (Azuma 2009, 98)

Following this, he proceeds to cast doubt on such an idea, suggesting that the postmodern context is one characterised by contours of ‘hyperflatness,’ discussed above (Azuma 2009, 102-104). Additionally, Azuma argues that in a world dominated by computers, beliefs that there is one true meaning to a string of text is in error; whereas the printed media previously presented readers with ink on paper in a singular form, the digital age presents an array of programs and views for singular strings of text, each displaying it differently (2009, 98-104). In short, the postmodern, hyperflat context renders all digitised lines of text polysemic and multivalent without alternative; such a radical shift in everyday engagement with information helps to constitute the radical disjuncture *Dōbutsuka* seeks to address.

Yet, bearing this in mind, *Dōbutsuka* poses a paradox: Azuma contends the postmodern age is characterised by the lack of any transcendental, universal meaning behind subjective moments of reading up, yet, there is a marked impulse for consumers to share their subjective experiences as objective. Such a paradox can perhaps be reconciled to earlier suggestions that sensoriums, or culturally and historically specific relationships between the senses instituted by and embodied via a variety of factors, reflect deeply held cultural values (Geurts 2002, 10). Further, we have already discussed how changes instituted by technology can promote specific modalities of engagement. In this way, I want to suggest that the hypervisual pushes us towards viewing in a certain way, and with a certain relationship to meaning; namely, one that sees meaning as inherent, and transmittable, rather than all meaning being constructed by the spectator. Further, the cultural value placed on narratives existing behind products that Azuma outlines – the idea of some underlying meaning – informs the ideas that enable and push spectators towards hypervisual movement. While the hypervisual may be deeply paradoxical due to the incongruence between its treatment of images and the actual realities of spectatorship, it emerges as a reflection of the paramount values of the postmodern, digital age; both an emphasis on consumption, and a carry over of the modernist ideal of transcendence.

As such, starting from the understanding of the hypervisual as it is treated in *Dōbutsuka*, and putting it into conversation with critical scholarship on the visual in North American and Western European contexts, there is a sense that what could be referred to as hypervisuality is the interplay between various factors such as context, ideology, and individual experience. To expound on this, hypervisuality is simultaneously informed by cultural and economic logics around consumption and spectatorship, and tempered by the increasing proliferation of different, subjective readings (themselves subject to individuals' unique experiences). Beyond the utility of capturing such a range of meaning with one word, taking hypervisuality thusly promotes a specific understanding of interconnection, spillover, and crossover between the above bodies of work.

Sketching the conditions of the Hypervisual

To elaborate on what provides hypervisuality its conditions, I want to momentarily pivot and reflect on the contextual nature of the postmodern, as well as address the compatibility between the conclusions of *Dōbutsuka* and North American and Western European scholarship. First, pulling together numerous strands from within *Dōbutsuka*, we are

given a multi-pronged set of conditions that produces hypervisuality: specific realities of consumerism, new technologies for engaging cultural products, and the attendant reorganisation of daily life. As such, Azuma's points cannot necessarily be marked as solely pertinent to the Japanese context; rather, he explicitly notes the postmodern context as global to a large degree. Key to this essay has been outlining the relation of Azuma's points to critical North American and Western European scholarship on vision, suggesting implications of taking the two together. Yet, much of the latter is explicitly addressed to what is cast as its own cultural milieu – a critique of the privileging of the visual as internal cultural critique. It must of course be said that there will be variations in the cultural treatment of the visual in Japan, even if we accept postmodernity as conceptual model able to be exported beyond “Western” contexts. This having been noted, to return to the rather globalised conditions that Azuma posits as giving rise to hypervisuality, they dovetail with critical scholarship on the visual I have outlined. Whereas the latter suggests the need to locate criticism of what is cast as ocularcentrism or hypervisuality in a bounded “Western” (perceivably an analogue for a large swathe of North America and Western Europe), the value of adopting aspects of Azuma's theory is the emergence of a theory applicable more broadly. In sum, I want to be clear that I am not suggesting the above bodies of work are even roughly contiguous with each other, but instead, enrich each other quite profoundly. Noting this, it likewise cannot be taken for granted that hypervisuality is produced through certain conditions, that while largely present across the globe, cannot be taken as universal nor equally experienced.

But to return to *Dōbutsuka* and Azuma's conclusions more directly, taking the hypervisual side-slip as embodied within *a certain* viewer whenever it occurs, allows for an understanding not solely of cause (ideology and context) but also effect. If we treat the hypervisual engagement as a process occurring through the viewer's body (ocular perception, attention, and processing) and conscious, as well as subconscious, thought, we can understand that the viewer themselves will have a specific relationship to images and narratives. We can understand as well that not only are there processes of consumption and construction of narrative that are brought about by changes in postmodernity, but the cultivation of specific ways of using aural and visual senses to experience the tropes Azuma writes of.

This notion of embodied spectatorship is particularly key in understanding hyper-visual spectatorship as a cultural process. *Dōbutsuka* extensively elaborates on narratives, and how they are tropologically assembled in hyperflat contexts. Similarly, the elements of narratives themselves – tropes – are always present as reference. They stand in for, and are only legible through, every other alien-girl-with-green-hair-and-a-cowlick (Azuma 2009, 60-62). Taking the hypervisual as melding together aspects of context, ideology, and process sees the hypervisual understood as instituting, through its accompanying discourses, simulacrum, and technologies, a relationship between viewers and narratives that moves from an interest in whole narratives to merely pieces of them. From a change of consumers previously caring what has given rise to the narrative and being able to access this themselves, but now in the hypervisual environment, being interested in controlling specific pieces of the narrative and taking it as harbouring not only meaning, but potentiality for a shared, perhaps monolithic experience. This pursuit of a shared experience is immediately reminiscent of criticisms of North American and Western European holdings of the visual as context-free (Fredriksson 2015), objective (Classen 1993; Howes 2003), and stable, with inherent meaning (Bucks-Morss 1996). Azuma of course warns that trusting the visual as communicating a singular experience to different viewers is always a misleading enterprise, as nothing in the hyperflat world is able to be universally experienced (nor is it universally true, for that matter). However, the hypervisual context treats narrative and images alike in this manner. Here, I would emphasise that Azuma's identification of the hypervisual as a distinct modality of engagement with narrative as well as encompassing context, is a crucial supplement and expansion upon other critiques of the visual.

When observing the theses of prior scholars critical of the privileged place of the visual in North American and Western European contexts, and how such sensoriums and contemporaneous ideologies have tended to privilege textuality specifically (McLuhan 1963; Stoller 1997, xv-xvi & 5-6), wedding Azuma's usage of hypervisual with that of other authors appears as a critically important elaboration to further understand the conditions of the visual in a postmodern context. Namely, the move from modernity to postmodernity could be seen as characterised by a preference for textuality as well as the hierarchisation of vision, to a postmodern context that advances a conceptualisation of the subjectively experienced as able to be universalised with the referential at times treated as objective; or in short, a hypervisual pursuit and context.

Conclusion

While *Dōbutsuka* draws the majority of its examples from anime and manga projects, Azuma's theory contained therein has implications that stretch far beyond subcultural analysis and criticism. While writing apart from (at least via any detectable, traceable pathway of citations) a body of largely English, French, and German scholarship on the place of the visual in U.S. American and Western European, and increasingly certain 'globalised,' contexts, he cuts directly to a key contention of such scholarship. Namely, there is an unspoken, but firmly established, tendency to treat visuals as holding meaning within themselves and a potentiality for shared experience. Yet, whereas other scholars have merely ended with such a proof, Azuma goes further to sketch its failing out (the hypervisual side-slip) and argue that it is becoming a more and more salient part of everyday engagement with cultural products.

Taking the points in *Dōbutsuka* as corollary to aforementioned work on the visual expands it in numerous ways. Most keenly as I have tackled in the prior section, it allows us to understand that not only is there a tendency towards taking meaning as embedded in images and thus, compelling us to treat them as able to be universally experienced, but that a text-oriented culture in the wake of postmodernity moves towards treating narrative not only as able to be disassembled, but controllable, and 'hyperflat[tened]'.

Understanding 'hypervisual' as denoting the interplay of context, ideology, and embodied subjective experience goes beyond mere utility, but also offers an understanding of a postmodern relationship between consumers and cultural products that fall under the heading of small narratives. These small narratives are increasingly outside of what has been treated to this point as a text – for instance, Ōtsuka's work that Azuma extensively draws on intricately analyses Japanese children's experience of Bikkuriman chocolates and their trading cards.

Here, there is a sort of challenge that emanates from putting Azuma's thoughts into conversation with U.S. American, French, and German criticism of the hypervisual. Critical work on vision has long held that viewing images is always already a subjective, contextualised experience dependent on the viewer; no meaning is ever given, only visual stimuli. As such, myriad authors (for example Burnett 2004; Fredriksson 2015) have pointed to human engagement with images as one defined by creativity, and one depending on viewer's drawing on prior experience, ideologies they have been exposed to, and elements of context from the medium of expression to building the image

is viewed in. When one recalls Ōtsuka's example of the children assembling a cohesive story of the Bikkuriman universe via fragments – the trading cards packaged with the chocolates – as Azuma suggests, they only offer a mere glimpse into the universe, prompting the children to subjectively fill in the blanks; each going home with a different experience of the Bikkuriman grand nonnarrative, or assemblage of tropes.

In this way, we can see from a more embodied perspective how the changes in society via myriad phenomena and a hypervisual context, have led in the direction of what Azuma (2011 & 2014) responds to in his more recent work, as have increasingly myriad other critics and social theorists – a fragmentation of perspectives amidst a rapidly proliferating sea of information. Azuma's Baudrillardian take on postmodern society, one beset by a mass proliferation of copies without an original (i.e. Baudrillard 1993), is both buttressed and made more multifaceted by the attention to the individual within *Dōbutsuka*.

I would close by suggesting that one of the most important results of bringing these two definitions of the hypervisual together is not merely an enriched, cross-cultural theorisation of visual culture, but a furthering of examinations of the North American and Western European tendency to view the visual as objective and rational, and to engage with the visual along the lines of textuality. While prior authors have most certainly contended that there are numerous pitfalls to taking photographs and films as objective or divorced from subjective choices and readings, the value of building a corollary to such theory with *Dōbutsuka* is that narratives in a postmodern context are likewise beholden to the same rationalcentric impulse that moves in search of the objective, and places a cultural premium on it. In short, threading together both strands of work on the hypervisual fleshes out even further a sense of how the postmodern everyday promotes specific relations to information, and continues a long-standing cultural, and now globalising, valuing of objectivity and rationality; something so thoroughly indicted by scholarship to this point.

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Interpreting/subverting the database: Character-conveyed narrative in Japanese visual novel PC games

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Japanese visual novel games, an under-researched game genre whose main feature is character-driven prose storylines in light of existing scholarship on characters and manga/anime aesthetics (Azuma 2007 & 2009; Galbraith 2009 & 2011; Nozawa 2013; Kacsuk 2016). It offers a brief overview of the visual novel game genre as a game genre where the presence of characters constituted by what Azuma (2007; 2009) defined as 'database elements', character building blocks which, by virtue of their commonality within fan culture, constitute each an access point and an expression of the wider fan culture as a whole. In turn, fans develop enthusiastic reactions to these fantasy elements, the so-called moe phenomenon (Galbraith 2009). Moe is an open-ended phenomenon which runs as the basis for the development of emphatic bonds with characters within visual novels.

Examining visual novel games under the framework provided by Espen Aarseth (2012) for the analysis of narrative within games, characters' constitutive database elements are examined, exploring them as being present at both the representational level and, due to the open-ended nature of the bond of empathy developed between the character and the player, the simulation level. The constant presence of database element-constituted characters on the screen makes visual novels' narrations dependent on characters, whose database elements are each an open window through which the setting and narration of the game is conveyed to the player through character identity.

This process is demonstrated through the examination of Sokō Akki Muramasa (Nitroplus 2009), a visual novel game whose various storylines turn the player's expected consumption of characters against them, and by doing so reinforce both the character's identity and the importance of the game's narration.

KEYWORDS

Visual Novel; Sōkō Akki Muramasa; Game Studies; Database Consumption; Moe.

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Introduction

Within the Japanese video game market, games targeted towards an exclusively mature audience have seldom been approached within Japanese studies, and among these, so-called visual novels are peculiar because, in spite of their classification as erotic games with subsequent featuring of pornographic scenes, their main appeal is not pornography, but rather a developed textual narrative which the player reads like a novel, hence the genre's name.

Featuring limited interaction, these games develop their characters in a way that is coherent with character dynamics found within Japanese anime and manga, with a huge emphasis on endearing the player towards the girl. However, the simple generation of endearing is not the sole appeal provided by visual novel games, which often feature articulated narratives with a message to convey. Furthermore, the visual element, character representations, is developed according to what cultural critic Azuma Hiroki (2007; 2009) has called the 'character database'. By virtue of their constant presence on the screen and the pivotal role female characters play in how the player is supposed to make sense of the narrative, approaching visual novels and how, in turn, the characters are influenced by the narrative, means analysing these games requires a double approach to the game's narrative and limited interactive elements.

Within this paper I'm going to showcase a Japanese visual novel game, *Sokō Akki Muramasa* (Nitroplus 2009), and place particular attention in how female characters become the focus of the player's reading of the game's underlying narrative and themes and how, through the characters, the game's depiction of a fictionalised, exceptional Japan and a fictionalised and monster-ified (Miyake 2015) West is depicted and shown to the players.

First, I will make a brief outline of visual novels as a game genre, what are the peculiarities of their framework of interaction and consumption of content and how this influences the narrative which is transmitted through the characters. Subsequently I will outline the peculiarities of *Sokō Akki Muramasa* against the wider genre of visual novels and how the peculiarities of the game influence how the game's themes are showcased to the player. Finally, I will analyse each of *Sokō Akki Muramasa's* female characters in their respective storylines and how the design of characters according to the character database is employed within the characters' storylines to advance the game's wider narrative.

A brief outline of Visual Novels

Japanese visual novel games are interactive software characterised by the reliance on text and content over interactivity: the player is limited to reading text on screen while enjoying character art and voices depicting the scenes being described within the text (see figure 1). Narration is usually in the first person, and the protagonist is generally described in very vague terms for player identification purposes. These

games have been identified by Patrick Galbraith as interactive visual romance novels (Galbraith 2009a, np) and subsequently as games that focus on interaction with beautiful girls (2011, np). He further elaborates the description of these games:

The world is seen through the playable character's eyes, a male who rarely appears on screen. Backgrounds are static and change when he changes locations; they are often recycled. Onscreen text describes the place and situation. When the playable character encounters a girl, she appears on screen; she has a unique design (exaggerated hair style, costume, personality) to distinguish her from other female characters. (Galbraith 2011, np)

The issue of collocating these games within the wider mediascape of Japanese pop culture has also been addressed differently, with Taylor (2007) collocating them in the same category of anime and manga due to the commonality of languages, to the point that she defined them as interactive anime/manga with erotic content (Taylor 2007, 198).



Fig. 1. Example of standard visual novel gameplay. Image is ©Key 2004

Azuma Hiroki (2009), on the contrary, argues that visual novels are distinct from anime/manga due to their metanarrative properties: the player can replay the game and choose different options, opening up new narrative possibilities (Azuma, Saitō and Kotani, 216). What Azuma concedes in the commonality of visual novel games with

anime/manga is that they both are passive and share the same visual aesthetics (Azuma 2009).

As products of written prose, Azuma argues that visual novels, as fiction which is supported by what he calls the character database, an ensemble of items which are employed in the design of characters. Characters created in this way do not represent reality, but rather fiction. In other words, the mechanism by which reality is represented does not reflect actual reality anymore, but rather reflects reality as represented by fiction, in this case anime/manga-based character fiction, in what is a departure from the naturalism, representing nature as it works in reality (Azuma 2007).

To this end, Zoltan Kacsuk (2016) further argued that, in order to properly understand and consume works which employ this database, a literacy in the items that compose this database, the understanding of its invoked codes is necessary (Kacsuk 2016, 277).

But, it's necessary to ask, what composes this database which has been referenced above? Azuma (2009) has argued that postmodern otaku (fan) culture is structured like a database, a great unordered ensemble of items which connect to fan culture as a whole. Fans feel attachment to characters rather than overarching narratives. More precisely, Azuma argues that fans feel attachment at the level of the elements present in the characters themselves, rather than characters in their distinctive unicity. These elements can be visual (hairstyles, glasses, clothes etc.), related to the demeanour of character (*tsundere*, *kuudere*, *yandere*, *dere*, etc.),¹ but are in no way limited to certain categories.² As long as the element is employed in the creation of a character and obtains enough success to be iterated, anything can become an item within the character database.

The character database contains all these elements, each of which is capable of engendering a specific kind of attachment within the audience, the phenomenon known as *moe*. *Moe* is a feeling of enthusiasm that is felt towards imaginary characters, and has been observed since the 70s (Sasakibara 2004, 27, 28), with the current word

1 The so-called *-dere* demeanours all involve a duality in the behaviour of the character, with a factor contrasting her affection. It can be hostility (*tsundere*), coldness (*kuudere*), exaggerated sweetness (*dere*) or possessive homicidal psychopathy (*yandere*).

2 It needs to be noted that, while the examples provided in this paper are related to female characters, female fans have also been described as feeling attachment towards characters (cf. Galbraith 2009b, np) and that visual novels directed towards female fans (*otome* games), similar patterns of recurring character constitutive elements can be observed in male characters.

taking form over internet boards by conflating the meaning for two homophone *moe* words (sprout, 萌え and burn, 燃え) and using it to describe the euphoric response to fictional characters (Galbraith 2009b, np). He elaborates the concept further in his discussion of the phenomenon:

Moe is affect in response to fantasy forms that emerged from information-consumer culture in Japan in the late stages of capitalism. Otaku scholar Okada Toshio states that moe is most strongly felt among 'third-generation otaku,' or Japanese born in the 1980s who watched Neon Genesis Evangelion in middle school and grew up amid a wealth of anime, manga, games and character merchandise following the seminal anime series. As Okada sees it, 'There is a strong tendency among this generation of otaku to see otaku hobbies as a form of "pure sanctuary"' (Okada 2008: 78). The use of 'pure' here should not be overlooked. The period of advanced economic development and material affluence from the 1960s to the 1970s was also the time when anime, manga, game and character merchandisers in Japan promoted extreme consumption among youth. (Galbraith 2009b, np)

Visual novels are particularly linked to the phenomenon of *moe*/character attachment because the characters within visual novels are almost constantly on the screen and depicted in a series of idealised poses/demeanours which serve to communicate the character's general state of mind.

These poses are not made with a particular scene in mind, and as highlighted by Galbraith (2011, np), these 2D images, also known as *tachi-e* (standing images) or *bust shots*, are re-used through the game and linked to a particular character's state of mind, changing as the character shifts from one state to another.

The composition of these 2D character images, full body illustrations, with the main differences situated in the representation of the head makes these images very reminiscent of character model sheets employed in the production of animated series (see figure 2).

Character model sheets, known in Japan as *settei*, represent the characters in various key poses and expressions, and are intended to provide a reference which "possesses the maximum expressivity with the least number of tracts" to animators as they draw the character as part of production (Vitagliano 2005, 267).



Image ©Studio Khara 2012



Image ©Nitroplus 2009

Fig. 2. Comparison between anime *settei* and visual novels' bust shots. Note the focus on providing an instant impression of the character in both.

The similarity cannot be overlooked, because both *settei* and bust shots fulfil a similar purpose: they provide a bedrock upon which the character can be expressed, either as part of animation production or with the imaginative power of a visual novel

player reading through the text. Database elements thus become a fixed point from which imagination can iterate and develop the character.

Just like the animator uses *settei* as a reference to draw characters in a certain situation, visual novel players can employ bust shots as the foundation to place the character into the situation described by the text, connecting the dots between the initial set of database elements and the situation described in the prose text.

The first-person narrative, by inviting identification with the visual novel's main character, is arguably conducive to the development of attachment towards the other characters as the protagonist (and the player with him) and the game's romanceable heroines interact and develop bonds and relationships.

These fictional relationships, which in the end become physically and emotionally intimate can be stretched over games with up to thirty-fifty hours of gameplay, making visual novel games particularly conducive to long play sessions, making it particularly conducive to be played in the aforementioned state of 'pure sanctuary', a space identified with one's room, which is to be filled with media and merchandise of a soothing nature, all to preserve one's identity from society (Okada 2008, 87-88).

Furthermore, the genre has its historical roots in the home computer market and amateur circles dedicated to computer programming (Picard 2013, np), placing visual novels in a particular intermediate layer between mainstream consumption and production, as the industry is not subjected to the lengthy creative and supervision processes of mainstream media conglomerates such as Kōdansha or Shueisha.

Galbraith's (2011) discussion of *bishōjo* games, a more generic umbrella which conflates visual novels with every other game featuring interactions with database-constituted characters, presents a very particular Nintendo DS game, *Love Plus* (Konami 2007) as the paper's case study, which is described with the usage of Anne Allison's (2006) concept of techno-intimacy, which refers to the bonds that are engendered as part of games that require the care of a virtual pet, which Allison exemplifies in her examination of the Tamagotchi device and is based on the continual enforced performing of menial tasks (such as feeding and cleaning the virtual pet, lest the pet becomes unhappy, ill or even die). *Love Plus* combines elements of visual novels with virtual pet games by first having the player work towards conquering the affection of one of three possible characters through progressive building and management of five possible characteristic scores, and then turns into an open ended experience,

placing the girl in the context of a virtual pet. The player can bring the girl with them and use the DS' camera to place the girl in a real context. The framework of interactivity in which the player is placed does not describe what happens within visual novels, although the absence of any overarching narratives moving the characters and their design via database elements echoes the claim that character takes precedence over the wider narrative (Azuma 2009), and the latter was no longer the target of engagement between fans subscribing to the character database and the media products they consumed.

A good example is the development of *To Heart's* (1997), the final game in the Visual Novel Series by software house Leaf. These four games can be considered the first visual novels, not only for the name, but above all, for the fact that the game's ten romanceable heroines were outlined and designed basing themselves on the data-set (database) of *moe* elements before development of any narrative could begin; the narrative exists because scenario writer Takahashi wanted to illustrate the characters (Tinami 2000: np).

Further reiterating the start of a shift to consumption of *moe* elements over narrative, the game's multiple storylines were crafted around the various heroines after their key traits and themes had been designed, setting the model for later visual novel titles' focus on characters and not on narrative, or, in the case of more articulated narrative games, to present the game's narrative through database elements within the character themselves.

However, this does not explain why visual novel games with articulated narratives like *Dies Irae ~ Acta es Fabula* (Light 2007), the *Muv Luv* series (âge 2003, 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014) or this paper own's case study, *Sokō Akki Muramasa*, have been released to great success. These titles combine database elements-constituted characters with highly developed settings and narratives, with the game's database elements-constituted characters exerting an influence on the depiction of the setting and vice-versa.

For instance, the first game in the list I've provided, *Dies Irae ~ Acta es Fabula*, develops a setting in which the story's main antagonists, the Longinus Dreizehn Orden, a cabal of sorcerers dating back from world war two occult Nazi societies, can act and function (see figure 3).



Fig. 3. Art representing the Longinus Dreizehn Orden. Note their iconic appearance. Image © **Light 2007**

Even though every character in the order is a database-element constituted character, both males and females, and everybody is characterised and act as their database elements mandate, they still advance an articulated story, with their head Mercurius offering comment on the nature of narrative to the player and how human beings develop attachment to stories.

Within *Muv Luv*, database-constituted characters are instead subjected to re-contextualisation through multiple parallel universes, and through them, themes like what constitutes Japanese identity is and the relationship between the United States and Japan are explored. Finally, within *Sokō Akki Muramasa* we have a series of representations of Japanese identity within a narrative that is advanced through database-constituted characters and the affection the player develops towards the characters.

It is thus more likely that the claim advanced by Nozawa Shunsuke:

The take-away point of this database theory is that people are affectively attracted not necessarily or not always by narrative “world” as such but by character elements that are organized at the database level, what Azuma calls “grand non-narrative.” That is, characters live on beyond specific narratives as an ensemble of elements and a site of affective engagement. This affective dimension is often described as *moe*, characterological empathy (see Galbraith 2009 for more extended discussion). On the other hand, the database view does not make narratives disappear totally. Quite the contrary: it generates a special relation of dependence to narrative. The potential pattern of combining different elements to create new characters requires new narrative imagination and narrative

eventfulness (see Ōtsuka 2010).

Decontextualized databases always afford narrative recontextualization, and decontextualization and recontextualization always form a feedback mechanism. Nothing is forever decontextualized, and no single context exists that is self-sufficient without others. It is character non-inconsistency that mediates between these processes. (Nozawa 2013, np)

Nozawa's description of characters as an ensemble of elements is apt, but, as with other descriptions of database consumption and the engagement it engenders, referring to both database elements and *moe* means employing terms whose meaning varies considerably depending on the context they are used in. Before a more in-depth discussion of video games which rely on the character database as the bedrock through which they provide the narrative to the player can take place, it is necessary to approach how to better define the process of engagement which is referred to as *moe* and how it work with what Azuma (2007; 2009) defined as the character database.

The problem of *Moe* and the database

Moe has been referred to as a euphoric reaction to fantasy characters (Galbraith 2009: np). Pop culture critic Okada Toshio commented that *moe* is not only the act of euphoric response itself, but also the meta-awareness that comes from observing oneself in such a state (Okada 2008, 100-101).

Beyond euphoric reactions, Studio Gainax's director Kazuya Tsurumaki's view of *moe* as the act of filling one's missing information by oneself (Kōdansha 2003, np) is also interesting, as it provides a perspective into an often overlooked aspect of character fruition: the fact that the character is made one's own personalised experience.

Psychologist Tamaki Saitō has commented that *moe* characters are an object of desire which is possessed through the act of fictionalisation (Saitō 2007, section 8, para 1).

While Azuma (2009) commented that feeling *moe* is to take apart each character's database elements and turn them into an item filed into a database (Azuma 2009, chapter 2 section 5 para. 3), there is a lack of focus on the inherent interactive value of having to fill the blanks, and this none more evident within visual novels, where the player has to constantly fill missing information starting from the character image present on the screen, which are then integrated by the player in the actions provided by the prose text.

This process of filling the blanks turns character consumption into the player's own personalised experience, and can, in a sense, be considered a part of the game's interactive experience. But to discuss that, it is first necessary to approach the database itself.

Azuma (2007; 2009) uses the term 'database consumption', to describe how character elements are consumed within Japan's postmodern society, basing himself on the Lyotardian (1979) premises of the postmodern condition, which sees the 'Grand Narratives' of the past (Idealism, Enlightenment, Marxism and so on) as having disappeared and with them, the ideological justifications for social order.

However, the description of database Azuma provides is 'not simply the kind of computer program or web site for storing and retrieving information that humans are finding increasingly difficult to live without, but rather a model or a metaphor for a worldview, a grand nonnarrative that lacks the structure and ideologies (grand narratives) that used to characterize modern societies" (Azuma 2009, translator's introduction).

Azuma views (2007; 2009) the shared, communal element of otaku culture indeed acts like a database, to which content consumers and producers alike can draw on to produce media products which sustain themselves on this ensemble of shared meanings.

However, the use of the term database as a metaphor is problematic. The term with references to its employment in software and thus a very precise meaning has the potential for either misuse or leaving out certain facets of its meaning.

Interestingly, software scholar Lev Manovich, with a similar Lyotardian premise, came to the conclusion that a database, as a cultural form, is an unordered representation of the world as a list of items (Manovich 2007, section 2 para. 1). He contrasts it with narrative, which is a trajectory of items regulated by cause-and-effect (Manovich 2007, section 2 para. 2). He then turns his attention towards video games, database given a narrative form: video games, although representative of new media and assembled as databases, are experienced like narrative, with the player attempting to uncover the algorithm lying behind the creation of the game's settings, characters and events; (Manovich 2007, section 2 para. 3)

The idea of the database as an unordered representation of the world is extremely interesting, especially in light of the description given by Azuma (2009) of the database

as an aggregate of settings (*settei*)³ (Azuma 2009, section x para y) which seems to fit into Manovich's statement. Each *settei* is in turn a link towards otaku culture as a whole, in what is a repurpose of Ōtsuka Eiji (2010) framework of narrative consumption, which see each media in a franchise as a window into an overarching grand narrative which includes "the era in which the main characters live, the place, the relations between countries, their history, their manners of living, the personal histories of the respective characters, the nature of their interpersonal relations etc." To Azuma, instead, each element in the database of otaku culture is a link towards culture as whole, which is a chaotic ensemble of elements whose meanings are shared amongst the fan base.

If we also take into account Kazuya Tsurumaki's (Kōdansha 2003) definition of *moe*, we can argue that the database is indeed unordered, as the elements are initially unordered as part of the character database. After a series of database elements has been selected to construct the character, connections between the various points are drawn as part of character fruition. This echoes digital art scholar Christiane Paul:

Database aesthetics suggest the possibilities of tracing process--individual, cultural, communicative-in its various forms. The understanding of a database as the underlying principle and structure of any new media object delineates a broad field that includes anything from a network such as the Internet (as one gigantic database) to a particular data set. (Paul 2007: section 2 para.1)

However, while each fan can create their own personalised version of each character and indulge in fruition accordingly, there is always the need for a starting point, an ensemble of elements which can be connected.

Nozawa Shunsuke's (2013) argument regarding the importance of character consistency describes this phenomenon pretty well. When a character is re-contextualised from one media to another as part of a media-mix, there must be an assurance that that particular character is still that particular character (Nozawa 2013, np).

The same can be argued with the feeling of attachment itself, as two fellow fans, however different their own personal version of a character can be, must still be certain that that character remains the same character. This constancy is what allows narrative to be conveyed to the player.

3 The translation employed within the English translation of Azuma's text is 'setting', however the original term is *settei*, and the meaning is not immediately clear, especially in light of what *settei* are within the Japanese animation industry.

Last but not least, the continuous interaction engendered at the level of the character's constitutive database elements is what allows player to feel *moe* towards a character, or, more precisely, engage in a process of emphatic engagement towards the character as an ensemble of database elements which provide the bedrock continual re-articulation of the elements themselves.

Visual Novels/Novel Games as games

Of course, visual novels can feature a varying degree of sophistication in the setting they present, and this off course influences how much narrative is conveyed to the player. As video games, a visual novel, albeit their framework might suggest otherwise, is not a simple digitised book, even in the face of their limited interactivity, and thus analysis cannot be limited to mere content analysis.

Beyond mere playing, the game's individual components must be analysed in relation to what role they play in contributing to the experience of the game (Consalvo and Dutton 2006). As it was also highlighted by Malliet (2007), elements of representations within game cannot be divorced from elements of simulation, the model of an object's behaviour and response to stimuli (see Frasca 2003).

As I have already highlighted, it is extremely easy to mistake a visual novel for a digitised book, but instead it is possible to highlight characteristics of simulation as the player traverses the game's world and makes decisions which affect other characters and the game world.

According to the framework recently developed by Espen Aarseth (2012), there is no single way a game tells a story, and there must be a reflection of this in the analysis critics employ in examination of games:

My present approach is to see the ludo-narrative design space as four independent, ontic dimensions: WORLD, OBJECTS, AGENTS, and EVENTS. Every game (and every story) contains these four elements, but they configure them differently. Game worlds can typically be linear, multicursal, or open, and this has great effect on the game's perceived narrative structure. Objects (including avatars and player vehicles) can be dynamic, usercreated, or static, and again we see a span between the ludic (dynamic, simulated) and the narrative (static). Agents can be presented as rich, deep and round characters (the narrative pole), or shallow, hollow bots (the ludic pole). The sequence of events can be open, selectable, or plotted, and the narratological notion of nuclei (kernels; events that define that particular story) and satellites (supplementary events that fill out the discourse) can be used to describe four different game types:

1. The linear game (Half-Life): fixed kernels, flexible satellites.

2. The hypertext-like game (Myst, Dragon's Lair): Choice between kernels, fixed satellites.
3. The "creamy middle" quest game (KOTOR, Oblivion): Choice between kernels, flexible satellites.
4. The non-narrative game (Chess, The Sims): No Kernels, flexible discourse: just a game. (Aarseth 2012, 3-4)

Visual novels best resemble the second type, the hypertext-like game. The player is presented with choices at key parts of the game, which determines where the story of the game will orient itself, but the process of transiting between a decision and another is always the same. The ultimate goal is to get to the end of the story and experiencing the character storyline's ending. Special events during the plot can be represented with full-screen illustration, usually to showcase a particular character's qualities or to depict intimacy.

Progress in the completion of the game can be usually gauged by checking how many images the player has seen in a special gallery screen located in the game's main menu. (see figure 4).

These images have been defined as *gohōbi-e*, reward images by Miyamoto Naoki (Miyamoto et al 2013: 24), but are also known as event CGs. The gallery can be seen as a sort of inventory of collectible items, which the player collects as part of their journey.

More interesting is the employment of characters, especially in light of the constant re-articulation and emphatic engagement they engender. Database-constituted characters can be, as outlined above, seen as strings of database elements. They provide content and are placed within a narrative, usually resulting in a character with a more or less defined identity which react to the decisions of the player. This places them within the category of agents.



Fig. 4. Example of gallery screen. Image © **Unison Soft/Blossom 2010**

As they read the prose text, player also is at work in drawing the connections between one database element and another. Arguably, the possibility of drawing the connections between various database elements can constitute a facet of interaction which should place database elements within the category of objects, making the analysis of characters within visual novels a double-layered endeavour, taking them into account both as representations and as elements belonging to the game's simulation. The game world is multi-cursal, which defines the game's perception as a multi-ended narrative.⁴ These aspects, together with the influence of the *moe* database on the narrative, will be discussed within the analysis of this paper's case study, *Sokō Akki Muramasa*.

Sokō Akki Muramasa:

Character-conveyed narrative and character-based deconstruction

Sokō Akki Muramasa is a 'slash dark adventure' visual novel game released by Nitroplus in 2009. The game is story-heavy, featuring extensively developed characters and settings which describe an alternate-history science fictionalisation of postwar Japan. This particular title was selected due to the fact that it uses the player's

⁴ There is also the case where a game forces a player to see multiple endings before presenting the player with a final, 'true end', as it is the case in *Fate/Stay Night* (TYPE-MOON 2004), making the game world a linear world presenting multiple multi-cursal storylines.

expectations against them and, in doing so, conveys and reinforces the game's dark narrative. It also operates a deconstruction of visual novels gaming mechanisms while making them explicit in the process, thus serving as an excellent candidate to show the genre's wider trends.

The game is set in an alternate history Japan (known by the name of Yamato) under occupation by western powers, a non-specified western/Anglo-saxon "United Federation" under the control of the British Crown following a non-specified conflict in which Japan surrendered to the enemy, resulting in the occupation of the Japanese archipelago. The western powers rule through a General Headquarters (GHQ) using the Japanese government, the internally divided and constantly in-fighting Rokuhara bakufu, to enforce their will while the populace suffers. The world presents a mixture of alternate history and techno-magic elements against a backdrop reminiscent of Japan's situation immediately after the war, with desolation and poverty plaguing the country.

The allo-historical alterations that produce the setting see the Ashikaga Shogunate avoiding collapse, which leads to the Meiji restoration not happening due to the lack of a centralised power and the preservation of the Mikado as Japan's head of state. On the other side of the globe, the American Revolution ends in failure, ensuring British supremacy in North America and the Commonwealth evolving into the United Federation. Fantasy elements revolve around the presence of techno-magical suits of armour known as *tsurugi*. *Tsurugi* armour suits are sentient armours capable of granting special powers to the wearer and whose forging process involves the armourer committing ritual suicide to infuse their soul in the metal and bestow sentience on it.

Visually, *tsurugi* constitute a very important portion of Muramasa's narrative universe, as they bestow main characters with super powers which allow them to stand above others. Together with the characters, *Tsurugi* armour offer a window into the wider world of the game. Both Japanese and western forces employ *tsurugi* suits, with industrially mass-produced armour destined for rank-and-file soldiers and specially crafted armour suits being employed by persons of importance.

This is employed by the authors to divide *tsurugi*-wearing characters along cultural lines, which is further reinforced by depicting the craft of smithing non-industrially made armour to a culturally-specific class of people: Emishi for the Japanese suits and dwarves for western suits.

The division along cultural lines continues within mass-produced *tsurugi*, which place the division within references to World War II. Japanese *tsurugi* reference World War II Japanese piston-powered aircraft, while western *tsurugi* reference postwar American jet aircraft.

By way of depicting warfare and the relative highly detailed battle scenes (pages of text are devoted to the description of how a *tsurugi* operates, how air warfare between armoured suits is conducted, the importance of the angle of attack etc.) the narrative offers a window into the game's wider universe, becoming a window into "the era in which the main characters live, the place, the relations between countries, their history, their manners of living, the personal histories of the respective characters, the nature of their interpersonal relations etc." (Ōtsuka 2010, 107).

Interestingly, the majority of the game world is of the extra-ludic variety (Aarseth 2012, 4). The game world is evoked through text descriptions, image background and the characters' database elements. The game world becomes ludic when the player is presented with a choice of where to steer the storyline. In that case the world becomes an arena where gameplay takes place. Based on the previous statement that database elements provide an interactive dimension as part of character fruition, one could argue that any screen which has a database-constituted character on the screen can become a ludic space, but the claim would need additional examination. Database items are also difficult to categorise, because, while their belonging to the objects dimensions is easily demonstrated because they are, by all intents and purposes, "static, usable objects" (Aarseth 2012, 5) which contribute to the overall experience of the game, they are a constitutive part of the game's characters, and thus can also be argued to belong to the game's 'agents' dimension.

This rich setting provides a background for the player character, Kamakura police detective Kageaki Minato, to pursue a particular goal shown at the beginning of the game: track down and kill a *tsurugi* user known as the Silver Star (Ginseigō). Kageaki has formed a covenant with the artifact *tsurugi* known as the Muramasa, which follows him and aids him in his investigation. The armour, however, is bound to the principle of balance between good and evil, and for every wicked being Kageaki strikes down while using the armour, he will be possessed by it and forced to strike down a being he loves.

The curse in action during the prologue sets the tone for the game, and called forth at the end of all five chapters of the game minus the various endings. with the focal

character of the chapter ending up dead by Kageaki's hands together with the chapter's wicked antagonist.

However, the game presents the characters that have to die within the chapter as being confined to that chapter for two consecutive instances, enough to reinforce the perception that they are confined to the game's episodic nature, thus encouraging the player to stir the game's story towards a certain character, which at the beginning of the game is either GHQ-aligned woman Ōtori Kanae or young justice fanatic Ichijō Akane (see figure 5).



Fig. 5. Game heroines Ichijō Akane and Ōtori Kanae **Image © Nitroplus 2009**

The progress in establishing this relation is marked through a comparative affectivity meter (see figure 6) which can be viewed at any time in the game's pause menu, and grows in accord with the player's action, until chapter three, in which Kageaki is forced to strike down someone he loves by the Muramasa's curse.

The target of this curse will eventually be the heroine whose score in the affectivity meter is the highest, with great potential for emotional impact on the player, as this removal of a character from the game is done on two levels: that of objects (database elements) with the relative interaction engendered in the feeling of empathic engagement and that of actors (with the removal of the character from the game world). Furthermore, the distribution of kernels which bestow points to a heroine's affectivity score is as such that any attempt to alter the score forces the player to go back to at least the beginning of chapter two, which, in the time economy of the game, can be potentially daunting.



Fig. 6. The game's affectivity meter. Image © Nitroplus 2009

The death of the heroine forces the player on a path in which he is forced to develop engagement with the remaining character, and even then, the conclusion of both women's storyline is tragic: Ichijō's storyline concludes with the death of Kageaki after she cannot forgive him for the murder he committed as part of the curse due to her inflexible, fanatical sense of justice. Ichijō takes upon the Muramasa and continues her personal crusade.

Kanae's story concludes with him and Kageaki going on a final fight and killing each other in the process in one last fight, after she revealed herself as a woman without any sense of morality towards murder on a revenge spree.

Narrative aside, the revealing of the affective meter's real purpose within the game turns the player's perception of the game's algorithm from the 'raise the score of the girl you wish to see the ending of' to 'avoid raising the girl's score to see her storyline'. However, ultimately, every effort by the player to make the character live comes at the cost of the Kageaki's life (Ichijō), or both Kageaki and the heroine's (Kanae).

It is only when the player makes the conscious effort to distance from both heroines that the third romanceable heroine, and the game's true ending is opened to him. Kageaki (and the player with him) chooses to not get attached and embarks on the game's true ending, which provides the player with answers about the nature of Muramasa's curse and the world at large, while making Kageaki and the player engender affection with the spirit of the Muramasa, which is revealed to be the third, secret heroine whose column on the affectivity meter is normally kept obscured.

The coming of the true end is interesting because, before the player can bring the characters he killed back to life by embarking on a new story path and thus "infusing them with new blood" (Azuma 2007), he has to shoulder the experience of choosing a path which results in the loss of a character, either through death of the heroine or death of the main character.

This makes character death once again meaningful, as getting to the true end, where both Ichijō and Kanae survive, will still deny intimacy between the two heroines and Kageaki and, with him, the player. Negating the possibility of intimacy between the player and the characters, whose survival is tied to the player making the choice of not pursuing him, thereby crystallising each character in the game's narrative and thus making them dependent on their host narrative universe brings the wider narrative into importance once more, as the game's narrative is reinforced not only through each character's design and individual database elements, but also by the narrative itself, which is, once again worthy of examination and consideration.

From database, representation

As stated above, the game's narrative is articulated both through character and through the game's world, which is even more evident when one takes into account the choices offered to the player. The game's narrative universe represents Japan as a lawless territory where the strong prey on the weak, where endless brutality reigns in a continuous cycle of vengeance.

Large portions of the narrative are spent detailing the effect of Kageaki's curse on the world, ranging from the killing of innocent people to restore the balance of good and evil to which the Muramasa armour must abide to how the political entities within the world of Sokō Akki Muramasa act.

The stream of information, and the oblique references to the state of Japan after the Second World War, with its state of poverty and devastation, cannot be merely overlooked in favour of what revolves around database element-constituted characters. The importance that the background narrative plays in the overall experience of the game is such that database elements need to express the game's host narrative into the character, in order to maintain a narrative experience which is coherent with the tone of the narration.

Beyond the game's narrative tone, the division along cultural lines between Japan and the rest of the world, along with the structuring of characters along character database lines references meanings which go beyond the database itself and onto long-standing cultural myths shared within Japan and Japanese perceptions of western countries, leading to a mix of *moe* elements and references to wider cultural myths about Japan and the west. This operation is undertaken in both the design of the tsurugi armours and the characters. The combination of *moe* elements and cultural references arguably runs contrary to Azuma's main assumption that grand narratives of any kind are no longer relevant.

In fact, the grand narrative, both as envisioned by Azuma and Ōtsuka, are extremely relevant within Sokō Akki Muramasa, and play a pivotal role in the construction of the main focus of the player's attention, the character's themselves. The three young friends around which the first chapter of the game focuses, all reference pre-war Shōwa-era (1926-1945) Japan in the design of their clothes, which are still employed on the basis of the Azuman character database. Characters belonging to the GHQ are assembled via crossed references to *moe* elements linkable to foreign characters such as blonde hair, wide jaws, beards, moustaches and a mixture of early twentieth century European uniforms.

Japanese tsurugi armours resemble samurai armour and alternatively brandish traditional Japanese bladed weapons or machine cannons which reference World War II firearms. Western tsurugi resemble European field plate armour, whose weapons

are alternatively rifles heavily influenced by European designs or medieval longswords and rapiers.

While an in-depth discussion of how a Japanese self and a western Other is represented within the game is well outside of the scope of this paper, the deliberate division along cultural lines contributes to form a background which is continuously referenced by the game's characters, with the Japanese forming an empathise-able imagined community (Anderson 2006) against a cold and militarised west.

Of particular interest is also the depiction of Japan as an exploited nation that runs through the whole game, as the country is depicted to be in control of a foreign power, its precious resources something to be fought over with no regards for the local populace.

In fact, the usage of the term Yamato to fictionalise the Japanese populace is the iteration of an 'imagined community' (Anderson 2006) which has long been the subject of much idealisation and commodification in a variety of contexts, from pop culture to tourism. In a way, the division along cultural lines of East and West and the depiction of Japanese and westerners as complete opposites, seems to echo Kōichi Iwabuchi's (1994) concept of complicit exoticism, as Yamato (Japan) possesses all kinds of special qualities such as being the place most favourable for the forging of tsurugi armours. By virtue of this particular relationship with the creation of techno-magical armours, Japan, fictionalised as the land of Yamato, is rendered exotic via the use of orientalist tropes, each of which is conveyed through the character database.

Another instance of narrative being conveyed through database elements is the iteration of Japan's narrative as a peace-loving people, which is congruent with what James McVeigh describes as 'Peace Nationalism': a form of anti-militarist nationalism focused on the portrayal of the Japanese people as victims of war and of the machinations of immoral wartime leaders (McVeigh 2004: 208-210).

Rokuhara Shogunate head Ashikaga Moriujji, fulfills this role, exerting oppression on the Japanese populace by means of tyrannical military might in an eventual effort to overthrow the western occupiers. His evil and lack of fundamental morality, although being depicted in accordance with similar visual novel characters such as Matō Zōken from *Fate/Stay Night* (TYPE-MOON 2004), in this case echo the depiction suggested by McVeigh within his description of peace nationalism.

The harsh occupation by western forces, and the subsequent subaltern relationship between Yamato (Japan) and the United Federation (English-speaking West) is stated by

one of the game's heroines, Ōtori Kanae, as being necessary, as the alternative (siding with Russia), would be much worse. This detail is not vital for the comprehension and fruition of Kanae Ōtori as a character, but still interacts and is intertwined with her constitutive database elements, especially the one known as 'Ojōsama' (daughter of nobility).





Fig. 7. (Above and previous pages) Bust shots comparison of Western and Japanese tsurugi and personnel. Images © Nitroplus 2009

The intersection of background narrative into characters' constitutive database elements results in the iteration of narrative through the database elements themselves, with the database elements providing the common ground by which the narrative can be made comprehensible to the audience.

Narratives by themselves are not part of characters' constitutive database elements, however, when the narratives are articulated through database elements, as it happens within Sokō Akki Muramasa, that narrative is attached to that particular database element and becomes integral part of the character's identity, and thus referencing the background narrative becomes necessary to maintain character consistency which is the absolute condition for character-based media (see Nozawa 2013, np). The more a database element is employed to articulate a narrative, the more that narrative becomes part of the character's identity which in turn must be preserved within the process of re-contextualisation, bonding the character with the narrative.

This is a process that can be observed in all of Muramasa's female characters. Akane Ichijō, self-styled hero of justice (a database element), sees it as a way to express commentary on the nature of justice itself. By holding a fundamentalist view of what is right and wrong, with no place for subtlety or nuance and holding every transgressor

as being worthy of death, the character of Akane Ichijō carries part of the background narrative (the game's uncaring world) within her character identity.

These two examples show a process which results in characters whose individual characteristics/database elements are drawn from the character database, but at the same time see their individual identity developed through the articulation of each database element. When these elements are made to reference a peculiar narrative contest, we have conservation of the character's host narrative in their constitutive database elements, as the characters must be depicted with that particular articulation of database elements to maintain character consistency.

This constancy is carried even when the characters are re-articulated within different contexts. See the following (figure 8) wallpaper featuring all of *Sokō Akki Muramasa's* principal female characters as pinup girls. This is most evident within the wallpaper in the side character of Chachamaru (third from the left). During the course of the game, she is depicted as a warrior girl fighting for the Rokuhara *bakufu*, and this is preserved by her being depicted with a Japanese sword in hand.



Fig. 8. Characters recontextualised as pin-ups. Image © Nitroplus 2009

Furthermore, references to the game are made in the ornament which dangles from her bikini top, which references the samurai armour she wears for most of the game. The same can be observed with Ichijō Akane (first from right, foreground), whose pinup dress includes references to her role as a *tsurugi* mechanic during chapter three of the game. A third example lies in Muramasa (second from left), whose leg accessory references the temple where she is kept (as a *tsurugi* suit of armour) in the game.

Thus, it can be argued that, as the setting of the game becomes more articulated, the more this universe is preserved and communicated within the character's database elements, and this is preserved during the process of character re-contextualisation. Even if one was to look at the above representation of Chachamaru without prior knowledge of either the character or *Sokō Akki Muramasa*, by simply noting that she wields a sword they will deduce that Chachamaru is a fighter. Furthermore, if the ornament is identified, the viewer will be able to deduce, at the mere minimum, that she belongs to a world where samurai exist, which is reinforced by the ornament dangling from the bikini top. The way in which she is depicted as a pinup, however, also embeds narrative, as her clothes are depicted to be of a cloth that is not found in a completely orthodox depiction of samurai warfare, and thus the viewer will be able to deduce that she lives in a world where samurai and modern technology coexist.

In fact, should we remove those two articulations of database elements, character coherency would waver, and it would become very difficult to tell whenever that character is indeed Ashikaga Chachamaru.

When a database-element constituted character is placed within a setting home to an articulate narrative, as is the case with *Sokō Akki Muramasa*, the parallel necessities of articulating each character's constitutive database elements and communicating the narrative in which the characters act results in a conflation of the narrative within the articulation of database elements. This, in turn, makes it so that the articulation of database elements needed to preserve character coherency cannot be accomplished without referencing the host narrative. This, as argued by Nozawa (2013), rather than leading to the disappearance of narrative, leads to a "new relation with narrative." In other words, in the event of the character being subjected to re-contextualisation (Nozawa 2013, np), it would still be necessary to maintain character consistency, and with it, narrative information would still be carried over to the new context, allowing a preservation of narrative within character identity, whose other side is character-consistency.

It is within this starting point that information about the ‘grand narrative’ as espoused by Ōtsuka Eiji (2010) is conveyed. The more the setting in the background is developed, the higher the amount of information pertaining to the narrative will be conveyed through each character’s database elements.

Database elements provide a common interface for the perception of unique character identity, in a way that is not unlike what has been detailed by Jos de Mul (2015) in his examination of personal identity within database contexts: when people’s identity is turned into data, and thus into a database, what allows the creation of an individual identity is the presence of the same interface, Facebook in de Mul’s case and the character database in the case of character identities within visual novels.

In the case of visual novels, database elements are the common framework by which characters and narratives can be comprehended and consumed. Within *Sokō Akki Muramasa*, the character database is purposed as the access point(s) into the narrative, which in turn creates and solidifies character identities whose unicity is reliant on the context they communicate through the articulation of their constitutive database elements.

Arguably, the character database did not lead to the disappearance of narrative, but rather became the new interface by which narrative is conveyed to the audience. In fact, the database approach produces commonality through which unique character identities (and host narratives) can be shared with the public.

Conclusions

This paper has offered a discussion of visual novels as a game genre enmeshed in the phenomenon described by Azuma (2009) as the character database and more in particular, how it relies on emphatic engagement (*moe*) in the construction of character identity and their relation to the game’s narrative. The paper did so by providing an overview of previous approaches to visual novels, especially those by Emily Taylor (2007) and Patrick Galbraith (2011), while also attempting to reconcile the various attempt at defining the phenomenon of *moe*, especially in light of the fact that precise definitions outside of ill-defined ‘euphoric reactions’ have not yet been offered.

The paper sought also to improve previous attempts at collocating visual novels, especially in light of the particular interactive framework that is offered by database elements, moving away from the view as ‘interactive choose-you-adventure books’ (Taylor 2007, 277) or simple interactive romance novels (Galbraith 2009a, np).

Database elements and the interactive and open-ended nature by which an affective bond develops in the player arguably offer another dimension of interactivity parallel to the choices offered to the player during the course of the game.

In fact, the game is a space where the player interacts with the database elements that constitute the characters, enjoying character fruition by way of filling the gaps between one database of elements and another, forming a personalised interaction which however remains founded on the constancy of the single database elements, whose peculiar articulation is what gives the character a unique identity. The particular articulation of database elements is a foundation by which the character's identity is maintained and preserved, which allows the preservation character consistency when the character is subjected to re-contextualisation (cf. Nozawa 2013, np).

From a game's studies standpoint, this places database elements in the dimension of objects (Aarseth 2012) while keeping the character they constitute as agents within the ludic dimension of the game software. This is a possible line of investigation that could offer interesting results in future examinations of visual novels from a game studies perspective.

With a firm basis in these findings, the article presented Sokō Akki Muramasa as a case study, arguing that the subversion of the development of affection towards characters for narrative purposes present within the game makes the mechanisms evident for analysis and commentary.

The reversal of visual novel mechanics is deployed to reinforce the game's narrative, influencing the player's actions and reversing the meaning that the player attributes to the pursuit of characters. While the player can, in a metanarrative sense, bring the character back to life by going back to a previous savegame or choosing another storyline (Cf. Azuma 2007), the only way they can save the character's life is by not pursuing the character in question.

As each character's storyline is explored by the player, each articulation of a database element is experienced in a way that reinforces the game's narrative and provide an increasingly unique identity to both the players and the game's world, resulting in a limitation to how the characters can be re-contextualised outside of their original narrative context, as the character identity (complete with the death they face within their storyline) is necessary for the preservation of character identity.

It is thus arguable that, in spite of Azuma's (2007; 2009) espousing the disappearance of narrative from the consumption of media products, narrative is in fact still prominent and as important as before, and, as the background narrative grows in sophistication and detail, the possibility for endless re-contextualisation (cf. Nozawa 2013, np) diminishes in light of the need to preserve character identity. Thus, narrative becomes subjected to its interpretation as per database elements, but does not disappear.

In fact, the articulation of character constitutive database elements can be employed to generate new narrative possibilities which are not present within the database itself, as it is shown within *Sokō Akki Muramasa*.

Furthermore, database elements can be subjected to discussion and deconstruction, and also employed to convey a complex narrative which is not readily referenced by the database itself. Further research possibilities on this particular video game genre could present opportunities to examine a genre of digital text which has been seldom explored within Japanese studies and, in particular, those focusing on Japanese pop culture. Possible approaches include examinations of the mode of narration presented by visual novels as games and how these modes tie into the wider fan culture behind it and what influences they exert, on the rest of Japanese pop culture at large.

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Media, propaganda and politics in 20th-century Japan – The Asahi Shimbun Company; Transl. Barak Kushner

Foreword by Funabashi Yoichi. London: Bloomsbury, 2016, 300 p.

Review by Judit Erika MAGYAR | Waseda University, Japan

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By the time news of the Taisho emperor's death spread in the land, Japan was no more the international weakling of the Meiji period that had signed unequal treaties. Yet, modernisation brought about not only economic but also social developments that were propelled by the establishment of western style news media. *Asahi Shimbun* has been fortifying the ranks of Japanese national newspapers since 1879 when it began circulation as an illustrated publication. Back then, English journalism served as an example for papers and *Asahi* has been so successful that, in addition to staying afloat, it has today built up a circulation of 7.96 million copies for its morning edition (*Asahi Shimbun Company 2017*).

The reviewed book examines how this important medium served as a facilitator of information dissemination for the better part of the 20th century and in what way journalists completed their task. In the foreword, Funabashi Yoichi, a former Editor-in-Chief and a prominent leading intellectual in the country, looks at what role the journal paid in national opinion formation in the Showa era (1926-1989). (The volume includes only a handful of references to Heisei era documents). Funabashi woefully states that journalism lost its viability and power of criticism at around the 1931 Manchurian incident when a congratulatory article was published after the news reached Japan. He further ponders the successes and failures of journalists in reporting the truth and whether the past dailies stand the trial of history.

The publication is unique in that it does not adhere to a particular style: it simply follows a chronological pattern in referring to historical events and discusses how the newspaper presented the issues in the past. Although there are similar renderings of

previous media coverings, – such as the book on *Picture Weekly (Shashin Shūhō)* in which the editors build their arguments around themes that the magazine often discussed – the *Asahi's* compilation does not survey topics but rather, events. Furthermore, it does not fit the ranks of typical newspaper histories either since it fails to provide an extensive explanation about the paper's inception and development.

The explanatory style of the book does not only draw on news articles published in *Asahi* but also on those put forward by other agencies. The individual entries refer to a single event and discuss how a particular episode in history was reported and interpreted by the above-mentioned news organisations. However, a substantial body of the examined sources also include internal documents, interviews conducted with contemporary staff members and committee meeting minutes which help explain why the paper decided to chronicle any specific incident the way it did. For the reader, the most intriguing renditions of news might be those that provide a historical snapshot of the relationship between the media and society during WWII and its immediate aftermath.

The translator, Barak Kushner, is a professor of Japanese History at the University of Cambridge in the UK and has published extensively on Japanese media history. Apart from rendering the Japanese original into English, he also wrote a noteworthy preface and conclusion that provide an insightful frame to the publication. He finds it important to mention that the primary book was longer – and consequentially wider – in its covering of history but the English version is more relevant to international readers who might not recognise nuances that are apparent to the domestic audience. Kushner argues that the *Asahi* journalists' work over the little more than six decades of the Showa era highlighted the fact that Japan was neither a victim of international events nor a pawn of foreign powers but rather, it was the action and inaction of, the misdeeds and misinterpretations of world affairs by its politicians, leaders and military personnel that ran the country amok. Furthermore, *Asahi* was not a passive reporter in the process of shaping events, thus, the company's take on creating national memory and choice of perspective in its articles substantially contributed to the popular view. As a prominent member of the Japanese mass media, being a mediator between the governing authority and the general public at the lower echelons of democracy, the *Asahi* has always been in a unique position to channel public opinion if only by the sheer number of its subscriptions. The Showa era saw Japan in various roles: an increasingly powerful emperor nation; a stubborn military power; a country that lost

its sovereignty to the one it had initially attacked; a humble collaborator during its own occupation; an emergent economic giant; a defiant competitor in the Bubble era; and finally, a former moneymaking powerhouse pondering its “lost decades”. However, not only the higher-level decision-makers were and are the only variables in the equation of *Asahi*’s success. Private citizens, the consumers of printed and electronic news, are as much to blame when a country goes awry and should take equal credit for the successes it achieves. National discourse is not exclusively sculpted by those with a strong voice but also by the ordinary fellow who pays for the newspaper that expresses a particular viewpoint.

The third constituent of influence on *Asahi* lies in its own strength and weight as a persuasive news medium. Other papers and publications often borrowed ideas and views from the company, following in its footpath when resorting to self-censorship during the war or challenging authority in the latter Showa period. As Kushner says, the Japanese media often “wanted to see themselves as a fourth estate” (Asahi Shimbun Company 2016, 278), playing a role in the country’s history beyond what news organisations typically accomplish in other parts of the world.

The book itself is not typical in its layout: it contains 27 bundles of items which – although vaguely following a chronological order – start off with a thematic chapter on the death of the Showa Emperor – more commonly known in the West as Emperor Hirohito – and continue with a 14-page account of the beginning of his reign that included the Depression. Each subsequent cluster then contains only so many articles so that none would go over 20 pages, the shortest being 7. The thematic compilations make it easier for the reader to navigate the volume and the sparsely inserted pictures break the monotony of the text. Not that the narrative in itself is boring, on the contrary: each expose contains a brief introduction to the overall historical setting and political climate, continues with a lengthier explanation of the actual event and typically concludes with a final sentence that links the topic to the next section. The writing style is pleasantly fluid and one can easily devour the entire book in only a few hours despite the hefty 300-page length. That said, the original Japanese came in at a much longer 592 pages but the English rendition is a consciously abridged version which was the result of repeated requests from the publishing company. Despite the limitations, the translator team made sure that the international audience receives ample explanation to the potentially murky pieces of information and provided a list of

notes to every chapter at the end of the volume by tracking down the original sources (Asahi Shimbun Company 2016, 279-288).

As for the individual topics, every chapter endeavours to provide a well-rounded summary of events related to them. To cite an example, chapter 9 – titled “Countdown to the War’s End” – which is one of the longest at 18 pages, encompasses 8 chronological news flashbacks. The first, “Mokusatsu’[sic!] and the Potsdam Declaration” narrates how the *Dōmei* News Agency translated “*mokusatsu*” as “ignore” whereas both the Associated Press and Reuters opted for the word “reject” when reporting on the Cabinet’s reaction to the Potsdam Declaration. The story snowballs from there and the last sentence points out that “the subsequent dropping of the atomic bomb and the Soviet Union’s participation in the war both stemmed from Japan’s rejection of the Potsdam Declaration” (Asahi Shimbun Company 2016, 90).

The next snippet of news in the chapter refers to how “Shipping stocks skyrocket[ed]” as a result of the above Declaration and goes on to highlight the businesses that foresaw an imminent postwar reconstruction. “The bomb” segment of the collection speaks for itself: it discusses the Hiroshima atomic explosion and how “Truman’s speech was ‘the first use of the term `atomic bomb` in a Japanese newspaper” (Asahi Shimbun Company 2016, 92). The chapter then resumes with “The origin of atomic bomb myths”, “Failed expectations”, “The lost report on the Soviet entry into the war”, “Reporters at ground zero”, and finally, “Misleading inferences” which throws light on the ensuing argument between the Cabinet Information Bureau and the Army Ministry, both of which insisted that the media publish their version of the directive. In the end, both were released to the public “side-by side with the same font size”, and the Japanese people were called upon to be wise, “persevere” and “remain calm” (Asahi Shimbun Company 2016, 93).

To sum up, in their address to the readers both Funabashi and Kushner refer to the phrase “history repeats itself”, not in a declaratory but a rather sceptical manner. They conclude by asserting that the journalist’s and historian’s role in narrating events is to “reflect carefully and diligently on its [history’s] provenance and our own role in its evolution” (Asahi Shimbun Company 2016, 277). The idea that a conscious, considered and responsible rendering of events should be the goal of reporting permeates the book and raises awareness about the individual’s responsibility in the circle of life.

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The Asahi Shimbun Company (2016), *Media, Propaganda and Politics in 20th-Century Japan*. Transl. Barak Kushner. London: Bloomsbury.

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A study of Japanese animation as translation: A descriptive analysis of Hayao Miyazaki and other anime dubbed into English – Adachi Reito

Boca Raton: Dissertation.Com, 2012, 293 p.

Review by Jamie TOKUNO | Independent Researcher, Hawai'i, USA

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For years now, scholars have been calling for a more “critical consciousness” of how Euro-American translation theories are applied to East Asian translation studies (Wakabayashi 2012). Judy Wakabayashi suggests there is a need for empirical testing of western paradigms on Japanese translation research (Wakabayashi 2012, 34). To an extent, Adachi Reito’s book sets out to answer that call through the use of references to major western translation theories on an as-needed basis, including the theory of translation universals, Gideon Toury’s translation norms, Eugene Nida’s dynamic equivalence, and literal translation. However, the book does not offer any real synthesis between these theories and the conclusions he draws. Despite this drawback, Adachi’s book constitutes a significant and data-heavy contribution of Japanese language material to three major and relatively new branches of the field: audiovisual translation studies, descriptive translation studies, and corpus-based translation studies. Ambitious in scope, this volume encompasses a survey of the basic concepts of audiovisual translation studies, a discussion of the history of Japanese animation and its reception in the United States of America, a descriptive corpus-based analysis of textual features of Hayao Miyazaki’s films and their American English translations, and a qualitative, diachronic analysis of retranslations of Miyazaki’s films. As a result of this breadth of coverage, each chapter is comprised of a different variation of data sets, with individual conclusions drawn in such a way that each chapter could almost be treated as an independent study. There is some brief discussion of the reception of Japanese animation in European countries, but the bulk of the cross-cultural analysis centres on

Japanese translations and American translations of animated films. Readers who are interested in comparisons of translational attitudes between Asian and western cultures, especially in relation to Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, Lawrence Venuti's concept of domestication and foreignisation, and other similar theories, will find this book rewarding and insightful.

The introductory chapter offers an overview of the process of translation of Japanese animated films, specifically in the context of linguistic and cultural power relations between Japan and the United States of America. It also presents readers with a neat set of summaries for each of the subsequent six chapters, which can be used to guide readers who are mainly interested in specific data sets and their respective methodologies, as no overarching methodological approach is applied to the book as a whole. Chapter one is particularly useful to readers who are new to audiovisual translation studies, as it provides a brief summary of the field's main issues and challenges, with emphasis on previous audiovisual translation studies that focus on Japanese animation. Chapter two presents a general overview of the differences between animation and live action, and the distinguishing features of animated audiovisual texts in the context of translation. Interestingly, here Adachi also expounds upon the use of English as an interlingua, that is "a pivot language" (39), for audiovisual translation, with an emphasis on the increasing rate of audiovisual media being translated into American English. This is followed by an insightful discussion of the target audiences of American English translations of Japanese animation, using Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) ratings for live-action and animated films as supporting data to demonstrate that American audiences of animated features tend to be children and young adults.

Chapter three is the most statistically heavy, featuring quantitative analysis of a small-scale corpus comprised of ten Japanese animated films and ten American animated films with their respective translations. This is the only chapter that directly addresses the call to apply empirical methods to test a western translation theory on data comprised of Japanese language texts. Adachi outlines Sara Laviosa's hypotheses on the universals of translation, and uses the Mann-Whitney U test to run statistical analysis of the data sets pulled from corpus software WordSmith (ver. 4.0) and

alignment tool e-lemma.text (ver. 1.1) to test those hypotheses. He comes to the significant conclusion that the “data clearly support the aforementioned assumption that a limited number of words are used more frequently in the translated films than the original works” (69). However, no further discussion is offered in regards to what bearing his findings have on Laviosa’s theory of the universals of translation. Instead, Adachi shifts his focus to conclusions drawn using line graphs that compare the average number of sentences and the average number of pauses and silences in the originals and translations of the Japanese and American animated films. According to Adachi, the marked increase in number of sentences, and decrease in number of pauses of English translations of Japanese animated films from their original texts, in comparison to the lack of statistically significant variation in Japanese translations of English animated films, suggests that Japanese translations of American audiovisual texts are not strongly influenced by the target culture, whereas English translations of Japanese audiovisual texts favour the textual conventions of American animated films. The crux of his argument here is that “a marked imbalance of the linguistic and cultural dominance relations in translational attitude exists between these two languages” (83), although his analysis in chapter five suggests that this imbalance may be shifting.

Chapter four is by far the longest, its length covering over two-thirds of the entire book. It focuses on the analysis of English translations of selected features of audiovisual texts in Miyazaki’s films released in the 1980s and 1990s. Adachi begins with a history of Japanese animation released in the United States through the 1990s, which helpfully provides a clear socio-historical context in which the translations of Miyazaki’s films are analysed. The bulk of the chapter is dedicated to analysing English translations of selected features of audiovisual texts in Miyazaki’s films of the given period. The list of features is long, and as a result, individual analysis of the translations of each feature is relatively brief. These features include forms of expression, content, specific subjects, pauses and silences, patterns of conversation, figures of speech, taboo, theme and characterization, statelessness, things Japanese, and the vaguely-named “other things to mention”. There is little synthesis between analyses, meaning each section is more or less self-contained, with no overarching theme or theoretical framework to tie all the analyses together. Furthermore, the source text samples given are all presented in Japanese characters, with no romanisation and no back translation

provided. Consequently, any researcher who cannot read Japanese will be at a severe disadvantage. Those non-Japanese speaking readers must rely solely on the English analysis presented by Adachi, and are not given the complete set of linguistics tools with which to critique his analysis properly. One of the stronger sections in this chapter is the comparative analysis of translations of American animated films into Japanese, which substantiates some of the book's earlier claims. Adachi writes, "The faithful attitude to the original American works illustrates that the Japanese version pays strict attention to reproduce not only the semantic content and the communicative function but also the tone and style of each original sentence as much as possible" (167-168). He goes on to reiterate that this tendency in the Japanese translations suggests that the source culture has a stronger influence on the translation process of American animated films into Japanese compared to the influence of the source culture on Japanese animated films translated into American English. Additionally, a discussion of historic trends demonstrates how sociohistorical conditions in the target culture can have direct bearing on the translations of Japanese texts into that culture.

Chapter five presents a diachronic qualitative and quantitative comparative analysis of retranslations of six of Hayao Miyazaki's animated works, looking at pre- and post-2000 releases. Here, Adachi draws upon his findings from the preceding chapter, with the objective of identifying shifts in translation approach. Adachi's objective here is to pinpoint trends in recent English translations of these audiovisual texts that might indicate a shift in the translation attitude towards Japanese animated works as a whole. Relevant translation theories, including Gideon Toury's translation norms, are very briefly touched upon here, but more in-depth discussion of the theoretical underpinnings would have served the study well. However, this chapter does present quantitative data sets illustrating the degree of utilisation of translation techniques from the literal-liberal classification by Molina and Albir (2002) in pre- versus post-2000 English translations of Miyazaki films. In a similar approach to that of chapter three, the quantitative data is presented as line graphs, as well as bar graphs, which show the substantial increase in literal translation techniques in English translations of Miyazaki's films after 2000. Adachi points out that this trend corresponds to an increasing interest in Japanese animation on the international stage. Qualitative analysis of specific samples from first, second and third translations further support

these findings. In his concluding remarks for this chapter, Adachi notes that there is a shift towards more “faithful translation of the source Japanese dialogue in which characters are supposed to share the same knowledge and assumptions” (229), which contrasts with his earlier assertion in chapter three that there is an imbalance between strength of influence of American culture on translations of Japanese animated films and that of Japanese culture on translations of American animated films. Adachi argues that this shift presents a new direction for Japanese audiovisual translation studies, particularly for animated films.

The final chapter offers readers a brief summary of the key points and findings of each chapter, as well as further discussion of the future direction for this study. In this sense, chapter six is the most comprehensive, given the wide variation of data sets, methodological approaches, and conclusions drawn in each chapter. Overall, Adachi’s book demonstrates the value of conducting diachronic analysis of retranslations, and how corpus-based methodologies can be used to shed light on overall trends in translational attitudes between certain language pairs. From an East Asian translation studies perspective, this book takes a significant step towards Judy Wakabayashi’s call for more engagement with western concepts of translation using empirical methodology, but falls short of fully realising its potential. Adachi skirts around any direct engagement with translation theory, western or otherwise, that might have substantiated the extensive empirical data analyses he presents. The connections between his data analyses and the theoretical frameworks into which they fit must be fleshed out by the readers instead. Although a more distinct and focused discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of each of the three major data analyses conducted within the study, as well as their respective methodologies, would have further substantiated the conclusions drawn, Adachi’s comprehensive presentation of statistical data sets as well as qualitative case studies on English translations of Miyazaki’s films, alongside the comparative analysis of Japanese translations of American animated features, reveals the potential for scholars of Japanese translation to contribute substantially to audiovisual translation, as well as to corpus-based translation studies and descriptive translation studies on the whole. While it may not fully address the need for a more “critical consciousness” of how Western translation theories are applied to the East Asian context, this book advances Japanese translation

studies in that direction, and offers multiple potential directions for future studies of a similar kind, perhaps with a more sharply-honed theoretical and methodological approach. Moreover, the shift towards a more faithful translational attitude to the source Japanese culture in animated features, as indicated in chapter five, is an important facet of the recent trend towards the transnationalisation of Japanese popular culture in the media. Scholars of Japanese audiovisual translation studies will find this book insightful and the findings presented compelling. Furthermore, the significance of its contribution as a corpus-based study on Japanese translated texts to the descriptive translation studies field should not be overlooked.

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