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**Soulful Bodies and Superflat Temporalities: A Nomadology of the Otaku
Database of World History at the Ends of History**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis is a philosophical engagement with the popular, low, and vernacular theories of History performed and expressed within contemporary Japanese manga (‘comics’) and anime (‘limited animation’), and most importantly, in the global production and consumption of otaku (‘manga and anime fan’) cultural and media ecologies. My project is rooted in a reading of the post-structural theoretical inquiries of Gilles Deleuze in parallel with what media theorist McKenzie Wark calls ‘otaku philosophy’ to examine how both high and low theories articulate anxieties and fascinations with the global theoretical discourses on ‘the ends of History’ and the imminent demise of industrial modernity. The first portion of the thesis is dedicated to a reading of the Japanese counter-cultural manga movement called *gekiga* (‘dramatic pictures’). In traversing *gekiga*’s post-war lineages to its revival in the medievalism of otaku artists Miura Kentarō and Yukimura Makoto, the first part postulates on what an anti-modern, anti-historical approach – or what Deleuze and Guattari call a *nomadology* – might look and feel like as it is mediated in the manga form. The second portion of the thesis examines the way in which Japanese anime mobilises the philosophies of nomadology in its filmic form and transmedial properties. In a critical assessment of the anime works of the otaku-founded media corporation Type-Moon, this section explores the *Fate* series alongside Deleuzian film and media philosophies to explore the infinite potentialities and recursive limitations of otaku nomadologies as they materialise beyond the screen. By reassessing the rise of otaku culture as a vernacular, global, and cosmopolitan rise in the critique of modernity and History, this thesis hopes to explore how transcultural and transmedial fan philosophies of historicity, memory, and temporality can be recontextualised within current academic debates about the efficacy of post-national historiographic pedagogies explored in the fields of postcolonial studies, comparative studies, global studies, and media studies.

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Declaration of originality

I declare that the thesis does not include work forming part of a thesis presented successfully for another degree.

I declare that the thesis represents my own work except where referenced to others.

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Introduction: The Otaku World-Image and History After History

This thesis is a meditation on popular Japanese manga (‘comics’) and anime (‘animation’), and the global media cultures that are formed in relation to the production, consumption, and distribution of manga and anime. It is specifically informed by Gilles Deleuze’s rich and varied corpus of philosophical writings on cinema, visual arts, politics, and historiography, and it hopes to articulate vernacular formulations of historical thought in the fan culture of the *otaku* (‘manga or anime fan’).¹ In an analysis of the vernacular and vectoral expansion of Japanese manga, anime, and video games across the globe since the 1980s, this project seeks to situate otaku media ecologies and their concomitant philosophies of historicity, memory, and temporality within a greater scope of contemporary theoretical debates regarding the role of Deleuze in global studies, world literature studies, comparative media studies, and intermedial studies.² Inspired by the recent research from what I call the *media Deleuzians* like Thomas Lamarre, Azuma Hiroki, and Alexander Galloway, this thesis seeks to offer a media philosophy approach to Deleuze’s theories on historical consciousness and temporality, a field of Deleuzian thought explored by what I call the *history Deleuzians* like Jay Lampert, Ronald Bogue, D.N. Rodowick, Manuel DeLanda, and Rosi Braidotti. This discourse has been informed by the globally rhizomatic and affectively charged practices of the fan production and consumption of not only media texts, but philosophies of mediation.

¹ Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). p. xvii. Lamarre writes that the ‘term *otaku*, for instance, is today widely used to refer to “cult fans,” that is, to those fans who are totally into manga, anime, video games, and a range of related merchandise and events. The term *otaku* derives from a formalistic way of addressing people that is calculated for its implications of distance between addresser and addressee – ‘your residence’ – and so it is probably not a coincidence that we have come to think of otaku as people who prefer isolation, who remain at home in front of TV or computer screens, venturing out only in pursuit of collectibles or to attend fan-related events. Anime and game otaku are frequently associated with social withdrawal syndrome, sometimes with pathological overtones, and the overall emphasis is on their personal collections, on their mania to take items out of general circulation and into the safety of their rooms. We tend to think of the prototypical anime viewing experience in terms of the eternal child at home alone in front of the television’.

² Intermediality is defined by Klaus Bruhn Jensen as such: ‘Intermediality refers to the interconnectedness of modern media of communication. As means of expression and exchange, different media refer to and depend on one another, both explicitly and implicitly; they interact as elements of various communicative strategies; and they are constituents of a wider social and cultural environment’, from ‘Intermediality’, in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy (Volume 2)*, ed. by Klaus Bruhn Jensen, Robert T. Craig, Jefferson D. Pooley, and Eric W. Rothenbuhler (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016). p. 972.

This thesis argues that otaku engagements with diverse media forms produce speculative, imaginative, and intensive possibilities and philosophies that negotiate with universal, generic, and global anxieties of worldwide overdevelopment, the fallout of post-industrial capitalism, and a pervasive temporal pessimism of human finitude articulated as the end of History.³ In the mass production of what I call the *otaku world-image*,⁴ this project

³ For more on the postmodern concerns of ‘the ends of History’, we must begin with Jean-Francois Lyotard’s assessment of historical thought, in which he claims that the ends of (modern) History – that is, the end of telling grand, monolithic, national, geographic, positivist, progressive, and teleological narratives of a people(s) advancing in the long march of linear time – was fully realised in the aftermath of World War II and most symbolically marked by (1) the fire-bombed ruins of the European and East Asian mainland, (2) the grotesque yet sophisticated system of mass murder seen in the Holocaust, and the (3) weaponization of scientific advancement of atomic fusion as seen in the nuclear doomsday of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. While the ends of teleology – most namely a cultural hang-up of Christian eschatology and Westphalian political theology – had seen dozens of ruptures throughout human time as Lyotard expansively illustrates in his work, the epistemological slippages of modernity were revealed in the ruins of France, Italy, Germany, and Japan, as well as the creative and intellectual communities that erupted in these regions in the post-war period. Even in this brief history of postmodernism, I am aware of its own cyclical irony of explaining a grand narrative, that is, the grand narrative of historical emancipation through intellectual iconoclasm, as Lyotard describes. Yet, following Lyotard, the end of History is a concept that has been in a long line of substantial shifts in Western epistemology, eschatology, and the production of new temporal cosmologies, from the dawn of Christianity to the twilight of late capitalism, from the distant memories of the past to not so distant visions of techno-futures. Lyotard claims that to resist the hegemony of History and the State apparatus that seeks its systematic reproduction, the postmodern must emulate Nietzsche in eschewing the institutionalised (antiquarian) past, claiming that ‘it is necessary to admit an irreducible need for history understood [...] not as a need to remember or to project (a need for historicity, for accent), but on the contrary as a need to forget (a need for *metrum*)’, as Lyotard writes in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota University Press, 1984), p. 10. From Lyotard, we also see examples later in this chapter from Hegelian-Marxist Alexandre Kojève on the loss of History in the post-war American and Japanese consciousness, which would mobilise the American Republican political operative Francis Fukuyama to write a neo-conservative cultural polemic called *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), an ersatz-Kojèvean diatribe about the historical failure of communism, the heroic victory of late capitalism, and the unsettling terror associated with the rising socialist and socially progressive policies across the post-Soviet and overdeveloped world. Bruno Latour would later write an extensive response to Fukuyama in *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁴ For more on the term *world-image* in continental philosophy, see the works of Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger, and Gilles Deleuze. At the heart of this doctoral thesis is the question of visibility, mediation, and the ontology of historical and temporal discourse. I use the term *world-image* as a way to describe the assessment of the ontology (or in a Heideggerian register, an ‘is-ness,’ the study of ontics, or the viewed and perceived question of ‘what-is’) of this world and other worlds imagined, as well as a way to process the visual ontology, iconology, and semiotics of a world formed by otaku images. As W.T. J. Mitchell writes, ‘A sensible way to avoid the temptation of thinking about images in terms of images would be to replace the word “idea” in discussion of imagery with some other term like “concept” or “notion,” or to stipulate at the outset that the term “idea” is to be understood as something quite different from imagery or pictures’, in *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 5. Mitchell’s work poses a philosophical question about the relationship between representation (in art, language, semiotics) and material reality, and how we can reinterpret philosophical discourse through a symbolic and semiotic screen. Therefore, when Bergson refers to the material world as a collection of images, he contends that ‘Matter, in our view, is an aggregate of “images.” And by “image” we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less than that which the realist call a thing— an existence placed halfway between the “thing” and the “representation”’, in *Matter and Memory*, trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 9. Similarly, Heidegger refers to the ‘world picture’ to describe an anchoring of Being in our

seeks to identify otaku philosophies of world history, literature, and culture beyond the mere particularities of national proximities, identities, and geographies. Rather, in a transcultural and transtemporal projection, otaku producers like Gainax Studios examine ‘a sense of a future foreclosed’⁵ and ‘the end of History’, as diagnosed and described by thinkers including Jean-Francois Lyotard, Alexandre Kojève, Francis Fukuyama, and Bruno Latour. By reimagining world history (natural, human, and cosmic) in what Lamarre refers to as the ‘distributive field’ of historical and temporal thought,⁶ the otaku world-image meshes, blends, and integrates layers of historical fiction, science fiction, supernatural fantasy, magical realism, and posthuman cyberpunk into an expansive post-historical, cosmopolitan, and transcultural epistemological database. In this multimodal database and media ecology, alternating media forms (from manga to anime to video games) challenge modern conceits of teleological, nationalistic, or institutionalised historical discourse, offering both critiques and celebrations of a flattened, digitised world.⁷

material world as we see and interact with it: ‘World picture, when understood essentially, does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as a picture. What is, in its entirety, is now taken in such a way that it first is in being and only is in being to the extent that it is set up by man, who represents and sets forth. Wherever we have the world picture, an essential decision takes place regarding what is, in its entirety. The Being of whatever is, is sought and found in the representedness of the latter’, in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. by William Lovitt (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1977), p. 135. Finally, Deleuze and Guattari write a bold account of becoming in their assessment of Franz Kafka’s project of reinscribing representational forces, claiming that ‘[t]here is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject [...] The book as assemblage with the outside, against the book as image of the world’, in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (New York: Continuum, 1987), p. 13.

⁵ Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2014), p. 50.

⁶ Lamarre calls the distributive perceptual field a way of describing ‘[t]he dehierarchization of layers’ in animation theory. Lamarre explains that ‘[b]ecause all the sensory elements appear on the surface of the image (rather than arrayed and ordered in depth), the structuration of the perceptual field takes on new importance. This is not to say that the distributive field does away with movement. With the flattening of layers, the force of the moving image is spread across the surface of the image, as potential. The composition or structuration of elements then takes on greater importance in giving direction or orientation to the movement of surface depths (potentials)’. p. 110.

⁷ This concept of flattening can best be described by Manuel DeLanda’s concept of the production of a ‘flattened ontology’, or the dehierarchising of ontological relations between different subjects, objects, beings, things, ideas, concepts, etc., as he writes: ‘One philosophical consequence of this new conception of species must be emphasized: while an ontology based on relations between general types and particular instances is *hierarchical*, each level representing a different ontological category (organism, species, genera), an approach in terms of interacting parts and emergent wholes leads to a flat ontology, one made exclusively of unique, singular individuals, differing in spatiotemporal scale but not in ontological status’, in *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 47. DeLanda draws from Deleuze and Guattari’s spatial and philosophical mappings of nomadology in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

What is the Otaku World-Image?

The *otaku world-image* is a philosophical concept informed by Deleuze's comprehensive history of world cinema in *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*⁸ and *Cinema II: The Time-Image*.⁹ There are two ways of understanding this phrase. Let us start with the first topology: the world and cinema. As David Martin-Jones warns in the introduction of *Deleuze and World Cinemas*, '[a]pproaching world cinemas, using Deleuze, requires care. To attempt to validate Deleuze's ideas through their application to films from around the world would run the risk of imposing already Eurocentric conclusions onto cinemas that belong to very different, context-specific cultures and aesthetic traditions'.¹⁰ Indeed, Martin-Jones suggests that to avoid this imperial-ideological pitfall, we must examine world cinema(s) and media(s) as a way to describe 'the plurality of cinemas that exist globally', which in turn reveals the difference of many diverse cinematic histories and aesthetic visions.¹¹ By observing each cinema of difference from Argentine melodrama to South Korean sci-fi, Martin-Jones explores how world cinemas contribute to a transcultural and transnational web that reflects the social and ideological concerns of a globalised world and the rise of 'the global rhizome of world cinemas'.¹²

Furthermore, in congress with Martin-Jones' examination of Deleuzian film-philosophy and film history in world cinemas, this thesis blends together Deleuzian philosophies of world cinemas, literatures, and media with the millennial rise of what media and fan scholar Henry Jenkins refers to as 'pop cosmopolitanism'.¹³ Pop cosmopolitanism, is a transcultural phenomenon marked by global media convergence, defined by Jenkins as '[t]he ways that transcultural flows of popular culture inspire new forms of global consciousness and cultural competency'.¹⁴ More than just a mere replication of the polarising phenomena of either Theodor Adorno's discussion of the imperial hegemony of culture industries like

⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*, trans. by Hugu Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). Hereafter *C1*.

⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Bloomsbury, Academic, 2013). Hereafter *C2*.

¹⁰ David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze and World Cinemas* (London: Continuum, 2011). p. 2

¹¹ Martin-Jones, p. 3.

¹² Martin-Jones, p. 5.

¹³ Henry Jenkins, 'Pop Cosmopolitanism: Mapping Cultural Flows in an Age of Media Convergence', in *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Media Consumers in a Digital Age* (New York: New York University Press, 2006). pp. 152-72.

¹⁴ Jenkins, p. 156.

Disney,¹⁵ or Marshall McLuhan's idealised 'global village',¹⁶ Jenkins subtly argues that the interplay between corporate entities like Nintendo and grassroots convergence of fan cultures of otaku, for example, allows for a broad intercultural exchange of semiotics, aesthetics, and discourses that introduces non-native children consumers to global media. Jenkins clarifies that

pop cosmopolitanism may not yet constitute a political consciousness of America's place in the world (and in its worst forms, it may simply amount to a reformation of orientalism), but it opens consumers to alternative cultural perspectives and the possibility of feeling what Matt Hills calls 'semiotic solidarity' with others worldwide who share their tastes and interests.¹⁷

Moreover, for Jenkins, pop cosmopolitanism is a non-normative, vernacular, and in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, 'nomadic' space for cultural knowledge-production because it relies on non-native fans to actively engage and participate with the technologically rich and ideologically porous media distributed. As Thomas Lamarre reminds us, not only is otaku media transcultural, but it is transmedial as well:

In fact, what happens between anime and its viewers is so dynamic that *viewers* seems a somewhat outdated and passive term to describe a situation in which 'viewing' may cross into conventions, fanzines, amateur manga production (*dōjinshi*), cosplay (costume play), and fansubbing. There is also the dynamism of a culture industry that entails crossover or tie-in productions in the form of manga, light novels, character franchises, toys, music, video games, and other merchandise. An anime series or film might thus be thought of as the nodal point in a *transmedial network* that entails

¹⁵ For more on Theodor Adorno's critique of Walt Disney Productions, see Esther Leslie's 'Eye-Candy and Adorno's Silly Symphonies' in *Hollywood Flatlands: Animation, Critical Theory and the Avant-garde* (London: Verso, 2004). pp. 158-99.

¹⁶ Marshall McLuhan refers to the Age of Information as the dawn of the 'global village', which he describes as such: "Our specialist and fragmented civilization of center-margin structure is suddenly experiencing an instantaneous reassembling of all its mechanized bits into an organic whole. This is the new world of the global village [...] The electronic age cannot sustain the very low gear of a center-margin structure such as we associate with the past two thousand years of the Western world," in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994). p. 93.

¹⁷ Jenkins, p. 156.

proliferating series of narrative and nonnarrative forms across media interfaces and platforms, such as the computer, television, movie theater, and cell phone.¹⁸

By producing transmedial aesthetic-technological commodities that flow across transcultural telecommunicational lines, Japan's transnational project of rivalling America's soft-power exportation of Disney and Hollywood cinema signalled the rise of global exportation and localisation of manga, anime, and video games (in short, otaku culture). The nature of globalising otaku culture across diverse regions began as the expansion of a new world cinema and a minor art form itself: anime, or Japanese animated cinema and television serials. Different from the international appreciation of the films of Kurosawa Akira and Ozu Yasujiro, anime became popular throughout the world through Tezuka Osamu and Miyazaki Hayao's Disneyesque series and films like *Astro Boy* (Tezuka Productions, 1980) and *Castle in the Sky* (Studio Ghibli, 1986). The global interest in anime erupted in the 1980s and 1990s boom of *mecha* ('robot,' 'machine suit') series including *Mobile Suit Gundam* (Nippon Sunrise, 1979-80) and the Japanese-American venture *Voltron* (World Events Productions and Toei Animation, 1984) as well as tournament-style *shōnen* ('boys' adventures') adaptations like *Dragon Ball* (Tōei Animation, 1986-89) and *Pokémon* (Nintendo and OLM, 1997 –). Because of this international, corporate mobilisation of children's culture like *Power Rangers* and *Pokémon*, Japanese animation and visual culture is now a dominant element of global children's culture as well as age-queered varieties of adult nostalgic revivals, reboots, and remixes.¹⁹ Therefore, it is imperative that before we examine the ubiquitous yet very useful terminology of the *global turn* in contemporary cultural studies,²⁰ this reading of the otaku world-image must be undertaken with the understanding that otaku culture expresses its role in the globalised world by addressing many complex issues of cultural/media/image exchange. These conceptual questions about pop cosmopolitanism range from questions of how global

¹⁸ Lamarre, pp. xiii-xiv.

¹⁹ For a detailed history of the rise of contemporary otaku culture across the world, see Anne Allison's *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006).

²⁰ For more on the global turn, see *Art History in the Wake of the Global Turn*, eds., Jill H. Casid and Aruna D'Souza (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2014) and *The Global Turn: Theories, Research Designs, and Methods for Global Studies* by Eve Darian-Smith and Philip C. McCarthy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017). The global turn here could be marked by the decolonial/deprovincial thinkers ranging from the postcolonial voices of Dipesh Chakrabarty, Homi Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Achille Mbembe to contemporary post-Marxists like Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, David Harvey, Karatani Kōjin, Enrique Dussel, Giorgio Agamben, Abdullah Öcalan, and many more.

otaku engage with commodity aesthetics, how they challenge discourses of appropriation, hegemony, and influence, how they offer different modes of distribution through fan-based translations and digital forms of telecommunications, and finally, how otaku artefacts articulate the complexities of mediation between users and interfaces. Through these many questions of fan activities, we might more effectively analyse otaku culture in relation to other nomadic and rhizomatic communities ‘whose embrace of global popular media represents an escape route out of the parochialism of [one’s] local community’ as case studies of transcultural, transmedial, and transhistorical discourse.²¹

The second way of conceptualising the otaku world-image is not only understanding otaku culture as a media ecology, but additionally as a philosophical cosmology. When thinking about why world cinemas are so important in understanding global perception, we must first understand that global cinemas are not only a material collection of culturally, linguistically, or geographically specific histories or experiences created by filmmakers, that are then distributed abroad by corporations and consumed by either film connoisseurs at local theatres, film reviewers at festivals, or your average consumers viewing a world cinema on multiple platforms and devices. World cinema is in its simplest terms a philosophical schema, or an *abstract machine* in a Deleuzo-Guattarian register,²² that adds dimensions, textures, and layers to an image – or a *perception* – of the world that might at one point appear as homogenous, contiguous, or striated.²³ A world-image, or the imaging-of-the-world, describes a fractal or sliced perception of world, as Christopher Vitale writes: ‘The universe is nothing but a crystal of images, reflecting and refracting each other. Each entity, by slicing the universe up in its own way, produces its own cinema, framing and cutting, slicing and imaging’.²⁴ Since this understanding of a universal image of the world is informed by Henri Bergson’s philosophies of temporality and memory, the otaku world-image is a concept that is

²¹ Jenkins, p. 152.

²² Deleuze and Guattari define an *abstract machine* as such: ‘The diagrammatic or abstract machine does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality. Thus when it constitutes points of creation or potentiality it does not stand outside history but is instead always “prior to” history’, in *ATP*, p. 157.

²³ Deleuze and Guattari refer to *striation* as a spatialisation and visualization of hierarchicisation, explained in comparison to the understanding of the *smooth*, or the flattening of thought, representation, temporality, and bodies. For more of a comprehensive understanding of Deleuze and Guattari’s spatial terms, see ‘1440: The Smooth and Striated’ in *ATP*, pp. 523-51.

²⁴ Christopher Vitale, ‘Guide to Reading Deleuze’s *The Movement-Image*. Part I: The Deleuzian Notion of the Image, or Worldslicing as Cinema Beyond the Human’, from *Networkologies*: <https://networkologies.wordpress.com/2011/04/04/the-deleuzian-notion-of-the-image-a-slice-of-the-world-or-cinema-beyond-the-human/> [Accessed 7 November 2016].

informed by Deleuze's unique engagement with Bergson in his *Cinema* books, which will be explored in the further sections on my methodology. For now, I seek to frame anime as a world media and as world philosophy that allows us to examine how the otaku world-image is a term that might offer a new way of not only conceptualising Japan's role in the production of world cinemas. In a more nuanced way, understanding the otaku world-image is central in conceptualising two elements of anime production and the perceptions that are formed while engaging with anime: (a) Japan's role in shaping the way *the world looks at modern Japan*, and (b) *the way that modern Japan looks at conceptualising the world in its entirety*, in the slices, threads, and bits that contribute to a flattened, global topography or database.

It must also be understood that in any initial reading of anime culture, we must not essentialise or orientalise. One might be tempted to agree with Frederic Jameson that 'We cannot not periodize' in a bygone era of ahistorical postmodernity,²⁵ or to 'always deterritorialise', as Alexander Galloway claims is a motto that has become an even more problematic claim in our epoch defined by the gentrification and marketability of the faddish, buzz-feeding Deleuzoverse.²⁶ While this thesis hopes to avoid advocating an ahistorical or orientalist position, as well as challenge a proto-fascistic reaction to postmodernity and technological acceleration, it does, however, seek to use these complex intellectual positions as entry points into how manga, anime, and otaku culture is perceived in the broader aesthetic and philosophical discourse of modernity, history, and temporality, especially in the overdeveloped networks of Japan, Europe, and North America. It must be stated that this thesis focuses on the material media elements to explore the Deleuzian properties of temporal and historical thought. By recognizing that the 'rise of a new media environment' of globalised technologies and 'post-cinematic' artefacts²⁷ like portable manga, anime, and video games, Steven Shaviro writes that digital media's networked engagements with the real socio-political effects of 'globalization, financialization, post-Fordist just-in-time production and 'flexible accumulation' (as David Harvey calls it), the precarization of labor, and widespread micro-surveillance' is integral in understanding the media forms themselves, and the philosophies and affects they produce.²⁸ Following Shaviro, his thesis hopes to highlight how

²⁵ Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (New York: Verso, 2002). p. 29.

²⁶ Alexander Galloway, 'The Swervers', from *Culture and Communication*: <http://cultureandcommunication.org/galloway/the-swervers> [Accessed 14 September 2017].

²⁷ Steven Shaviro, *Post Cinematic Affect* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2010).

²⁸ Steven Shaviro, 'What is the post-cinematic', from Shaviro's personal film blog called *The Pinocchio Theory*: <http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=992> [Accessed 9 February 2018].

media ecologies can expose a network of what Deleuze calls *universal histories* of global capitalism, precarity, and overdevelopment, which all articulate the anxieties of the historical terminus, of ecological devastation, and the end of Man. Furthermore, it must be stated that anime culture should be situated into a broader, more generic global context of digital networks and their economies so to avoid reading the expansion of Japanese world cinemas and their medias in a clichéd and intellectually spurious framework of cultural essentialism, which is often manifesting as a techno-orientalist reaction against mass culture industry and the commodity economy of Japan.²⁹ While I do not speak for Japan, nor am I trained in years of Japanese language or literature, this thesis hopes to highlight those scholars that are, so that I might illustrate how Japan's visions of History are global articulations of the precarity and terror of our post-historical epoch, as Paolo Virno describes.³⁰

I must also state that I do not view the otaku world-image as a purely liberatory aesthetic, political, or social force: it is rather, a tool for the critical analysis of global culture industries, interest-driven networks, and mediated communities and assemblages. In any cultural-essentialist viewpoint, one might misidentify Japanese media industries as distraction economies of psychological displacement and technological replacement (holographic anime pop-idols, domestic robots servants, or mobile digital pets or spouses). In this context, my fellow Marxist critics might fall prey to an easily accessible critique which reduces otaku culture to crass, spectacular consumerism that is not worth study, or at least, is too readily understood as a corporate mouthpiece for affective, rhizomatic, and personalised elements of millennial consumption. Unfortunately, this appears too simplistic, Eurocentric, and technophobic. This is evidenced by the politically reactionary, intellectually elitist, and rhetorically technophobic outrages over the distraction economy of manga, anime, video

²⁹ Tatsumi Takayuki notices this pervasive nature of techno-orientalism in "Orientalism, Counterorientalism, New Exoticism," written in *Full Metal Apache: Transactions Between Cyberpunk Japan and Avant-Pop America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). p. 199.

³⁰ Paolo Virno describes the 'post-historical' condition of the twenty-first century as such: 'And yet the affirmation of an eternal present, a centripetal and despotic actuality, is provoked by déjà vu, namely by the form of experience in which there prevails – as Bergson put it – "the feeling that the future is closed, that the situation is detached from everything although I am attached to it". In capricious, rampant years of history, Karl Mannheim prophesied: "It is possible ... that in the future, in a world in which there is never anything new, in which all is finished and each moment a repetition of the past, there can exist a condition in which thought is utterly devoid of all ideological and utopian elements." A post-historical situation, then; but also, at the same time, a condition marked by the mnestic pathology of which we have already spoken: "there is never anything new ... each moment [is] a repetition of the past," in *Déjà Vu and the End of History*, trans. by David Broder (London: Verso, 2015). p. 9.

games, and other Japanese toys and merchandise entering the commodity-bloated West, which are perhaps best encapsulated by recent leftist responses to the augmented reality mobile game *Pokémon Go*, as popularised by Slavoj Žižek's lecture on digital monsters, virtual reality, and Nazism.³¹ I am in no way arguing against their positions about capital or consumerism, but I am, however, keenly pointing out that there are problems with foreclosing any discourse on global perception, *or the ways we perceive the global*, especially considering the mass appeal and popularity of Japanese anime and otaku culture across the converged, networked world of the twenty first century. Therefore, instead of speaking for Japan (a historical imperial power and neoliberal leader in its own right), this thesis hopes to speak up about how specific stories, concepts, forms, and machines that rework, reengineer, and reconstitute discourses on History, as McKenzie Wark introduces in his essay 'Otaku Philosophy', which effectively identifies the nuances of otaku consumer culture, knowledge production, and aesthetic movement through the intellectual history of postmodern discourse disseminated from continental Europe to Japan in the 1980s.³² Following Wark's lead, we might more effectively trace and identify otaku theories and practices in Deleuzian thought especially as they pertain to the contemporary wounds of an accelerated global modernisation. This may provide clarifications to the tenuous post-globalised negotiations between hardened capital and a brittle environment, of State/corporate propaganda and the difficulties of doing history right, of corporate producer and digital consumers, of labour's uneasy slippage into leisure, of the so-called East and West ideological divide, and so on and so forth. All these concepts must be taken into consideration when approaching a doubly materialist and abstracted project on mediations of history, modernity, and globalisation. This is especially important because otaku culture is a culturally mangled product of many transhistorical and critical imaginings, or what Deleuze refers to as 'fabulations', and therefore, retains a charge of minor art.³³

³¹ Socialism Or Barbarism!, 'Žizek Explains Pokemon Go', (12 February 2018) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_00g_G9wVY [Accessed 5 May 2018].

³² McKenzie Wark, 'Otaku Philosophy', in *Public Seminar* (23 September 2015) <http://www.publicseminar.org/2015/09/otaku-philosophy/> [Accessed 6 October 2015].

³³ Deleuze and Guattari's formulation of the term "fabulation" can be found in *What is Philosophy*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): "Creative fabulation has nothing to do with a memory, however exaggerated, or with a fantasy. In fact, the artist, including the novelist, goes beyond the perceptual states and affective transitions of the lived. The artist is a seer, a becomer [...] fabulation is the fabrication of giants. Whether mediocre or grandiose, they are too alive to be livable or lived," p. 171.

This thesis is a small step in a much longer journey into exploring the otaku world-image, especially as it relates to contemporary philosophical discourse and in the realm of global and media studies. The focus of this thesis reflects my interest in how the otaku world-image projects, rejects, and dissects History. This project asks: ‘how does one literally *do* history (historiography) *after* History (the ideological manifestation of teleology) in mediated formats?’ Or put it another way, how does any individual access a relationship with a historical presence (what might be called a specific feeling, understanding, or imagining of an historical event, a situation, a moment, or a persona) after experiencing globalisation and its technological tools? To go further, how does one even conceive of exploring alternative modes of *the historical* against the backdrop of the eschatological logic of human extinction brought on by the real effects of climate change, overpopulation, the depletion of fossil fuels, and extensive environmental degradation?

As Dipesh Chakrabarty clarifies, how is it that we are able to assess historiographic models outside of ‘the historicist paradox that inhabits contemporary moods of anxiety and concern about the finitude of humanity’, where our attempts at ‘historical understanding’ are consistently ‘thrown into a deep contradiction and confusion’ by very important and legitimate postmodern critiques of localisation, periodisation, provencialisation, teleological mapping, historical truthiness,³⁴ and historical determinism?³⁵ According to these questions and more, I hope to present how an otaku vision of world history might illustrate what the historical terminus looks like in speculative, imaginative, and networked fabulations, and how such a vision might further provide solutions through the unique aesthetic philosophies of otaku allegories and media practices.

Geeks, Killers, and Postmodernists: The Rise of Otaku Discourse in Japan

³⁴ Robin van der Akker on truthiness: ‘The term “depthiness” is a reference to both, as will be clear by now, Jameson’s notion of depthlessness and Stephen Colbert’s joke about “truthiness.” The comedian invented the term to criticize politicians’ tendency to bend the facts to fit their program. As he explained during his controversial speech at the White House Correspondents’ Dinner in 2006, where he took aim at then president George W. Bush: “Do you know that you have more nerve endings in your gut than you have in your head? You can look it up. And now some of you are going to say: I did look it up and that’s not true. That’s because you looked it up in a book. Next time look it up in your gut. My gut tells me that’s how our nervous system works ... I give people the truth unfiltered by rational arguments.” Colbert defines truthiness as the truth of the gut, unperturbed by empirical research or rational thought. It is a truth that feels true to me, or to you, but whose validity is not necessarily confirmed by science,’ in ‘The New “Depthiness”’, in *e-flux* 61 (January 2015). <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/61/61000/the-new-depthiness/> [Accessed 7 April 2015].

³⁵ Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘The Climate of History: Four Theses’, *Critical Inquiry* 35.2 (Winter 2009). p. 197.

As Japanese media philosopher Azuma Hiroki writes, the word *otaku* ‘is a general term referring to those who indulge in forms of subculture strongly linked to anime, video games, computers, science fiction, special-effects films, anime figurines, and so on’.³⁶ The word has spread across the globe as a specific way of defining a fan of Japanese comics, animation, and digital culture or toys, yet it has localised connotations throughout the world and even in Japanese rhizome of subcultures. With the global exportation of Japanese popular culture in the 1980s and 1990s, the word and concept of ‘otaku’ has gained attention among intellectuals, academics, journalists, and cultural critics for their two diverging connotations in Japan and abroad in North America and Europe. It is important to state that the history of the term has been problematised and intellectualised in public debates about art, politics, and postmodern thought, and I am only drawing on a brief introduction to non-expert readers so to trace its philosophical trajectory.

The inception of the term in public vernacular was the first shot fired in the public debate concerning the role of otaku in Japanese culture. In June 1983, journalist Nakamori Akio coined the phrase おたく / *otaku* (‘geek,’ or ‘fan,’) in his essay ‘Otaku’ no kenkyū (‘Otaku Research’), which was published in the niche adult and erotic comics magazine *Manga Burikko*, edited by the Marxist manga writer, illustrator, and theorist Ōtsuka Eiji.³⁷ In the English translation of Morikawa Kaiichirō’s essay on the emergence of otaku studies in the Japanese academy, Dennis Washburn writes:

‘Otaku’ is an honorific term used to refer to another person’s home – and when it is used in direct address, it means ‘your home.’ Many pronominal forms in Japan are based upon words that indicate place or direction (e.g. ‘kochira’ can refer to either the location ‘here’ or to the person in this location here, that is ‘I/me’), and so by analogy with those pronominal forms *otaku*, which refers to ‘your home,’ is used as a formal, honorific form for ‘you.’³⁸

³⁶ Azuma Hiroki, *Otaku: Database Animals*, trans. Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). p. 3.

³⁷ Nakamori Akio, ‘This City is Full of Otaku’, trans. by Matthew Alt from *Néojaponisme*: <<http://neojaponisme.com/2008/04/02/what-kind-of-otaku-are-you/>> and <<http://www.burikko.net/people/otaku01.html>> [Accessed 13 June 2018].

³⁸ Morikawa Kaiichirō, “おたく / Otaku / Geek,” trans. Dennis Washburn. (Berkeley: Center for Japanese Studies, 2012) <<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5zb9r8cr>> [Accessed 5 May 2018], p. 3.

In this context, the phrase was first used by fans of Japanese media fandoms as an ironic and endearing honorific that referred to the place where most fans would spend their free time: in their home, the space where they would often participate with their favourite media forms by making fan-comics, fan-fiction, fan-videos, fan-arts, etc. Nakamori, however, missed the irony. His essay is a divisive polemic, to say the least, which recounts his first time visiting Comiket (the Comic Market convention in Tokyo). The column is a brief, bullying tirade. He openly mocks, derides, and insults the readership of the magazine edited by and for otaku fans, derogatorily referring to fans of manga, anime, and other pulpy genres of narrative as ‘those kids [...] who never got enough exercise, who spent recess holed up in the classroom, lurking in the shadows obsessing over a *shogi* board or whatever’, who would wear hand-me-downs, broken glasses, and less fashionable outfits that were easily recognizable amid the conformist salaryman and sporty styles of 1980s Tokyo.³⁹

If the classist rhetoric was not insulting enough for readers of the magazine, Nakamori continues his assault by body shaming fan communities, referring to male fans as ‘borderline malnourished’ or ‘squealing piggies with faces so chubby the arms of their silver-plated eyeglasses were in danger of disappearing into the sides of their brow’, and female fans as ‘girls [who] sported bobbed hair and most were overweight, their tubby, tree-like legs stuffed into long white socks’.⁴⁰ Nakamori is further unnerved by the technological, aesthetic, and media-related hobbies that otaku engage in. He characterises otaku not as highly technically savvy folk-artists or as unpaid labourers and marketers for a growing global media economy, but rather, as

guys with every back issue of *SF Magazine* and the Hayakawa science-fiction novels lining their bookshelves, science fair types with coke-bottle glasses who station themselves at the local computer shop, guys who get up early to secure space in line for idol singer and actress autograph sessions, boys who spent their childhoods going to the best cram-schools but turn into timid fish-eyed losers.⁴¹

³⁹ Nakamori, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Nakamori, p. 3.

Nakamori often vilified otaku in his work, later describing them as ‘perverts with paedophilic tendencies’, who are further characterised as ‘mama’s boys’ afraid of playing sports or dating the opposite sex.⁴² Nakamori did not ever write for the magazine again, and yet, was the first to open the *otaku* debate in contemporary Japanese journalism and academic discourse.

Frederik L. Schodt recounts in *Dreamland Japan* that even though Nakamori’s obscure essay only made waves in a small fan magazine, ‘the mass media jumped on it’, and ‘Nakamori later confessed to mixed feelings about the phenomenon he had unleashed’, worrying that he had spun a popular narrative about ‘a huge population of young people obsessed with manga or anime or other hobbies – of socially inept young males, in particular seeking refuge in a fantasy world’.⁴³

After the publication of Nakamori’s inflammatory polemic in 1983, the Japanese mass media churned out hundreds of articles, columns, opinion pieces, and interviews on otaku culture. As Schodt writes, by the mid-1980s, the culture wars in Japan began. Defenders of otaku culture initially figures like editor-in-chief of *Manga Burikko*, Ōtsuka Eiji, and a founder of the first official anime studio Gainax, Okada Toshio, began to distribute manuals, pamphlets, short essays, and videos regarding the emerging subculture in Japan. Ōtsuka wrote back to Nakamori in the next issue of the magazine, remembering that he ‘objected to what Nakamori wrote, saying that the word “otaku” as he used it was not criticism, but rather “discrimination” (*sabetsu*)’.⁴⁴ Ōtsuka’s criticism sought to identify the otaku movement not only as a faddish cultural moment, but as a historical product of post-war Japanese innovations in media ecologies, economies, and technologies. While Nakamori’s column is perhaps closer to a mix of an angry tweet from an adolescent bully, Ōtsuka’s criticism of otaku culture is far more intellectually rigorous, and serious, decidedly rooted in historical, philosophical, and political research.⁴⁵

In this cultural climate, Ōtsuka defended otaku culture against a rising moral panic that erupted in Japan after two ‘weird global media events’,⁴⁶ as Wark calls them: the trial of the

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Frederik Schodt, *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2011). pp. 44-5.

⁴⁴ Ōtsuka Eiji, ‘Foreward: Otaku Culture as ‘Conversion Literature,’” in *Debating Otaku in Contemporary Japan: Historical Perspectives and New Horizons* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). p. xx.

⁴⁵ Ōtsuka, p. xxii

⁴⁶ McKenzie Wark, *Telesthesia: Communication, Culture, and Class* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012). p. 42.

‘Otaku Killer’ Miyazaki Tsutomu between 1990 and the Aum Shinrikyo sarin attack in Tokyo in 1995. 26-year-old Miyazaki, a serial child-killer, was charged with murdering, mutilating, and molesting four girls between the ages of four and seven. Japanese mass media coined the phrase ‘otaku killer’ after finding more than 5,700 VHS tapes of anime, slasher horror films, child pornography, including images and videos of his victims, and his own amateur *lolicon* (‘cute girl’) manga.⁴⁷ Ōtsuka recounts that he was asked to ‘become involved in the trial of the sexual perpetrator’ because of his expertise in otaku culture, but remembers that he ‘became somewhat angry about how judgment of his crimes kept shifting onto otaku hobbies or tastes’ rather than the crime, or the psychological state of Miyazaki.⁴⁸ Sharon Kinsella writes that because of the constant media coverage of his otaku obsessions, ‘[a] heavily symbolic debate ensued [after] Miyazaki’s arrest, in which his alienation and lack of substantial social relationships featured as the ultimate cause of his antisocial behavior’, even though dozens of accounts ‘described how Miyazaki’s mother had neglected her son so that “by the time he was two years old he would sit alone on a cushion and read *manga* books”’.⁴⁹ Just like the rise of American moral panic of hip-hop music and violent video games after the Columbine High School shooting in my hometown of Littleton, Colorado in 1999,⁵⁰ this event mobilised dozens of terrified parents, teachers, and students who feared that any subversive fan culture would produce disturbed, violent, and monstrous young men.⁵¹

During this time, the otaku discourse became inflamed by defenders and attackers of otaku culture, and yet, was not clearly contextualised as a movement. As always with fans of a marginalised, seemingly anti-authoritarian form of media like punk rock or hip-hop, otaku culture sought cultural, intellectual, and social legitimacy in dominant cultural outlets, as Azuma writes: ‘The severe otaku-bashing in the press in the wake of the Miyazaki incident incited a reverse reaction from otaku themselves, who have become hyper-conscious of their

⁴⁷ Ōtsuka Eiji, ‘An Unholy Alliance of Eisenstein and Disney: The Fascist Origins of Otaku Culture,’ trans. by Thomas Lamarre, in *Mechademia (Volume 8): Tezuka's Manga Life* (2013). p. 252.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Sharon Kinsella, ‘Japanese Subculture in the 1990s: Otaku and the Amateur Manga Movement,’ *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 24.2 (Summer, 1998). p. 309.

⁵⁰ For more information on the 1999 Columbine High School shooting in Littleton, Colorado and its relationship with the rise of moral panic, public outrage, and media censorship laws, see Henry Jenkins’ essay, ‘Professor Jenkins Goes to Washington’ in *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Media Consumers in a Digital Age* (New York: New York University Press, 2006). pp. 187-97.

⁵¹ Kinsella, p. 310

identity as otaku’.⁵² This would lead Okada Toshio to produce his parodic film *Otaku no Video* in 1994 and his book *Otakugaku nyūmon (An Introduction to Otakuology)* in 1996 in order to explain the cultural value of otaku culture.⁵³ Anno Hideaki, Okada’s college friend and colleague, directed *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, a postmodern gospel of otakuology in 1995,⁵⁴ which influenced more research into otaku culture, as Azuma reminds us: ‘once *Neon Genesis Evangelion* became a hit in 1995, and otaku culture gained wide attention, these issues gradually surfaced’.⁵⁵ However, that same year, a doomsday cult called Aum Shinrikyo, which was influenced by popular apocalyptic manga and anime and even produced its own manga marketing campaign, gassed the Tokyo subways with sarin, killing and injuring dozens of commuters.⁵⁶

Azuma writes that due to the constant attacks on otaku culture and the conservative backlash to youth culture, these events coincided with the rise of an intense campaign of defending otaku culture through the global *lingua franca* of twentieth century philosophical discourse: Eurocentric postmodernism. Traversing the works of Lyotard and Deleuze, ‘Okada called into question the way in which “otaku” had become a derogatory term and presented a redefinition of otaku as “those who possessed an evolved vision” – a “new type” of person responsive to the cultural conditions of a highly consumerist society’.⁵⁷ Azuma characterises Okada’s work as intellectually rigorous, yet equally ‘megalo-maniacal’ and ‘narcissistic’, which he finds to be a natural response to the reactive, conservative, and moralistic otaku-bashing that flooded mainstream Japanese discourse, and even academia: ‘voices of authority within mass media and public discourse [...held] a strong loathing for otaku behaviour, and the debate on otaku culture often face[d] resistance at that level, pre-empting any meaningful discussion’.⁵⁸

Okada, educated in Japanese art history while attending Osaka University of Arts, knew full well that to legitimise otaku culture, he would have to find a historical lineage for

⁵² Azuma, *Otaku*, p. 4.

⁵³ Lamarre, p. 144.

⁵⁴ Lamarre, p. 146.

⁵⁵ Azuma, p. 5.

⁵⁶ Richard A. Gardener, ‘Aum Shinrikyō and a Panic About Manga and Anime’, in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, ed. by Mark W. MacWilliams (London: Routledge, 2008). p. 210-11.

⁵⁷ Azuma, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

this emergent form of media. Marc Steinberg notes that Okada's process of legitimising the low theory of otaku culture was inspired by Ōtsuka Eiji's Deleuzo-Barthesian fan handbook *A Theory of Narrative Consumption* as well as 'Edo terminology and cultural forms', which encouraged Okada to produce 'a theory of the *otaku*, whom he describes as a "new type" of advanced life form who "leads informatic capitalist society"'.⁵⁹ Okada was not the only otaku-academic to identify manga and anime culture to Edo mass culture and proletarian art movements of early modern Japan. Murakami Takashi, Japan's most popular contemporary artist, wrote a similar theoretical defences of otaku culture in his 2000 catalogue called *Superflat*. In his essay on superflat theory, Murakami refers to superflatness as a 'sensibility that has contributed to and continues to contribute to the construction of Japanese culture, as a worldview, and [...] is an original concept that links the past with the present with the future'.⁶⁰ Lamarre explains that Murakami's theory of superflat posits that the flattening of layers structures 'the image in such a way as to bring everything to the surface'.⁶¹ Superflat theory is often characterised by a 'flattening and dehierarchizing of the layers of the image', and in this context, Lamarre describes the phenomenon of superflat as such:

When the background does not look farther away than the foreground, your eyes cannot detach, isolate, and hierarchically order the elements in the image. Instead, your eyes follow the lines that zigzag across the surface. Such images are structured to encourage lateral movement of eyes. Eyes begin scuttling, meandering, scanning, as if restlessly oscillating around a center that remains nonlocalizable.⁶²

Murakami, who completed his doctoral thesis on Edo *nihonga* ('Japanese art,' 'theory of Japanese painting') at Tokyo University of the Arts, compares Hokusai's famous Edo period woodcuts, prints, and scroll-paintings with 1970s sci-fi anime, for example, as Steinberg writes:

⁵⁹ Marc Steinberg, 'Otaku Consumption, Superflat, and the Return to Edo,' *Japan Forum* 16.3 (2004): 449-71. (p. 453).

⁶⁰ Murakami Takashi, *Superflat*, (Los Angeles Museum of Modern Art: Madora Shuppan, 2000). p. 5.

⁶¹ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 111.

⁶² *Ibid.*

What he constructs through this juxtaposition is thus not a history in the usual sense, but rather a diagram of relations; a diagram which produces these relations even as it draws them out. There is the similarity in form and lines between stills of Kanada's *Galaxy Express 999* (1979) and one of Hokusai's *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji: Yamashita shiro ame* (1831): the zigzagging lines over a curved form (earth in one case, Mount Fuji in the other) and the use of colour to differentiate forms and orient the viewer rather than technologies of depth (such as one-point perspective).⁶³

From Edo paintings to post-war Japanese visual media, Murakami provides a compelling anticolonial revision of Japanese art history that challenges the aesthetic and philosophical hegemony of Eurocentric modernity and postmodernity, making otaku culture the most and first postmodern form founded in the Edo period.

However, while Okada and Murakami attempt to reclaim *Japaneseness* after American occupation and rapid technological modernisation in the post-war generation, Lamarre writes that in any materialist and technological approach to manga and anime, it is best to be careful with Murakami's postmodern reappraisal of Japanese art history, primarily because it essentialises an aesthetic, cultural, and technological history as 'another discourse on Japanese uniqueness (*Nihonjinron*), which celebrates Japan as always already postmodern'.⁶⁴ In this highly essentialised context, Murakami produces his own false binaries of East-West, modern-postmodern, and structure-nonstructure, as Lamarre concludes:

Superflat theory develops an opposition between Western modernity and Japanese postmodernity, which it posits at the level of the structuration of the visual field. It thus tends to reify an opposition between (a) modern compositional structures of depth with hierarchical ordering of elements versus (b) postmodern structures of superflatness with nonhierarchical distribution of elements. Everything boils down to a strict divide between Cartesianism and superflat, to shore up a structural divide between modern Western visuality and postmodern Japanese visuality.⁶⁵

⁶³ Steinberg, p. 466.

⁶⁴ Lamarre, p. 114.

⁶⁵ Lamarre, p. 113.

Similarly, Azuma also responds to the otaku-Edo historical debate, writing that instead of seeking a premodern lineage for manga or anime production and consumption, otaku culture is a response to a more recent historical phenomenon of consumer capitalism:

The history of otaku culture is one of adaptation – of how to “domesticate” American culture. This process also perfectly epitomizes the ideology of Japan during the period of high economic growth. Therefore, if at this time we perceive a Japanese aesthetic in the composition of anime and special effects, it is also necessary to recall that neither anime nor special effects existed in Japan prior to a few decades ago and that their process of becoming “Japanese” is rather convoluted. Otaku may very well be heirs to Edo culture, but the two are by no means connected by a continuous line. Between the otaku and Japan lies the United States.⁶⁶

Steinberg, too, concludes that ‘[t]he attempt to inscribe “Japaneseness” in otaku [...] is an attempt to negate the post-war influence of America on Japanese culture,’ in which the cultural and corporate ‘affirmation of otaku culture and Japan in general is linked to the 1980s “delusion” that, if modernization was the equivalent of Europeanization, then postmodernization was manifested in two forms (either Americanization or Japanization) and that world history had chosen Japanization’.⁶⁷

While Okada and Murakami sought to legitimise otaku culture as a post-colonial response to not only American occupation but a swift century of Westernisation (from roughly 1868-1960 C.E.), Azuma and Ōtsuka are wary about the nationalistic rise of promoting otaku culture to defy and challenge the trade blocs of inter/post-Cold War North America, the European Union, and the rest of East Asia. According to Azuma, the otaku subculture is an ideal avatar for post-war Japan, primarily because it is a hybridised, mangled, and culturally ambivalent product of forced Westernisation, rapid industrialisation and technological modernisation. Azuma further contends that the rise of otakuism expresses the cultural trauma of defeat after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the humiliation of American occupation, which was intensified by pseudo-colonial dependence on American economic interests and technologies. In understanding the formulation of otaku culture in Japan and abroad, Ōtsuka

⁶⁶ Azuma, *Otaku*, p. 11.

⁶⁷ Steinberg, p. 458.

argues that the growth of the heavily technologically mediated and visually-grounded media subculture can be viewed as a post-Cold War icon of global, capitalist jockeying for cultural influence, a transformation of a military-industrial complex into an entertainment-industrial complex. Azuma claims that '[I]urking at the foundations of otaku culture is the complex yearning to produce a *pseudo-Japan* once again from American-made material, after the destruction of the "good old Japan" through the defeat in World War II'.⁶⁸ As Azuma notes, the media-art-technology exchange between the U.S. and Japan between the post-war era and Information Age highlights not only the obvious markers of cultural exchange (or hegemony), but also how media production, consumption, fan participation, and the expansion of aesthetic commodity discourse are responsible for propagating both states' techno-capitalist ideologies of individualism, technological advancement, and personalised, affective models of media consumption.

This returns us to the problem of otaku criticism. While Azuma and Ōtsuka defend otaku culture against conservative moral panic, both theorists find themselves pitted against the formulaic State appropriation of the emergent otaku culture.⁶⁹ Both critics are also consistently ambivalent about the role of otaku culture in institutionalised or amateur intellectual communities. Azuma, a trained academic and a self-identifying otaku, finds his work as a defence of culture industry and a legitimisation of institutional knowledge-production centres, like the academy.⁷⁰ Ōtsuka, who once produced manuals for amateur media-mixing,⁷¹ recently found himself at an impasse with the Japanese university institutionalisation of otaku discourse, which he fears promotes a dehistoricised and depoliticised discourse that has yet to come to terms with the fascistic, militaristic, nationalistic, and capitalistic ideologies enmeshed in the formulations of otaku culture.⁷² As recently as 2015, Ōtsuka has called otaku culture a style of 'conversion literature' for what he

⁶⁸ Azuma, p. 13.

⁶⁹ For more on my Marxian inflected theories of State appropriations of subcultures, countercultures, or oppositional cultures, see Raymond Williams' essay 'Base and Superstructure' in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). pp. 75-82. Moreover, in the introduction of Dick Hebdige's iconic *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1988), Williams' cultural theory is cited and built upon through vernacular examples of post-war British subcultures. Williams is responsible for drawing out Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's work on hegemony and ideology into a broader Anglophone discourse on culture, art, literature, and power, and Hebdige continues the tradition by assessing punk, glam, and goth culture.

⁷⁰ Azuma, p. 54.

⁷¹ Ōtsuka, 'Foreward,' p. xiii.

⁷² Ōtsuka, p. xvi.

sees as neutered political radicals and intellectuals of the failed leftist movements of the 1960 Anpo riots against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (an extension of occupation) and the 1968 activism of Zenkyōtō, the Japanese Marxist student movement, who ended up in the late 1970s ‘[a]bandoning Marxism and taking up semiotics’.⁷³ Noting that almost all of the founders of otaku media were once associated with the New Left in Japan, Ōtsuka writes

These defeated members of the student movement acquired nourishment to live from the lowest levels of the Japanese industry and media hierarchy, children’s culture, or from TV, which was still of low status, or from underground media such as pornography magazines and “pink films”.⁷⁴

Furthermore, while early anime thinkers engaged within the underground art scene, the gritty proletarian art movement of *gekiga* (‘dramatic pictures’) manga was founded by worker-artists like Shirato Sanpei and Tatsumi Yoshihiro who wrote manga critiquing historical class struggle, poverty, war, nationalism, Westernisation, and the everyday structural violence experienced in newly industrialised Japanese cities like Nagoya, Kobe, or impoverished portions of Tokyo.⁷⁵ Ōtsuka argues, however, that this seemingly politically-charged art movement transformed from a leftist avant-gardism into a neoliberal evangelism, a cathartic purging of radicalism for the sake of bourgeois consumption: ‘gekiga, mediated by the Zenkyōtō movement into the 1970s, changed from “working-class” culture to the white-collar culture of “university students”. The result: de-politicization (*datsu-seijika*) of gekiga and its incorporation (*taiseika*)’.⁷⁶

While I seek to qualify Ōtsuka’s position on the lost political value of gekiga and its otaku successors throughout Chapters One, Two, and Three, it is still important to illustrate how politics, art, and philosophy intersect at the rise and proliferation of otaku culture to this day in Japan and abroad. Because of this, Ōtsuka emphasises the cultural importance of historicising and politicising otaku cultural development and discourse in global Marxian contexts, which Ōtsuka observes, is a limited element in dominant discourse on otaku fan culture, especially in the Japanese academy. Frustrated by the institutionalisation of otaku

⁷³ Ōtsuka, p. xviii.

⁷⁴ Ōtsuka, p. xvi.

⁷⁵ Ōtsuka, p. xvii.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

thought into the academy, Ōtsuka directs much of his criticism at New Academism. Azuma associates New Academism with a pop Japanese postmodernism, defined as ‘a complex and difficult discourse that grew out of an amalgamation of structuralism, Marxism, theories on consumer society, and critical theory [which] was acclaimed outside universities in the mid-1980s as a fashionable mode of thought for the younger generation’, most often identified as ‘a fad in theory’ as much as a trend in vernacular discourses in fashion magazine columns, film reviews, and advertising campaigns.⁷⁷ For this reason, Ōtsuka claims that ““otaku” and their “culture” becoming an object of academic attention is an accurate reflection of the state of affairs where “jokes” (*jōdan*) have been converted into something “serious” (*honki*) in Japan in the past thirty years’, associating the otaku insurgency in New Academism with the Sokal affair that took place in the United States in 1996.⁷⁸ Ōtsuka responds to the influx of otaku discourse in New Academism in his debates with not only Azuma, but also with cultural theorist Miyadai Shinji, who like Azuma, was also armed with continental European postmodern and post-structural philosophy.⁷⁹ Azuma and Miyadai, as Ōtsuka remembers, were both students of Asada Akira at the University of Tokyo, the Japanese translator of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Jacques Lacan, and Jean-Francois Lyotard in between 1985 and 1996.⁸⁰ Ōtsuka claims that by associating otaku culture with the New Left, radical avant-gardism, or an enlightened liberation of capital and consumption, his academic and artistic peers risked undervaluing how quickly postmodern theory (and Eurocentric thought) transformed into a hip marketing ploy deployed by media executives, state-funded academics, and the broader national Japanese consumer bureau to promote a nationalistic exportation of soft power.⁸¹

According to Ōtsuka, the dehistoricisation and depoliticisation of otaku culture traces the process of a co-optation by the State, which has been identified by cultural Marxists like Louis Althusser and Raymond Williams as the hegemonic integration of emergent or

⁷⁷ Azuma, p. 16.

⁷⁸ Ōtsuka, p. xvi. For more information on Alan Sokal’s hoax on the Marxist academic journal *Social Text*, see Alan Sokal’s *Beyond the Hoax: Science, Philosophy and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁷⁹ Ōtsuka, p. xvii.

⁸⁰ Asada Akira, *Kōzō to chikara* (Structure and power), (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1983). For more on Asada’s work, see Azuma’s *Otaku: Database Animals*, p. 16 and p. 126 (note 27). See this article posted on *Néojaponisme* for more context: <<http://neojaponisme.com/2011/05/06/structure-and-power-1983/>> [Accessed 12 June 2018].

⁸¹ Patrick W. Galbraith, Thiam Huat Kam and Björn-Ole Kamm. *Debating Otaku in Contemporary Japan: Historical Perspectives and New Horizons*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). p. xvi.

oppositional cultural forces into the ideology of a ruling superstructure.⁸² Sanitised of historical or political charges, Ōtsuka claims that the initial foundations of the otaku subculture – which was at once at the forefront of New Left youth movements in Japan – transformed into a militant semiotic insurgency (à la Barthes, Deleuze, Baudrillard), which Ōtsuka identifies as one of the prevailing failures of the promises of vernacular Marxism and the prime contributor to the accelerated sense of historical loss and amnesia in contemporary Japan. For this reason, Ōtsuka warns that otakuism should not be viewed as a blueprint for what Japan *was* (as a premodern fantasy), what Japan *is* (as a highly optimised version of American or European technologies or philosophies), or what Japan *will be* some day (as some utopian playland of liberation). In this context, it is no wonder that when Marxist theorist Alexander Kojève visited Japan, he envisioned post-war Japan as a confused, schizoid, and dehumanised dystopia, a place where all culture was hollowed out by a highly integrated form of consumer capitalism. Like Ōtsuka, Kojève responded to his time in Japan and the United States as case studies for the end of Man and History, as he articulates in a frustrated Hegelianism:

If Man becomes an animal again, his arts, his loves, and his play must also become purely “natural” again. Hence it would have to be admitted that after the end of History, men would construct their edifices and world of art as birds build their nests and spiders spin their webs, would perform musical concerts after the fashion of frogs and cicadas would play like young animals, and would indulge in love like adult beasts.⁸³

Accordingly, then, the naturalized otaku vision of millennial Japan (and the globe) appears to Ōtsuka as a manufactured, reengineered, and wholly inventive world historical imaginary of flatness, optimisation, speed, and immanence that makes ‘database animals’ of consumers as Azuma writes, which further promotes a new world-image of History either at its own terminus or in agonizing entropy. Kojève calls this the *post-historical condition* of post-war

⁸² Williams, ‘Base and Superstructure’, p. 122-3.

⁸³ Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. by Raymond Queneau and Allan Bloom, trans. by James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980). p. 159.

Japan and the United States, a historical consciousness that lacks all class consciousness and cultural memory, an ahistorical *habitus* that recreates the whole of social life into discrete yet networked modes of individuated consumption.⁸⁴

It is in this context that this thesis seeks to address Ōtsuka's questions about historicisation and politicisation as much as the aesthetic, ontological, and semiotic questions posed, as he writes:

It appears as though “otaku” culture itself has been scrupulously de-politicized, but those currently responsible for it are also the bearers of historical revisionism and neoliberalism in Japan. Against a state of affairs of de- or anti-politicization (*datsu naishi hi seijika*) and de-historicization (*datsu rekishika*), it need not even be said that there is nothing to be gained from contemporary de-politicized and de-historicized “otaku” or “otaku” theory.⁸⁵

Following Ōtsuka, I argue that when approaching a critical otaku theory, we must think about its relationship with *historical philosophy* as it is expressed in the context of otaku reinvention, revision, and replications of histories. What we might find, instead, is that otaku theories of History have the potential of expressing vernacular ways of integrating expansive discourses on global historical thought by posing questions about what constitutes the ahistorical versus the post-historical, or the post-historical versus the transhistorical. In another way, what can otaku theories say about the philosophical character of the otaku imaginary, and how can they help explore what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘a Nomadology, the opposite of a history?’⁸⁶

‘Gasping for Breath’: The Dizzying Acceleration of Modern Japan

Before we assess the Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophical concepts of *nomadology* and *fabulation*, I want to follow Ōtsuka in historicising and politicising one of the central concerns of otaku philosophies of history: *modernity*. Bruno Latour, in *We Have Never Been Modern*, defines *the modern* as an ‘adjective [that] designates a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture,

⁸⁴ Kojève, p. 162.

⁸⁵ Ōtsuka, p. xvii.

⁸⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 25

a revolution in time. When the word or appears, we are defining, by and stable past'.⁸⁷ As Peter Haidu affirms, any quick etymology of *modern* is exceptionally important in understanding that its meaning is wrapped in an asymmetrical reflection of its antipode: the *ancient*.⁸⁸ *Modernus*, or the state of being in the present, *modo* ('just now') in Late Latin, then transformed into the Middle French *moderne*, an adjective that was as opposed to *ancien* from the Latin *ante* ('before'). This split expressed in intellectual thought occurred, as James O'Donnell writes, in differentiating the temporal categorisation between a current Christian scholar and a scholar in the pagan era.⁸⁹ David Boruchoff contextualises this temporal differentiation as an ideological one, where the medieval Christian scholastics viewed their position as dominant, enlightened, and progressive, which carried onto the seventeenth century French academy in the form of the 'Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns', which would shape the works of Bacon, Rabelais, and Descartes.⁹⁰ Latour writes that the intellectual debate between the ancient-modern has been a game of cultural and intellectual hegemony since the medieval period, and even in that case, the meaning of both has yet to truly remain fixed in its image and meaning. Because of this, Latour notices that in contemporary Western society, even the Modern has lost its original meaning, being replaced with 'contemporary', because the postmodern rupture articulated by Lyotard and Baudrillard saw the dismantling of the hegemony of the Modern and its ideological fixations.⁹¹ Latour concludes that the word modern

is always being thrown into the middle of a fight, in a quarrel where there are winners and losers, Ancients and Moderns. "Modern" is thus doubly asymmetrical: it designates a break in the regular passage of time, and it designates a combat in which there are victors and vanquished.⁹²

⁸⁷ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Peter Haidu, *The Subject Medieval/Modern: Text and Governance in the Middle Ages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004). p. 1.

⁸⁹ James O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). p. 16.

⁹⁰ David A. Boruchoff, 'The Three Greatest Inventions of Modern Times: An Idea and Its Public' in *Entangled Knowledge: Scientific Discourses and Cultural Difference*, ed. by Klaus Hock and Gesa Mackenthun. (New York: Waxmann, 2012). pp. 133-63.

⁹¹ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.11.

⁹² Latour, p. 10.

Through this history, *modernus* should be understood as a hegemonic imposition of progress, acceleration, and historical privileging of advancement. This is perhaps why modernity is associated with colonialism and imperialism, from the medieval period onward into the colonial Renaissance.⁹³ To understand Japanese modernity, however, one must understand a mutated history of colonial, imperial, and technological integration. Many historical and cultural critics of modern Japan claim that modernisation in Japan is marked by its relationship with other modern philosophies and technologies, especially those from the colonial powers of Prussia, France, Britain, and the United States. Harry Harootunian theorises ‘that Japan’s modernity, far from moving toward the achievement of true time, as if there were a developmental archimedean point [...] was rather an inflection of a larger global process that constituted what might be called co-existing or co-eval modernity’.⁹⁴ For this reason, many historians of Japanese modernity find the process of modernising Japan as a technologically-driven process, where the intercultural linkages between the West and the East shaped Japan going forward, from the Portuguese arrival of 1543 to the American ‘opening of Japan’ in 1853. In these histories of Japanese modernity, disparate events of technic and cultural rupture align with scientifically and technologically deterministic vision of how Japan’s process of *becoming-modern* was conceptualised. David Nye targets the arrival of Portuguese explorers and their guns in 1543, which he illustrates would alter the wars of the Sengoku period irrevocably.⁹⁵ Timon Screech examines the 1609 arrival of the Dutch East India Company into the trading port of Nagasaki and the introduction of optical devices and geometry manuals, which he views as the transformation of Japanese science and painting.⁹⁶ Regardless of these dominant, monolithic historical readings of modernisation, the myth of modern Japan persists. Daisuke Miyao moves Japanese modernity much further up on the timeline, arguing that the

⁹³ This by no means would invalidate the historical realities of colonisation in premodern societies. However, like with all aspects of *becoming-modern*, the relationship between the colonial, the imperial, and the proto-capitalist is often tied inextricably with the expansive Eurocentric projects of exploration, scientism, Christianisation, and the rise of the Westphalian state. For more on these relationships and distinctions, see John Ganim’s *Medievalism and Orientalism: Three Essays on Literature, Architecture, and Cultural Identity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), Kathleen Davis’ *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism & Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), and Andrew Cole and D. Vance Smith’s *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages: On the Unwritten History of Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁹⁴ Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). p. xvi.

⁹⁵ David Nye, *Technology Matters: Questions to Live With* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006). p. 17.

⁹⁶ Timon Screech, *The Lens Within the Heart: The Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i, 2002). p. 183.

introduction of Thomas Edison's kinetoscope to Japan in 1896 and the Lumière cinematograph in 1897 by entrepreneur Inabata Katsutarō saw the mobilisation of cinematic technologies that would allow Japanese filmmaking to thrive and repeatedly challenge the dominance of American, French, and German cinema at moments of historical rupture, like in the 1920s, 1940s, and 1960s.⁹⁷

Problematically, however, while these examples are intriguing micro-histories of cultural contact and technological convergence, they often smack of technologically determinism. Even if these events reveal historical slices of the larger totality and realisation of technological modernity in Japan, the teleological (and capitalist) process of modernisation is multidirectional, slippery, and at times, imperceptible, bordering on overdetermined, as Althusser writes:

Here again, we must not be taken in by the appearance of an arbitrary succession of dominations; for each one constitutes one stage of a complex process (the basis for the “periodization of history”) and the fact that we are concerned with the dialectics of a complex process is the reason why we are concerned with those overdetermined, specific “situations,” “the stages,” “phases” and “periods,” and with the mutations of specific domination that characterize each stage.⁹⁸

In a similar move, as early as 1911, Sōseki Natsume – one of Japan's first modernist novelist and a founder of Japanese literary theory, called *bunkuron* (‘theory of literature’), spoke in Tokyo in a lecture entitled *Gendai nihon no kaika* (‘The Civilization of Modern-Day Japan’) – introducing a forty-year retrospective on the occidentalism,⁹⁹ Meiji reforms from 1868

⁹⁷ Miyao Daisuke, *The Aesthetic of Shadows: Lighting and Japanese Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013). p. xi.

⁹⁸ Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005). p. 211.

⁹⁹ For more on occidentalism in Japanese and Chinese histories of modernisation, see Rachael Hutchinson's essay ‘Occidentalism and the critique of Meiji: the West in the returnee stories of Nagai Kafu’ in *Japan Forum* 13.2 (2001): pp. 195-213. Hutchinson also has a monograph dedicated to the subject in *Nagai Kafu's Occidentalism: Defining the Japanese Self* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011). See also Xiaomei Chen's *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-discourse in Post-Mao China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). To understand the transmission and mutation of occidentalism throughout Asia in the twentieth century, see Ichiyo Muto's essay ‘Asia, Inter-Asia, and Movement: Decolonization into the Future’ in *Cultural Studies* 11. 2 (2010): pp. 178-83.

onward.¹⁰⁰ In short, Sōseki, in the midst of modernisation, saw the overdetermination of the historical process as Althusser describes. Highly critical of rapid Westernisation of Japan as well as the colonial enterprise established in Korea and Manchuria, Sōseki began formulating an antimodernist critique of Japanese acceleration in his late works before dying in 1916. Sōseki, like other early twentieth century critics of modernity across the world including T.S. Eliot in the United States, Walter Benjamin in Germany, W.H. Auden in the United Kingdom, and Sergei Eisenstein in the Soviet Union, began to critically assess the rise of technological modernity, which could be witnessed in the mechanisation of labour, warfare, colonialism, art, philosophy, politics, and the urban spaces of cities like Paris, London, Berlin New York, and Tokyo. As Harootunian contends, within the everyday lives of those who interacted in these cosmopolitan cities in flux, ‘modernity was seen as a spectacle of ceaseless change (and the narrative of historical progress and the law of capitalist expansion) and the specter of unrelieved uncertainty introduced by a dominant historical culture no longer anchored in fixed values but in fantasy and desire’.¹⁰¹ In the lecture, Sōseki remarks on the rapid modernisation of Japan that began between 1868 and the 1880s. Sōseki asks his audience if the emotional pain, psychic toll, and identity crisis that gripped Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century was worth the benefits of a modern industrial capitalist society. Sōseki reconsiders the mechanisation of agrarian labour (“labor-conserving means”), the urbanisation of mass populations into economic centres, and the redistribution of the land for the purpose of national commerce over feudal dominion, worrying that rapid modernisation lead to the mass production of an illusion of civilisation, marked by the rise of a technologically-advanced society of leisure, art, and culture (“area, zone, or place of amusements”).¹⁰²

Sōseki further explains that the formulation of Japanese modernity did not arise from the natural causes of cultural contact with external forces that occurred throughout Japan’s history of foreign policy with Korea, China, India, and Oceania. Rather, Sōseki found that it was the pace, intensity, and speed at which contact was made resulted in identifying Japanese modernisation as a peculiar experience, especially compared to other cultural powers in Asia. Sōseki refers to this intervention as the uneasy ‘Anglo-Japanese alliance’, marked by the 1853

¹⁰⁰ Sōseki Natsume, ‘The Civilizations of Modern-Day Japan’, trans. Jay Rubin, in *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature*, ed. by J. Thomas Rimer and Van C. Gessel (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). pp. 315-21.

¹⁰¹ Harootunian p. xix.

¹⁰² Sōseki, p. 319-20.

American arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry's naval fleet in the Edo Bay, where Perry and his fleet of steamships directed its guns at the harbour, demanded the opening of Japan for a free-trade diplomacy. Fearing invasion and occupation Sōseki claims that the Japanese State accommodated itself for American imperialism. As with all discourses on imperialism and colonialism, Sōseki grew unhappy with the rapid and unnatural ways Japan was compelled to modernise, claiming:

Japan has gone along developing by internal motivation until, at long last, it brings its civilization to a complexity level of ten. We've just barely managed to reach that point, when, all of a sudden, out of the clear blue sky, a civilization that has advanced to a complexity level of twenty or even thirty comes along and crashes into us. Because of the pressure this new civilization exerts on us, we have no choice but to develop in unnatural ways. And so the civilization of Japan today does not plod along at its own steady pace, but instead it leaps ahead from one desperate round to the next. Lacking the freedom to climb the stairway of civilization one step at a time, we take a stitch here and a stitch there with the biggest needle we can find. For every ten feet of ground we cover, we touch down on only one, virtually missing the other nine.¹⁰³

Note that first, Sōseki defines civilisation (and the history of such) as 'the process of the development of man's vital energies', expressing a Hegelian perception of teleological and metaphysical historical development.¹⁰⁴ Both as a student of the Westernised Tokyo Imperial University and the first Japanese scholar of English Literature at Cambridge, England between 1900-1902, Sōseki certainly had knowledge of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's work, and exhibits his interest in art and world history.¹⁰⁵ Evidence of this appears throughout this lecture, in his theoretical writings on Japanese literature, as well as in his novel *Kusamakura* ('The Grass Pillow,' 1906).¹⁰⁶ I point to this Hegelian position for a reason: as the lecture illustrates, Sōseki does not ask for a new way for Japan to conceptualise modernity, nor does

¹⁰³ Sōseki, p. 319.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Inger Sigrun Brodey, 'Introduction' in *My Individualism and the Philosophical Foundations of Literature* by Sōseki Natsume and trans. by Sammy I. Tsunematsu (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2004). p. 12.

¹⁰⁶ Annette Thorsen Vilslev, 'Questioning Western Universality: Sōseki's Theory of Literature and His Novel *Kusamakura*', in *Japan Forum* 29.2 (2016): pp. 257-78.

his lecture reveal a nomadology of Japan amidst the West's History of Progress. Rather, more conservatively, he finds progress inevitable. However, it is the pace and force that concerns him. If it is true, as Hegel writes in *The Philosophy of History*, that the 'basis of civilization is advancing to intelligent reflection and to general forms of thought',¹⁰⁷ whereby progress is measured by the art-religion-philosophy trinity, the solidification of *the State* and the refinement of its laws, then what happens when an accelerated modern culture like Japan is unable to identity itself in the mirror? Hegel argues that this is a symptom of collapse, where a culture loses sight of its *Geist* ('the Spirit [of history]') in the wake of domination from outside forces and the loss of Freedom: 'The History of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom'.¹⁰⁸

Therefore, in this lecture, Sōseki fears that the synthetic, Westernised forms of an accelerated progression shapes the psyche of a people, making that Japan feel as though it is held captive by modernism, stuck 'sitting at a dinner table and having one dish after another set before us and then taken away so quickly that, far from getting a good taste of each one, we [us Japanese] can't even enjoy a clear look at what is being served. A nation, a people, that incurs a civilization like this can only feel a sense of emptiness, of dissatisfaction and anxiety'.¹⁰⁹ Sōseki claims simply that Japan should slow down, err on the side of caution in the colonisation of Korea and Manchuria, and return to an introspective criticism of accelerated Westernisation in education and in government. Sōseki concludes that even with these prescriptions, Japan is doomed to be eternally afflicted by 'an incurable nervous breakdown', and that this sickly Japan would be forced to run at an unimaginable pace to keep up with the West, only to consistently 'fall by the wayside gasping for breath'.¹¹⁰ This account of Japanese 'modern history' is still incredibly problematic, yet I mention Sōseki's lecture so to clarify the fraught nature of modernity in Japan, equally as victim and perpetrator.

***Kindai no chōkoku* as 'World-Historical Mission': Overcoming the Chronopolitical**

However problematic to my alternative readings of History, Sōseki poses extensive critiques of *modernity* that speak to contemporary Japan's greatest fears and fascinations: the melting

¹⁰⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2004), p. 68.

¹⁰⁸ Hegel, p. 19.

¹⁰⁹ Sōseki, p. 320.

¹¹⁰ Sōseki, p. 321.

away of History, the blurring of lines between premodern, modern, and postmodern Japan, and the cultural acceleration that follows these quick historical shifts and mutations. Masao Miyoshi refers to this theoretical fascination in Japanese modern historiography as the ‘chronopolitical’ controversy of ‘the relationship between the premodern, modern, and postmodern or non-modern’ in literature, politics, history, aesthetics, and digital culture.¹¹¹ The chronopolitical element of interest is informed by Japan’s century of rapid modernisation, as well as its proliferation across the world as a rival to the hegemonic West.¹¹² As Marxian historians and theorists Karatani Kōjin, Harry Harootunian, and Masao Miyoshi have written in dozens of essays and monographs, tracing the modernisation of Japan can be generally explained by three broad historical phases that alter, shift, rupture, and flow into each other. As Karatani reminds us in a reading of Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the modernisation of Japan, or the Meiji Restoration of Japan in 1868, was linked to a “world-historical context” of the rise of the modernised totalitarian state:

The period around the year 1870 was one of worldwide upheaval. It was a period in which nation-states appeared in many regions: not only in Germany, but in America, Italy, and postwar France. Over the next ten years these modern states become imperialist powers, and as a reaction to this nationalism developed in every part of the world.¹¹³

In this world-historical context, Karatani explains that ‘[b]ecause of the outcome of the Franco-Prussian War, Japan’s revolutionary government made Prussia its model’ in all aspects of institutional and cultural reforms’.¹¹⁴ Coupling a Japanese nationalism with a zealous adherence to a modern occidentalism, the first stage of modernisation, according to Karatani, functioned as a geopolitical response of opposition to China’s dominance in Japan’s vision of Asian history. In the crass adoption of Anglophone and Franco-Prussian reforms between

¹¹¹ Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian, *Postmodernism and Japan*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989). p. xvii.

¹¹² Ronald Kelts, *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture Has Invaded the U.S.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). p. 193.

¹¹³ Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. by Brett de Bary (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993). p. 195.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

1868-1911, Karatani claims that Meiji thinkers and politicians sought to commit to a policy of *datsuaron* ('De-asianisation') in order to undermine a Chinese vision of a Pan-Asianist agenda.¹¹⁵ In the next stage of modernisation, Karatani observes that as an occidentalist policy shaped Japanese identity politics, the ideological expansion of *nihonjinron* ('Japaneseness, Japanese exceptionalism') was a driving force in the systematic deployment of the first wave of modern technological, political, militaristic, and colonial advancements, which accordingly, resulted in the centralisation of the Japanese State from 1895 to 1945.¹¹⁶ In this stage, a modernising Japan, in Karatani's Marxist assessment sought to stand to influence the rest of Asia (and the world) as an rivalling bloc of power to the United States and Europe, which would later be conceptualised as Japan's role as the Pan-Asian protectorate of the 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere', a phrase first used by Foreign Minister Arita Hachirō in a radio broadcast on 20 June 1940.¹¹⁷

Harootunian similarly writes that World War II was viewed as an opportunity for *kindai no chōkoku* ('overcoming modernity'), a concept first introduced at a conference held by "the major intellectual-cultural constituents of the period, such as the Kyoto School of Philosophy, the Japan Romantic Group (Nihon Romanha), and members of the Literary Society [Bungakkai]" in 1942.¹¹⁸ *Kindai no chōkoku* was a philosophically paradoxical, ideologically mangled, and rhetorically spurious call for the mobilisation of a global liberation movement from the American and European colonialists, capitalists, and occupiers of disenfranchised places and peoples. It can be described as a propagandistic ploy that nevertheless was widely accepted across East Asia and the Pacific early in the war, as Harootunian reminds us:

Six months into the war, Japan had virtually swept across Southeast Asia, where its troops were initially welcomed as deliverers of Asians from white man's colonialism, and had occupied most of the islands of the western Pacific. As a member of the Axis Powers, Japan was committed to a global conflict that had begun earlier in Europe, despite its own subsequent claim that it was only waging a war in East Asia or the

¹¹⁵ Karatani, p. 43.

¹¹⁶ Karatani, p. 195.

¹¹⁷ William Theodore de Bary, *Sources of East Asian Tradition: The Modern Period*, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). p. 622.

¹¹⁸ Harry Harootunian, *Overcome*, p. 34.

Pacific. Because the war was global, its meaning for the country and its recent history of capitalist modernization could not be seen as merely a local experience but rather had to be considered within the broader context of a ‘world-historical’ mission and destiny. The war, in other words, provided the occasion for evaluating the meaning of modernity, as such, and Japan’s role in taking it to the next stage.¹¹⁹

As Harootunian explains, overcoming modernity, or overcoming Western modernity, was an ideological project that not only formed collective sentiment, it was also functioned as an imperially constructed ideological discourse by the State intelligentsia and foreign ministers viewed who viewed it more as a policy of ‘regional intervention’ into East Asia. In this way, Harootunian explains that the regional intervention (in soft power and military occupation) was designed to appear as a liberation from the continual abuses from the West. Harootunian writes that this concept was spun by readers of Marx, Lenin, Mao, and Nietzsche who transformed legitimate ‘heady discussions about “world-historical meaning” into an elaborate alibi for Japanese imperialism’, not unlike the Nationalist Socialist German Workers’ Party’s privileging of the philosophies of Nietzsche and Heidegger.¹²⁰

However, the contention that Japan was viewed as the international community’s liberator from Western colonialism, occupation, capitalism, and racism is not only an unpopular view among historians of modern Japan today, however fraught their methods maybe but it must be deemed as a hypocritical and propagandistic invention, especially in a review of the colonial and hegemonic ways that Japan attempted to modernise East Asia. Under this continued claim of postcolonial self-sufficiency as a Pan-Asian protectorate, the Empire of Japan was formulated under a false pretence and in an ‘ahistorical blindness’, as Harootunian puts it.¹²¹ As many historians have illustrated, the modernisation of Japan was a tense bind between coercion and complicity with the West, a process that was no doubt hegemonically forced upon Japan by European or American free-tradists,¹²² but did not

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ For more on the philosophical and political relationship between Nazism, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, see Elliot R. Wolfson’s *The Duplicity of Philosophy’s Shadow: Heidegger, Nazism, and the Jewish Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

¹²¹ Harootunian, p. 35.

¹²² John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade’, *The Economic History Review* 6.1 (August 1953): pp. 1-15.

manifest in the same colonial means of other East Asian countries, like Vietnam or India, for example. Japan's role in the world at large – very similar to many modernising, soon-to-be fascist nations like Germany and Italy – was marked by the centralisation of the entire nation under one national identity, national language, and national history. This process of centralising the Japanese state was marked by the mass adoption of Franco-Prussian influenced Meiji Reforms of the 1880s,¹²³ which transformed institutions like schools, hospitals, the military, and the parliament from a European template against the wishes of nativists seeking to retain Japanese ways of life amidst Western pressure and influence.¹²⁴ Meiji Japan, as an industrialised, Westernised entity, was in no way a Pan-Asian ally. As Japan grew more industrialised, centralised, and land-hungry for development, their pursuits skewed viciously destructive, seeking to transform their landscape through the cultural force of assimilation and the military force of annihilation. In this accelerated position, the reforms led to a clearing-away of traditional experiences of Japanese rural life, as is evidenced by the mass slaughter and extinction of dozens of animal species once worshipped,¹²⁵ the displacement of peasants and farmers,¹²⁶ and the mass genocide of indigenous Ainu people of the northern islands after 1868.¹²⁷ As with all events related to the expansion and manifestation of any frontier ideology (i.e. dominating the landscape and the indigenous populous, centralising through annihilation and assimilation):¹²⁸ the expansionism of a centralised Japan infected the rest of East Asia, as evidenced by the colonial wars over Korea and Manchuria with China in 1894 and Russia in 1904;¹²⁹ the swift and brutal 1895

¹²³ Karatani, pp. 195-6.

¹²⁴ For more on Meiji Reforms, see W.G. Beasley's *The Meiji Restoration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), Benjamin Duke's *The History of Modern Japanese Education: Constructing the National School System, 1872–1890*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2009), and John Knight, *Waiting for Wolves in Japan: An Anthropological Study of People-Wildlife Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹²⁵ For more on the ecological impact of the Meiji Reforms, see Brett Walker's *Lost Wolves of Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009) and John Knight's 'On the Extinction of the Japanese Wolf' in *Asian Folklore Studies* 56.1 (1997): pp. 129–59.

¹²⁶ Walker, p. 6.

¹²⁷ See Brett Walker's *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590–1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) and Katarina Sjöberg's *The Return of the Ainu: Cultural Mobilization and the Practice of Ethnicity in Japan* (Langhorne: Hardwood Academic Publishers, 1993).

¹²⁸ For more on Japanese conquest of the Ainu, see Richard Siddle's *Race, Resistance, and the Ainu of Japan* (New York: Routledge, 1996) and Ann-Elise Lewallen's *The Fabric of Indigeneity: Ainu Identity, Gender, and Settler Colonialism in Japan*, (Sante Fe: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), p. 133.

¹²⁹ For more on Japan's colonial wars, see Louise Young's *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), Joshua A. Fogel's *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State: Japan and China* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), John Steinberg's *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero, Volume 2* (Boston: Brill, 2007).

annexation of Taiwan and accompanying Southeast Asian territories;¹³⁰ the horrifying atrocities committed on mainland Asia in China and Korea from 1937 onward;¹³¹ the wartime occupation of Malaysia, the Philippines, and other Pacific Islands in Oceania;¹³² and the widespread xenophobic hate-speech and institutional discrimination directed at other Asian refugees or immigrants – often Chinese and Korean – living in Japan today.¹³³

After the war, however, Miyoshi and Harootunian write that the final stage of modernisation grew from the collective production and theorisation of a project of technological, economic, and cultural acceleration, of the overcoming of modernity, the second wave of modernisation that took place during and after World War II. In this post-war phase, Miyoshi and Harootunian recognise that the Japanese statist, bureaucrats, and business elites sought to not only rebuild Japan physically after the firebombing of Tokyo and nuclear bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, but also to: (1) outpace the world in the production of capital, primarily through industrial advancements in machinic and telecommunication forms; (2) commercialise, domesticate, and refine American military technologies for mass consumption and exportation (cars, washing machines, radios, etc.); and (3) expand a streamlined Taylorist-Fordist military-industrial complex so that it would permeate, govern, self-regulate, and integrate into every aspect of Japanese social life, producing a durable, yet rigid *chō antei shakai* (‘super stable society’), or what Anne Allison refers to as the mass mobilisation of ‘Japan, Inc.’¹³⁴ As the wartime philosophy of *overcoming modernity* transformed into post-war politics, the ideology of acceleration became technologised and weaponised in the development of a new military-industrial complex. As Lamarre writes, post-war Japanese modernisation was inseparable from American foreign policy interests and the prospect of accruing capital in the firebombed and radiated ruins, as if a de facto, private enterprise of the Marshall Plan as it was conceived in post-war Europe:

¹³⁰ Andrew D. Morris, *Japanese Taiwan: Colonial Rule and Its Contested Legacy* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).

¹³¹ Sandra Wilson, Robert Cribb, Beatrice Trefalt, and Dean Aszkielowicz, *Japanese War Criminals: The Politics of Justice After the Second World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

¹³² John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1993).

¹³³ Debito Arudou, *Embedded Racism: Japan's Visible Minorities and Racial Discrimination* (London: Lexington Books, 2015).

¹³⁴ Anne Allison, *Precarious Japan*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013). p. 10.

Naturally, the questions about technology shift with postwar transformations in technology; with the identification of Japan with miniaturization, electronics, robotics, communications, and other information technologies; in conjunction with massive contracts for the production of American military equipment; and with the transformations in the dream of Japanese economic, political, or technological autonomy.¹³⁵

Furthermore, as Lamarre assesses, in the wake of the nuclear destruction of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the indiscriminate firebombing of Tokyo and Nagoya, the American occupation and demilitarisation, and the equally hegemonic and symbiotic U.S.-Japan relations, the process of overcoming modernity and, largely, overcoming Japan under occupation, resonated with industrial and political leaders who saw a massive influx of American investment in pre-war or interwar electronic companies including Panasonic, Sony, Hitachi, and Toshiba as well as automotive corporations like Toyota, Honda and Mitsubishi.¹³⁶ With U.S.-Japanese interests aligned in the expansion of industrial partnerships and the birth of multinational corporate entities, overcoming modernity seemed easier than ever, as Lamarre concludes:

the economic successes born of American wars in East Asia, modernization was reborn in Japan, and the reconstruction of Japan promised to erase its wartime destruction. Not surprisingly, in light of the recentness of war experiences and the clear evidence that Japan's economic miracle was fueled by the American wars in Korea and Vietnam, this 'second modernization' of Japan became (and remains) as fraught with anxieties and questions about modernity and technology as the prewar era, and maybe more so.¹³⁷

Importantly, the process of out-modernising modernity caught on in Japanese industrial and corporate culture, and it is responsible for the mass production, development, and distribution of manga and television anime series from the 1960s into today. Therefore, to understand the chronopolitical anxieties of an overdeveloped nation like Japan, it is important to remember

¹³⁵ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. xxxvi.

¹³⁶ William K. Tabb, *The Postwar Japanese System: Cultural Economy and Economic Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). pp. 86-139.

¹³⁷ Lamarre, p. xxxvi.

that overcoming a sense of historical or national temporality, of overcoming the periodisation of History (premodern, modern, or postmodern) produces a discordant vision of temporal reality, whereby the media forged in modernity (like Japanese manga, anime, and video games) exposes the difficulties and contradictions of overcoming chronopolitical thought, and in reading Japanese historiography.

Nomadic Rememberings: Deleuze and the Fabulations of the Otaku World-Image

Against the impulses of overcoming modernity, then otaku culture seeks to alter a world vision of what modernity is and what it could be in relation to its techno-historical moorings. In Roman Rosenbaum's introduction to *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History*, a central departure point for the question of historical thought and representation in post-war and contemporary Japanese visual culture, Rosenbaum examines the historical dimensions of manga not only as it pertains to the construction of Japanese national identity, but even more so, how the graphic art tradition has consistently been a vernacular form of historical speculation and alteration throughout Japanese history. Rosenbaum astutely observes that as late as the mid-to-late 2000s, the study of manga in 'the Western academic press' was often described as 'controversial, particularly as to the degree of verisimilitude in their representation of history'.¹³⁸ Specifically, Rosenbaum writes that '[c]ontroversies like those surrounding *Manga Kenkanryū* (Hating the Korean Wave, 2005) and Kobayashi Yoshinori's *Sensō-ron* (Discourse on the War, 1998) are two conspicuous examples of the criticism of the potential of manga to misrepresent history', where 'revisionist or nationalist' retellings of Korean immigration in Japan or the intentions and outcomes of World War II purport untrue historical claims that reinforce xenophobic, racist, and fascistic ideologies from far-right political propagandists.¹³⁹ By dwelling on the truthfulness of the represented content, Rosenbaum also contends that readers and critics alike are missing the historical point here: as Friedrich Nietzsche contends in *Untimely Meditations*, the pillars of human history trap human thought in ideological labyrinths, especially if History is not critically assessed in all ways, not only in its empirical value, but also in its ethical dimensions.¹⁴⁰ Rosenbaum, among others including, Sharon Kinsella, Carol Gluck, Tessa Morris-Suzuki, and Susan J. Napier, argue that

¹³⁸ Roman Rosenbaum, *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History*, (New York: Routledge, 2013). p. 1.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by Daniel Breazeale and trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

‘manga and graphic art are able to rewrite, reinvent and re-imagine the historicity and dialectic of bygone epochs in a way that distorts the complex narrative of emperor-based Japanese historical periods’, wherein the global world expansion of media texts and commodity forms ‘manifest the transcultural soft power of a “global” media that has the potential to display history in previously unimagined ways’.¹⁴¹

While Rosenbaum and manga scholars privilege the autorial works of Tezuka and Miyazaki to explain the ways in which Japanese visual culture can be considered critical historiographies, I am more interested in the more recent anime allegories of overdevelopment, especially as it is expressed in futuristic, cybernetic conflicts in alternative realities and historical continuums. Kawamori Shōji’s *Nobunaga the Fool* (Satelight, 2014) is a recent example of the way in which otaku discourses on globalisation, overcoming modernity, and the ends of History appear as chronopolitical rewritings and fabulations. Kawamori, the creator and director of *mecha* (‘robot’, ‘mobile suit’) anime classic *Macross* (Studio Nue, 1982) and the manga series *Visions of Escaflowne* (1994–1997), released his latest series as his first foray into alternative histories that a focus on the East-West developmental binary. The series, like many of Kawamori’s other *mecha* (‘mobile suit,’ ‘robot’) fantasies, tells the story of a boy-prince and his friends who must learn how to pilot mobile armour suits to defend their realm from imperialist invaders, unifying their planet in the process. *Nobunaga* is interesting in the way that it tells a science-fiction based, quantum, multidimensional version of world history set in the traditional fifteenth and sixteenth century Sengoku period, which like Kawamori’s *Escaflowne*, combines a pseudo-medieval chivalric romance with a melodramatic and futuristic space opera to complicate and contemplate grand allegories of the epistemological, technological, and cultural discourses of Japanese modernisation in a world-historical context. The universe of *Nobunaga* focuses on the war between the Western and Eastern Planets, opening as a fairy tale would in the first episode, as the narrator articulates: ‘Once upon a time, the two sides were bound by the ‘Dragon Pulse’ spanning the heavens. The [Eastern] civilization that once had prospered has now turned to a tale of dreams, as the inextinguishable flames of war tear the realm asunder’.¹⁴² The sci-fi narreme continues, centring the conflict on the recovery of ancient technologies (*mecha*

¹⁴¹ Rosenbaum, p. 3.

¹⁴² ‘The Star’, *Nobunaga the Fool* (Season One, Episode One), dir. by Kawamori Shōji, prod. by Satelight Inc (Crunchyroll, 2014). [20 January 2015].

armour suits) referred to in the series as sacred relics, treasures, and regalia which have been confiscated and replicated by the main legislative body of the Star of the West: The Knights of the Round Table. The Western Planet is led by King Arthur and other occidental heroes including Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, Cesare Borgia, and even gender-queered versions of Hannibal Barca and Niccolo Machiavelli, who are all depicted as warmongering fascists in the series. To save the East from imperial domination and exploitation, a heretical girl by the name of Jeanne Kaguya d'Arc – a legendary fusion of French martyr Joan of Arc and Japanese folktale heroine Princess Kaguya – is transported from fifteenth century France to the East by the famed time-traveling techno-occultist Leonardo da Vinci, or as the narrator calls him, 'the one who observes the world'.¹⁴³ Jeanne and Leo search for the Star Messiah, and eventually meet up with 'the heretic of the Eastern Planet and "the greatest fool of the day", Oda Nobunaga'.¹⁴⁴ Bound up tensely in both medieval mysticism and postmodern cyberneticism, the series creates a certain techno-esotericism of quantum physics, time-travel, and space-travel blended with messianism and spiritualism, which deftly describes most popular avant-garde mecha sci-fi like Kawamori's own *Macross* and *Escaflowne*.

Nobunaga the Fool is a chronopolitical fabulation told after the disintegration of modernity, after Lyotard's and Azuma's claim against the consumption of grand narratives ended, seemingly affirming Takayuki Tatsumi's claim that 'postmodern Japanese artists have become ever more ambitious in their creative attempts to disrupt, defamiliarize, and queer the conventionally drawn boundaries between orientalism and occidentalism'.¹⁴⁵ Here, in the mixtures of spatiotemporal intensities, a radical chronopolitics is played out in content in form, in the allegories of the hegemony of occidental history and within the very accelerated media of anime. Linda Hutcheon points to the postmodern reconstruction of historical consciousness, to bridge the gap between historiography and fiction writing on the postmodern formulation of world history, referring to texts similar to *Nobunaga* as 'historiographic metafiction.' Hutcheon describes historiographic metafiction as a postmodern text that

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Tatsumi, *Full Metal Apache*, p. 4.

works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction. And it is a kind of seriously ironic parody that effects both aims: the intertexts of history and fiction take on parallel (though not equal) status in the parodic reworking of the textual past of both the ‘world’ and literature.¹⁴⁶

While *Nobunaga* is not really an impressive aesthetic or philosophical milestone, it is, however, one text in an internationally marketed and successful genre of speculative historical fiction that envisions chronopolitical questions of historical process through magical, scientific, and surrealist explorations of spatiotemporal splintering and historical queering, making it a popular anime with historiographic metafictional attributes.

More specifically, *Nobunaga* can be situated among dozens of otaku time-traveling and alt-historical texts that not only “‘thematise history’ in a general sense’, as Ronald Bogue writes in *Deleuzian Fabulation and the Scars of History*,¹⁴⁷ but one that also explores the ‘coexisting strata of histories, counter-histories, historical allegories and transhistorical ineffabilities, all of which finally have enduring efficacy’ in the global otaku imaginary.¹⁴⁸ This form of speculative historical fiction, what Donna Haraway refers to as ‘speculative fabulations’¹⁴⁹ or what Mark Fisher calls the fiction of ‘postmodern anachronisms’,¹⁵⁰ is universally concerned with the problems of rapid modernisation, global capitalism, ecological devastation, teleological thought, and institutional oppression by examining the transhistorical limits of historical representation. Moreover, otaku artefacts like *Nobunaga* can articulate the wars of chronopolitics (of the underdeveloped and the overdeveloped) through a media mixing of historical milieu, visual and narrative references, and character designs inspired by global preindustrial, mythic, and legendary societies – from the tales of Ancient China to the wars of medieval France to the colonisation of the Americas – and science fiction or time-travelling

¹⁴⁶ Linda Hutcheon, ‘Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and the Intertextuality of History’, in *Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction*, ed. by P. O'Donnell and Robert Con Davis (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ Ronald Bogue, *Deleuzian Fabulation and the Scars of History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

¹⁴⁸ Bogue, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016). Haraway describes a new type of science fiction that binds together posthuman speculations of a future after mankind and after capitalism, which she calls the Cthulucene. This type of storytelling is earthly, chthonic, and best explained as “SF,” or as she writes, ‘a sign for science fiction, speculative feminism, science fantasy, speculative fabulation, science fact,’ p. 10.

¹⁵⁰ Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, p. 5.

plots. The temporal juxtapositions that arise on the surface of the manga page or anime layer assess the expansive philosophical questions of temporality, history, and memory throughout the semiotic mediation of the text.

This thesis structures itself upon the Deleuzo-Bergsonian position that the otaku world-image is purposefully (maybe even militantly) anachronistic, a force that flattens historico-temporal ontology and epistemology into an accessible transmedial and transcultural database, interface, and simulation that exposes the value of chronopolitical anachronisms. This can also be understood in relation to Bergson's theories of memory and time, in which he calls anachronism as the 'memory of the present' and the 'false recognition' of memory, temporal sensations that feel

quite different from the feeling of "the feeling of familiarity", felt and experienced by an individual who 'conceives memory as repetition of the past, because it does not seem possible that a representation can bear the mark of the past independently of what it represents.'¹⁵¹

Virno responds to Bergson's description of the phenomena of experiencing anachronism, writing that '[i]n both cases, an *anachronism* is at work: both manifestation and concealment of the virtual make use of a *counter-temporal* process, postulating the transposition of the *hic et nunc* [here and now] onto the past'.¹⁵² Similarly, Fisher observes that '[a]nachronism, the slippage of discrete time periods into one another was [...] the major symptom of time breaking down', further arguing that in time-traveling narratives, 'these temporal anomalies are triggered by human beings' predilection for the mixing of artefacts from different eras. In this final assignment, the anachronism has led to stasis; time has stopped'.¹⁵³ Rosi Braidotti responds to the philosophising of anachronism through Deleuze's work on nomadology, claiming that to understand an anti-History, a breaking of teleology, or the 'cracking the teleology of nature', as Walter Benjamin writes, must occur.¹⁵⁴ Braidotti assigns the ultimate

¹⁵¹ Henri Bergson, 'Memory of the Present and False Recognition', in *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, ed. by Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey, trans. by Melissa McMahon (New York: Continuum, 2002). p. 185.

¹⁵² Paolo Virno, *Deja Vu*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁵³ Fisher, p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'Fourier' in *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002). p. 631.

sign of nomadology in the body of the first cloned animal, Dolly the sheep, as a historically marked copy traversing Deleuze's nomadic theory of History. Dolly, like a teleological history unbound, 'is simultaneously archaic and hypermodern [...] a compound of multiple anachronisms situated across different chronological axes [...] inhabit[ing] different and self-contradictory time zones'.¹⁵⁵ In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, not only are these examples reminders of alternative modes of historical thought, but '[t]hese are models of nomadic and rhizomatic writing', forms of anticultural discourse that seeks to dwell on a 'forgetting instead of remembering, for underdevelopment instead of progress toward development, in nomadism rather than sedentariness, to make a map instead of a tracing'.¹⁵⁶

It is in the anachronizing, nomadological otaku world-image that manga series inspired by Miura Kentarō's *Berserk* (1988 -) and later revised in Yukimura Makoto's *Vinland Saga* (2005 -) as artefacts that wrestle with world-historical events and anthropological realities of slavery, migration, genocide, religious conversion, colonisation, and the rise of industrial capitalism from the position of the minoritarian party (the slave, the mercenary, the outcast, the woman, the child, the old, the exile, the Other).¹⁵⁷ Throughout these series, it is tempting to trace the trails of cultural convergence and difference, but let us not mistake ahistorical discourse from anti-historical discourse, whereby History is contested instead of ignored. Following Bogue, I argue that '[e]ach work forces a rethinking of the implications of fabulation, and each testifies to the multi-dimensional potential of the concept for application to other narratives',¹⁵⁸ so that these purposefully anachronistic texts challenge dominant historiographic understandings of teleology and progress, fact and fiction, representation and reality. In a similar way, Braidotti writes that this is what nomadology is: an anachronistic, virtualised, and at times, simulated collection of traumatic memories of historical violence that shape the way minoritarian communities feel the painful impact of History.¹⁵⁹ Braidotti responds to chronopolitical value of anachronism and minor memories, claiming that:

¹⁵⁵ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). p. 58.

¹⁵⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁷ For more on Emmanuel Lévinas' work on historical violence, ethical subjectivity, and the Other, see *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. by Alfonso Lingis, (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991). p. 240. Also see Brian Schroeder's *Altared Ground: Levinas, History, Violence* (New York: Routledge, 1996). pp. 142-3.

¹⁵⁸ Bogue, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ This concept of feeling or embodying the painful elements of History is, in broadstrokes, the central answer to the questions of historiography after History, especially within the context of describing new modes of pedagogy

The corollary of this notion of time and of the political is that the specifically grounded memories of the minorities are not just static splinters of negativity forever inscribed in the flesh of the victims of history. Molecular or nomadic memories are also, and more especially, a creative force that gives the “wretched of the earth”, as Fanon put it, a head start toward the world-historical task of envisaging alternative world orders and more humane and sustainable social systems. It comes down to a double consciousness of both the multiple axes of oppression, and hence of hurt, humiliation, and pain, as well as the creative force they can generate as motors of transversal and collective transformation.¹⁶⁰

And while the nations of Japan or the United States cannot be viewed as minoritarian figures in the annals of modern history, otaku artists and fans do not find a home in either of these States; they find a home in the virtual memories of the dispossessed, of the nomadic memories of History, which Braidotti describes as the

affirmative, destabilizing forces that propel subjects actively toward change. They are the kind of memories that are linked to ethical and political consciousness and concern events one simply forgot to forget. In Deleuze’s language, these memories pertain to the realm of the virtual and are abstract in the positive sense of leaning toward actualization.¹⁶¹

The otaku nation is a roving nomadic tribe, transhistorical, transmedial, transcultural, and transversal in their nature, and even in their pockets of fabulation, the global otaku can also mean many different things at once to each member of a community defined by a specific national, geographical, cultural, or linguistic determinant.

Summary of Chapters: Otaku as the Text-Image-Data Assemblage

and creative practice. Next to Braidotti, the most practical expression of *feeling* History, and learning its intellectual history is explored by Alexander Galloway in his essay, ‘History Is What Hurts: On Old Materialism’ in *Social Text* 32.2 (2016): pp. 125-41.

¹⁶⁰ Braidotti, p. 32.

¹⁶¹ Braidotti, p. 33.

Therefore, since my associations with Deleuzian art theory and historico-cultural discourse are channelled through the prism of my intellectual and aesthetic tastes – as much as they are associated with my class identity as well as my experiences with poverty and precarity – my interest in manga and anime articulates a universal history of other nomadic memories that project horrifying visions of late capitalism and the everyday experience of precarity as historical remainders of hyper-modernisation and overdevelopment. Like Ronald Bogue, Hanping Chiu, and Yu-lin Lee’s collection of essays, *Deleuze and Asia*, this thesis seeks to ‘forge connections between Deleuze and Asia that are intended to initiate fresh lines of inquiry rather than delineate a specific field of study’, while also attempting to avoid the Eurocentric pitfall of blindly applying ‘Deleuze to Asia’, as Bogue, Chiu, and Lee write; instead, this project seeks to ‘use Deleuze as a generative force of inquiry in Asian contexts, and to use Asian culture and thought as a means of probing and testing the viability of Deleuze’s own philosophy’.¹⁶²

This thesis seeks to critically engage with otaku low theories on the political and philosophical role and to examine the ethical value of comics and animated film. By specifically examining the recent globalised expansion of manga and anime across the globe between the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, I examine how these culturally hybridised and aesthetically intermedial and accelerated machines rethink the hegemonic theories of modernity and its accompanying ideologies of subjectivity, art, history, coloniality, and capital. As we will see, popular manga series like *Berserk* and anime series like *Fate/stay/night*, for example, rely on philosophising through new mediated modes (manga to anime to software) to produce radical nomadologies for transcultural audiences. These series further blend critical re-readings of imperial histories (legendary, ancient, premodern, medieval, early modern, etc.) with popular and pulpy Japanese apocalyptic fantasy and nuclear science fiction to actively reengineer memory and recuperate post-historical amnesia as strategic means of resisting and thinking beyond the twenty-first century colonial project of neoliberal global capitalism. The project will principally apply Deleuzian art theory and post-Deleuzian media theory (affect-body, speed-immanence) to evaluate the materiality, vitality, and immanence of the manga machine and anime machine as avant-garde art forms. I hope to

¹⁶² Ronald Bogue, Hanping Chiu, and Yu-Lin Lee, *Deleuze and Asia* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014). p. x.

examine the otaku theories of History alongside the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of nomadology described above, which engages with historical discourse in two modes: in the intensities of *becomings* and the immanence of *events*.

The structure of the thesis is unconventional, at least, regarding the way I am engaging with my methodologies, histories, and artefacts. The thesis is divided in two parts, with a theory and history chapter introducing both parts before examining the case studies. Part I, entitled ‘The Gekiga War Machine’ comprises of Chapters One, Two, and Three, focusing primarily on the gritty, cinematic-inspired avant-garde style of *gekiga* (‘dramatic pictures’) pioneered by post-war manga artists Tatsumi Yoshihiro and Sanpei Shirato. Chapter One establishes a history of the style and movement, as well as an extensive introduction of Deleuzo-Guattarian theories of becoming in relation to gekiga ontology and aesthetics. As a manga theory chapter, this section further examines gekiga as a furious media, which can be understood in relation to Deleuze and Guattari’s theories of becoming-animal, embodiment, and affect. Chapter Two explores the form and philosophy of gekiga as it is later revived by Miura Kentarō in his manga series *Berserk*, primarily as an alternative otaku philosophy of becoming-bersek, a post-historical becoming rooted in a nexus of iconoclastic art histories, styles, and expressions. Chapter Three examines Yukimura Makoto’s *Vinland Saga* (2005 –) as a gekiga revival alternative to *Berserk* that offers a critique of the post-historical philosophies of Miura’s Nietzschean fable. In *Vinland Saga*, a complex network of ethico-historical inversions highlights the crisis of action in the war manga form as a critical crisis in historical thought. Both chapters explore how these texts express three specific gekiga revival aesthetic practices as modes of nomadic becoming, as examined in relation to Deleuzian art theories on depth, line composition, and colour. I also incorporate Deleuzian cinematic semiotics into my reading of the highly cinematic gekiga form in Chapters Two and Three to illustrate the limitations of affect and movement in manga, especially in a larger critique of History and nomadology.

Part II, entitled ‘The Anime Time Machine’, contains Chapters Four, Five, and Six, turning from manga to anime. This section examines how Deleuzian theories of History, temporality, and immanence are thought through the form of Japanese limited animation (anime). Chapter Four introduces a history of Japanese animation alongside Thomas Lamarre’s philosophies of depth and the Superflat art movement of postmodern Japan alongside Manuel DeLanda’s concept of *flat ontologies* so to map out how the anime machine

flattens not only images, but conceptualisations of time and History itself. Chapter Five applies this animation theory and Deleuzian cinematic semiotics to Type-Moon's *Fate* series, which I argue, exhibits similar Deleuzo-Bergsonian temporal and historical philosophies of immanence. Within Chapter Six, I seek to examine the queer histories and bodies that Type-Moon engages with in other parts of their transmedial universes, further assessing how nomadologies can be examined through the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of the *Joan of Arc effect*. Chapter Six expands on a reading of the Joan of Arc effect in context of *Fate*'s transmedial ecology, in the anime machine and other devices too, including smartphones and game console screens. In this philosophical archaeology of the otaku world-image, traced from the post-war insurgence of radical manga and anime techniques to the all-encompassing digitisation of the anime-image, this thesis seeks to illustrate a complex continuum of Deleuzian thought experiments and textual interpretations that assess the chronopolitical anxieties and the fabulative solutions employed by otaku artists.

Part I: The Gekiga War Machine



The opening splash-pages of Shirato Sanpei's gekiga classic *Kamui-Den* ('The Legend of Kamui', *Big Comics*, 1982).

Chapter One: Gekiga Theories of Affective Histories and Nomadic Becomings

This chapter seeks to introduce the otaku philosophies (and other vernacular and low theories) of alternative, nomadic histories within the first otaku philosophy machine: manga. Like the writing machine, painting machine, and musical machine before it, the manga machine expresses its varied philosophies of temporality and history in a multitude of directions, all of which are manifested in an array of what Stephen Zepke refers to as ‘onto-aesthetic’ formulations.¹⁶³ This chapter focuses primarily on the philosophical possibilities exhibited in the cinematic-inspired avant-garde style of *gekiga* (‘dramatic pictures’) manga pioneered by post-war *manga-ka* (‘manga artist’) Tatsumi Yoshihiro, Shirato Sanpei, and Matsumoto Masahiko. Importantly, the gekiga style movement – and the philosophy that blossomed in the post-war period and extended its aesthetic and philosophical influence to most popular *seinen* (‘adult male comics’) in the late twentieth century – is a product of a cultural, political, and philosophical genealogy that critiques modernity and reveals a fascination with global nomadic memories, marked by transhistorical processes of becoming-Other in many of its forms: *becoming-berserk*, *becoming-woman*, *becoming-steel*, *becoming-nomad*, and *becoming-giant*, as expressed in contemporary series like Miura Kentarō’s *Berserk* (1988 -), Yagi Norihiro’s *Claymore* (2001-2014), Shiono Etorouji’s *Übel Blatt* (2004 -), Yukimura Makoto’s *Vinland Saga* (2005 -), and Isayama Hajime’s *Attack on Titan* (2011 -). As this section focuses on Deleuzian and otaku philosophies of affect (becomings) and movement (nomadologies), the next two chapters will examine Miura’s *Berserk* and Yukimura’s *Vinland Saga* as another case study in post-historical or nomadic becomings in contemporary manga. Therefore, if we read Miura’s fascinations with inhuman becomings and Yukimura’s lasting interest in nomadologies, this section will effectively approach a specific critique of the logic of modernity, coloniality, and anthropocentrism. From this point, we can locate the manga’s low theory (or otaku philosophy) of histories and bodies mutated by affect and always on the move, accelerated by intensity. In doing so, these readings urge to extend Deleuze and Guattari’s theories of affect and movement to gekiga and otaku philosophies in post-war manga production.

¹⁶³ Stephen Zepke, *Art as Abstract Machine: Ontology and Aesthetics in Deleuze and Guattari*, ed. by Robert Bernasconi (New York: Routledge, 2011). p. 4.

Within this introduction, this chapter will provide three methodological moves in relation to otaku explorations of Deleuzian philosophies of embodiment and movement. Firstly, I will begin by reading the Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts of *becoming-intense*, *becoming-animal*, and *becoming-imperceptible* from *A Thousand Plateaus* to explain the prevalence of inhumanness, otherness, and posthuman animality in gekiga.¹⁶⁴ Moving in parallel with Deleuze and Guattari, I will attempt to blend the theories of Akira Mizuta Lippit and Thomas Lamarre on animalisation in Japanese media culture to articulate Zepke's claim that Deleuzian onto-aesthetics urges toward 'removing art from any romantic analogy with the divine, and placing it back among the animals'.¹⁶⁵ From here, I will turn to the inhuman mediations of what McKenzie Wark refers to as 'furious media' in order to explore how gekiga philosophy effectively approaches the radical political potentiality of the most prevalent affect expressed in gekiga and seinen manga-form: *fury*. From Wark and other post-Deleuzian media theorists, I will examine Tatsumi Yoshihiro's memoir manga *A Drifting Life* alongside contemporary gekiga scholars like Shige (CJ) Suzuki and Sharon Kinsella as an exemplar of gekiga philosophy. Here I will apply Zepke and Wark to Tatsumi's vernacular and low theories of gekiga as an aesthetic, philosophical, political machine. By the end, I will extend the seemingly infinite manifestations of nomadic, nonanthropocentric, and hybridised embodiments of intensity in the gekiga machine by further engaging with recent phenomenological works on cinematic tactility and embodiment not through the circuit boards of cyborgs, but rather, deep within in the blood, muscles, and guts of shapeshifting *berserkers* (like Miura's Guts and Yukimura's Thorfinn) that erupt from the frames of the gekiga machine as if exploding from their metallised armour and sinewy skin.

'What is Gekiga Philosophy?': A Historico-Philosophical Primer of Post-War Manga

From 2014 onward, recent scholarship in Japanese, Francophone, and Anglophone manga studies has begun to rethink the political, aesthetic, and philosophical afterlife of gekiga manga in post-millennial Japan.¹⁶⁶ As a national marker of Japanese counterculture,

¹⁶⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, '1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible...' in *ATP*, pp. 256-341.

¹⁶⁵ Zepke, p. 6.

¹⁶⁶ Jaqueline Berndt, 'Manga Studies #1', in *Comics Forum*, 11 May 2014:

<https://comicsforum.org/2014/05/11/manga-studies-1-introduction-by-jacqueline-berndt/> [Accessed 24 June 2015].

underground comics, and proletarian sixties' social critique, gekiga manga diverted the tenets of traditional manga production away from the Disneyesque didacticism of Japanese children's comics perfected by the early works of Tezuka Osamu. While Tezuka's later works would also inhabit the gekiga movement, his younger post-war contemporaries committed to social realist narratives of exploitation, violence, and alienation that they experienced in everyday life. As Timothy Lehmann notes, gekiga narratives depict 'hard-edged realism characteristic of men's comics', inspired by a nexus of emergent media forms.¹⁶⁷ CJ Suzuki writes that gekiga narratives, conceived and theorised by avant-garde manga artist Tatsumi Yoshihiro, depict mature narratives of everyday life, often accompanied by graphic images of violence and sex:

By the midfifties, the content of comics, particularly in *kashihon* manga, began to shift from children's entertainment to more sophisticated forms of entertainment [...] This shift was a response to the gradual maturing of an audience no longer satisfied with childish narratives.¹⁶⁸

Suzuki notes, in response to Tatsumi's exemplary manga-memoir *Gekiga hyōryū* (A Drifting Life), gekiga can be 'characterized by the use of a minimalist, hardboiled-style, which is probably informed by the then-popular western and Japanese suspense horror and detective films'.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, as Tatsumi has indicated in his own memoir, gekiga is a quickly sketched, cheaply assembled, monochromatic weekly serialised manga with popularly pulpy influences from cinema, radio, and television. Sharon Kinsella reminds us that these weekly 'magazines are inexpensive and bulky – they are made of several hundreds of pages of coarse lightweight paper, tinted in pastel shades'.¹⁷⁰ Due to the 1942 and 1973 oil shortages in Japan, manga and (especially gekiga) was illustrated and printed in black and white ink on cheap paper that was 'generally dyed to pastel colours in order to improve the lustre of its essentially grainy, dull

¹⁶⁷ Timothy R. Lehman, *Manga: Masters of the Art* (New York: Collins Design, 2005). pp. 206, 246.

¹⁶⁸ Shige (CJ) Suzuki, 'Tatsumi Yoshihiro's *Gekiga* and the Global Sixties: Aspiring for Alternative', in *Manga's Cultural Crossroads*, ed. by Jaqueline Berndt and Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer (New York: Routledge, 2013). p. 53.

¹⁶⁹ Suzuki, p. 58.

¹⁷⁰ Sharon Kinsella, *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society* (London: Routledge, 2000). p. 3.

appearance'.¹⁷¹ Pulpy in content and in production, gekiga manga was made by and for those who could not afford fully-coloured, high-quality printed manga magazines Tezuka's *Shin Takarajima* (New Treasure Island) set a precedent for in 1947.¹⁷²

Tatsumi and his cohort produced hundreds of manga stories in a very short time, swiftly sketching, writing, and furiously publishing mature, cinematic-inspired narratives that reflected what Nakamura Hideyuki referred to as the 'poetic realism' of monochromatic post-war French, American, and Japanese film-noir.¹⁷³ Beyond the subversive content and underground production of gekiga, Tatsumi's drafted a letter to members of his *Gekiga kōbō* (Gekiga workshop) in 1959 to address the difference in gekiga and traditional manga readership. In his Gekiga Manifesto, Tatsumi wrote:

More recently (in the mid-fifties), the story manga has been vitalized through the influence exerted by the supersonic development of other media, such as film, television, and radio. This vitalization has given birth to something new, which is gekiga. Manga and gekiga, perhaps differ in methodology, but more importantly, they differ in their readership.¹⁷⁴

The demand for gekiga grew rapidly in the *kashihon-ya* ('rental book-shop') industry of Osaka. Kashihon were cheap local bookshops that distributed professional (and even at times, amateur) comics and magazines for a growing generation of disaffected college students and impoverished young workers.¹⁷⁵ Along with meeting the needs of new readers, gekiga adapted to emergent media forms, blending its form into the supersonic bodies of film, television, and radio, as is revealed in its very supersonic and vulgar production.

Tatsumi argues that as college students and factory workers grew out of children's manga, they moved further away from clichéd stories of national identity and post-war trauma, changing their tastes and concerns of an accelerated everyday life in an occupied Japan. Under

¹⁷¹ Kinsella, p. 63.

¹⁷² Kinsella, p. 27.

¹⁷³ Nakamura Hideyuki qtd. in Daisuke Miyao's essay, 'Out of the Past: Film Noir, Whiteness and the End of the Monochrome Era in Japanese Cinema,' in *East Asian Film Noir: Transcultural Encounters and Intercultural Dialogue*, ed. by Chi-Yun Shin and Mark Gallagher (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015). p. 22.

¹⁷⁴ Tatsumi Yoshihiro, *A Drifting Life*, ed. by Adrian Tomine and trans. by Taro Nettleton (New York: Drawn and Quarterly, 2013). p. 730.

¹⁷⁵ Suzuki, p. 51.

occupation, mass capital investment in rebuilding Japan became a priority for U.S.-Japanese statisticians.¹⁷⁶ Western cultural hegemony and infusions of capital propelled techno-cultural experiments in topographic telecommunications (telegraph, telephone, television, radio, and cinema), which accelerated and perfected the Japanese Taylorist-Fordist industrial machine.¹⁷⁷ As telecom giants and military manufacturers turned to consumer capitalism, workers began traversing along these vectors of techno-capitalist acceleration on the emblem of modernity: the train. With mass rail integration, rural regions became depopulated and capital became centralised along the means of transportation and consumption within industrial, urban hubs like Nagoya and Osaka.¹⁷⁸ Post-war urban planning mimicked the American model of suburbia, which joined elements of urban sprawl alongside freeways and rail lines, transforming the wandering *rōnin* and into the bored commuter, as Thomas Lamarre writes:

It is rather like the steady expansion and intensification of commuter train lines in Tokyo: through continued privatization, informatization, and acceleration, the contemporary train is no longer what it was, and yet it does not, for all that, present a resolute break with the past.¹⁷⁹

Garō Guerrillas and the Supersonic Swarm of the Vulgar Left in Post-War Japan

In this post-war urbanised context, Tatsumi's manifesto reveals further that manga itself became the quintessential mobile form of popular entertainment for the post-war generation. However, while manga traversed vectors of mass rail integration, this form of production and consumption did not seem to mobilise opposition to acceleration, alienation, exploitation, or excommunication that naturally accompanies the rise of telecommunications, industrialisation, and urbanisation. While newsstands had been supplying commuters with mobile manga magazines since the interwar period, *kashihon* hubs in industrialised cities like Nagoya and

¹⁷⁶ For more on American occupation and reconstruction of Japan, see Howard B. Schonberger's *Aftermath of War: Americans and the Remaking of Japan, 1945-1952* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1989), Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, Carola Hein, and Yorifusa Ishida's *Rebuilding Urban Japan After 1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), and Tomiko Yoda and Harry Harootunian *Japan After Japan: Social and Cultural Life from the Recessionary 1990s to the Present* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). p. 260.

¹⁷⁷ McKenzie Wark, *Telesthesia*, pp. 31-2.

¹⁷⁸ André Sorensen, *The Making of Urban Japan: Cities and Planning from Edo to the Twenty First Century*, (London: Nissan Institute and Routledge, 2002). p. 162-3.

¹⁷⁹ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. xiv.

Osaka localised the aesthetic and political process of gekiga production in resistance to the mass manga market. Like revolutionary salons, beatnik cafes, or the punk underground, the kashihon industry became quickly politicised. Tatsumi famously wrote that ‘if Tokyo manga is likened to white-collar workers, Osaka manga is that of peons’.¹⁸⁰

The rise of gekiga effectively drew on what Raymond Williams refers to as ‘structures of feeling’ of a rapidly industrialised, modernising Japan, expressing intensive experiences of social alienation and existential angst felt by the students and labourers of post-war Japan.¹⁸¹ In the radical global sixties, this alt-comic form quickly spoke to a new generation, becoming ‘a medium through which Tatsumi and other gekiga artists sought to explore the potential of comics to express themselves artistically and to engage in social critique’.¹⁸² As Tatsumi and friends began to “explore dark, complex, and politically charged themes like economic exploitation, social alienation, sexual perversion, and psychological complexes, they also began depicting transgressive and disturbing experiences of ‘marginalized people living on the fringes of society’ in post-war Japan.”¹⁸³ The rental book market responded with the government to censor and exorcise their collection of sexual, violent, or political manga.

In response, Tatsumi and friends looked beyond kashihon and founded the avant-garde and ‘vulgar Marxist’¹⁸⁴ manga magazine *Garō* in 1964, edited by Nagai Katsuichi and Shirato Sanpei, who both named the publication after one of Shirato’s proletariat ninja heroes.¹⁸⁵ With Nagai and Shirato’s leadership, *Garō* blended together the intermedial proletarian art forms of kabuki-style *jigaigeki* cinema, *kamishibai* outdoor plays (‘paper theatre’), American pop art, as well as the political writings and aesthetic works of proletarian artists like Shirato’s own

¹⁸⁰ Tatsumi, p. 14.

¹⁸¹ Raymond Williams defines his term ‘structures of feeling’ in *Marxism and Literature*, p. 132: ‘The term is difficult, but “feeling” is chosen to emphasize a distinction from more formal concepts of “world-view” or “ideology.” It is not only that we must go beyond formally held and systematic beliefs, though of course we have always to include them. It is that we are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs are in practice variable (including historically variable), over a range from formal assent with private dissent to the more nuanced interaction between selected and interpreted beliefs and acted and justified experiences. An alternative definition would be structures of experience: in one sense the better and wider word, but with the difficulty that one of its senses has that past tense which is the most important obstacle to recognition of the area of social experience which is being defined’. Williams seems to complicate affect by intensifying its relationship from not only aesthetic or intellectual stimuli and reaction, but as ideology, experience, and belief shape the flows of intensities.

¹⁸² Suzuki, p. 51.

¹⁸³ Suzuki, p. 55.

¹⁸⁴ Alexander Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004). pp. 100-1, Note 65.

¹⁸⁵ Kinsella, p. 37.

father, Okamoto Toki.¹⁸⁶ *Garō* thus injected the manga machine with a Left avant-gardist political inheritance that explored the horrors of colonial thought, imperial capitalism, and the exploitation of labour expressed in all forms of gekiga: in content, form, and even the mode of production, as Ōtsuka Eiji argues:

we must not overlook the fact that the Zenkyōtō [student protest] movement was itself a sort of pop culture that the new mass of students encountered at universities, where it began the process of massification (*taishūka*). It was characteristic for these university students to regard “pop culture” as “counter culture” and to use it as a tool of criticism toward the social system and capitalism. This is clearly apparent, for example, in the stance whereby such students found the theme of class conflict in Shirato Sanpei’s gekiga.¹⁸⁷

Thanks to *Garō*’s success, gekiga emerged as a vernacular form of other ‘radical sixties art movement’, influencing the production of *dōjinshi* (‘amateur manga’), punk zines, women’s liberation *komi* (‘mini-communication’), and other forms of protest media.¹⁸⁸

As we can see in this brief history of gekiga’s formulations, the popular art form harnessed and mobilised three revolutionary structures of feeling that reacted to the extension of American occupation, the rise of global sixties counterculture, and the: (1) cosmopolitan *exhilaration* expressed by the culturally-mangled history of post-war aesthetic development in Japan, (2) supersonic *speed* of telecommunications and electric media (radio, film, television), and (3) swarming *fury* and overflowing rage of what Japanese writer Nosaka Akiyuki once called the *yakeato-sedai*, or ‘the generation of the burned-out ruins’.¹⁸⁹ Shirato allegorises the existential rage of the *yakeato* in his Marxist and minoritarian manga series *Ninja bugeichō* (Tales of the ninja, 1959), *Kamui* (1964-1971), and *Kamui-Den* (The Legend of Kamui, 1982-2000), which explored the feudal plight of peasants and the indigenous Ainu in stories of low-

¹⁸⁶ Gennifer Stacy Weisenfeld, *Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-garde, 1905-1931* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). pp. 103-4.

¹⁸⁷ Ōtsuka, ‘Conversion Literature,’ p. xvii.

¹⁸⁸ Setsu Shigematsu, *Screams from the Shadows: The Women’s Liberation Movement in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012). p. 86.

¹⁸⁹ Suzuki, p. 60.

born ‘ninja warriors that symbolize[d] class inequality and disenfranchisement’.¹⁹⁰ Ryan Holmberg reminds us that Shirato’s Marxian series functioned as the exemplar template for the gekiga movement because it followed Gekiga Workshop’s avant-garde manifesto on theories of new media as politically radical modes of articulating the rage and resentment of workers and students:

The series was popular not only amongst its intended audience of male children and adolescents, but also college students and intellectuals, who celebrated its view of Japanese history through the lens of a Marxian “dialectical materialism” and its supposed response to the challenges of the Left after the setbacks of Anpo 60.¹⁹¹

Responding to this countercultural movement, gekiga artists sought to provide leftist historical critiques of Japanese post-war policies and sentiments through premodern allegories of Tokugawa and Edo period peasant rage, feudal exploitation, and the rise of the ninja class to avoid government censorship that Miyazaki Hayao and Takahata Isao would face in the mid-1960s.¹⁹² The Tōei Doga film *The Great Adventure of Horus, Prince of the Sun* (Taiyō no Ōji Horusu no Daibōken, 1968) was not intended to be an adaptation of Norse sagas; it was intended to be a tragic retelling of the Yukar, an epic oral tradition of the indigenous Ainu people of the island of Hokkaido.¹⁹³ Masked as a Norse epic, Takahata, Miyazaki, and their screenwriter, Fukazawa Kazuo, hoped to avoid contending with post-war censorship laws that prohibited controversial depictions of Japan’s history.¹⁹⁴ In their attempt to avoid further

¹⁹⁰ Roman Rosenbaum, ‘Gekiga as a site of intercultural exchange: Tatsumi Yoshihiro’s *A Drifting Life*’. This paper was presented at the international conference on Intercultural Crossover, Transcultural Flows, held at the Japanisches Kulturinstitut (The Japan Foundation) in Cologne, Germany, from 30 September to 2 October 2010. p. 78.

¹⁹¹ Ryan Holmberg, *Garō Manga: The First Decade, 1964-1973* (New York: Center for Book Arts, 2010). p. 5.

¹⁹² Kinsella, p. 152.

¹⁹³ Maria Roberto Novielli, *Floating Worlds: A Short History of Japanese Animation* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2018). p. 56.

¹⁹⁴ The de facto censorship of Japanese historical material did not only apply to post-war manga or anime as Laura Hein and Mark Selden explain in *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States* (London: Routledge, 2000). Hein and Selden illustrate further that beyond media censorship laws, Japan’s history of censoring secondary history textbooks is a contentious political battle even to this day. Hein and Selden illustrate how Japan’s Ministry of Education has been the target of enumerable lawsuits from 1965 to up to as recently as 2007, which accuse the Ministry of knowingly and systematically approving of propagandistic additions and selective omissions in public textbooks. Controversial topics include the rape of Nanking, Korean sex slaves (comfort women), the Holocaust, and Japan’s colonial involvement in Hokkaido and Okinawa (p. 22). For more on the political debates and legal battles about Japanese white-washing in public school history

complications with Tōei Doga executives, they used the Scandinavian retelling as a historiographic stand-in for a milieu that interrogates gekiga and vulgar Marxist values of a nomadic society under attack by imperial powers.

However, most artists explored modern post-war and postcolonial narratives of revolutionary rage in the face of accelerating modernisation outside of Japan. Echoing Ōtsuka, Kinsella claims that in order to rethink the role of consumer capitalism and American occupation in Japan, these new gekiga artists actively deployed proletarian activist tactics through the manga machine:

Many top manga artists of this period who were contracted to produce series for the leading weekly commercial magazines also lent their talents to producing political materials in manga form for organizations such as the Japan Labour Union (*Nijon Rodo Kumiai*). In one such pamphlet published in 1969, manga artists Ishinomori Shotaro, Fujio Fujiko, Mizuki Shigeru, and Asaoka Kogi, identified themselves with the cause of workers fighting against factory exploitation and students fighting against the US-Japan Security Treaty.¹⁹⁵

Furthermore, just as these openly Marxist gekiga artists mobilised themselves as post-war activists, they did so well beyond the comfort of the enclosed circuits of *Garo*, eventually transforming their Marxian gekiga philosophies of rage and discontent into popularly accessible boys action-adventure stories and pseudo-historical manga. Within the popular manga machine, gekiga artists reproduced post-war proletarian and communist manga-manifestos in mass media outlets like *Sunday* and *Jump* magazines, as Kinsella notes:

Between 1969 and 1971 *Sunday* [...] serialized a historical drama by the artist-team Fujio-Fujiko about the Chinese cultural revolution titled simply *Mao Tse Tung* (*Mo Taku To*). In 1971 *Jump* [...] carried a story titled *The Human Condition* (*Ningen no*

textbooks, see Mark Selden and Yoshiko Nozaki's groundbreaking essay, 'Japanese Textbook Controversies, Nationalism, and Historical Memory: Intra- and Inter-national Conflicts', in *The Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 7.21.5 (June 2009), and David Sneider and Gi-Wook Shin's comprehensive study *History Textbooks and the Wars in Asia: Divided Memories* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁹⁵ Kinsella, pp. 32-4.

Joken), which protested against the oppression and the forced imposition of American army bases in Japan.¹⁹⁶

While *The Human Condition* openly assaults the extension of American occupation after 1960, it is important to note that Fujio Fujiko's popular *Mao* manga mirrors Shirato's ninja narratives and proletarian expressions of peasant rage and transhistorical political philosophy, villainising the Chinese nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek, the apathetic West, and most importantly, *Japanese* occupiers in mainland China that helped Mao and his coalition incite and win the civil war. In a brilliantly reflexive turn, *Mao* functions as a popular assessment of the Cultural Revolution and a radical revision of Maoist philosophy well before Louis Althusser's academic revisionism of Mao in the West.¹⁹⁷ Rather than simply promoting the politically rigid deployment of Maoism, Fujio Fujiko examines Maoism in a mediated allegory of manga as a proletarian art form.

Within the raging gekiga machine, Fujio Fujiko recognised the radical potentiality of what Peter Sloterdijk refers to as 'the psychopolitical fury of Maoism' in each panel, realigning the Maoist cult of total guerrilla warfare alongside post-historical desires of the gekiga machine.¹⁹⁸ As if tracing the political energies of the Gekiga Workshop, gekiga enunciates not only the fury of Japanese youths during the 1960s, but most importantly, the fury of the peasant-student-warrior assemblage itself:

If one believes that the control of thymotic energies through the Stalinist management of rage reached the ultimate degree of realpolitik cold-bloodedness, one is as abused of this belief in a twofold manner by Maoism. The first lesson consists in the invention of a new kind of guerrilla warfare that Mao Zedong advanced [...] this kind of guerrilla warfare later served as a source of inspiration for the many 'liberation armies' of the Third World [...] Mao's politics was from the outset characterized by a methodical substitution of collective fury for missing revolutionary energies, which was provoked by the military-political leadership.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Kinsella, p. 32.

¹⁹⁷ For more on Althusser's recovery of Maoism, see Gregory Elliot's *Althusser: The Detour of Theory* (London: Verso, 1987).

¹⁹⁸ Peter Sloterdijk, *Rage and Time: A Psychopolitical Investigation*, trans. by Mario Wenning (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). p. 168.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Fujio Fujiko's enunciation of political rage in *Mao* demonstrates a sophisticated temporal and political scepticism of the monumental and antiquarian past. As David Deamer writes on Nietzschean historiography, unlike monumental or antiquarian pasts, the *critical* mode of history

analyzes the past, "bringing it before a tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it". It designates good and evil, the incorruptible and the corrupt, the healthy and the sick – in service of any kind of desire. It conjoins the histories of the possible and of tradition through judgement.²⁰⁰

Similarly, in the words of Sloterdijk, the very psychopolitical rage of Maoism is rooted in this Nietzschean post-historical criticality and scepticism, which can be read as a politico-philosophical project of upending the monumental and antiquarian modes of history by inciting a militarised collectivisation of peasant fury (as much as land):

For Mao it was sufficient to identify a random new resentment collective in order to set it on its designated enemy – this was enough to present the conflict as the contemporary form of "class struggle" [...] Mao discovered this instrumental in a flood of infuriated adolescents who, following the call of their leader, left their schools and universities in order to spread physical and psychological terror across the entire country. The catchphrase for this deployment of rebellious youth into villages was once again referred to as the unity of theory and praxis.²⁰¹

In this context, the series locates a strategic and wrathful will to overcome History by producing a guerrilla production of newness in its aesthetic and political modes of production and consumption. Like Maoist guerrilla politics, gekiga production functioned as a guerrilla aesthetic philosophy to think outside of Hegelian-Marxist teleology. Shirato and Fujio Fujiko's gekiga philosophies expose this post-historical rage of feudal exploitation and foreign

²⁰⁰ David Deamer, *Deleuze, Japanese Cinema, and the Atom Bomb: The Spectre of Impossibility* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). p. 78.

²⁰¹ Sloterdijk, p. 17.

occupation as a shocking reminder of the cost of Japanese modernisation through the very *modern* body of gekiga manga. Following Maoist and Nietzschean theories of history, we can see that even the gekiga machine reflects an always changing political body that mutates constantly by swarming the centre, and never fully solidifying as an artefact that emits an authoritative aura of political and cultural memory (and amnesia).

However as Sloterdijk emphasises, Mao's own philosophical project of challenging the structural violence of agrarian exploitation, and of therefore creating *an always new* mode of political and economic life, could only come-into-being after each cycle of extremist iconoclasm completed, leaving close to 45 million Chinese peasants dead.²⁰² For the sake of gekiga philosophy, Fujio Fujiko harnesses the quick fury exposed by Tatsumi and the Gekiga Workshop in a creative re-reading of Maoist theories of history, which in many ways functioned as a critique of not only Japanese imperialism and conservatism, but also a nuanced analysis of the acceleration of the agrarian state into the hypermodern supra-state, and Mao's strategic failure (and ideological contradictions) of transferring peasant rage into industrial modernisation. Following Sloterdijk's reading of post-war European Marxism, Japanese Marxism as expressed in aesthetic and political discourse 'searched for procedures to lend a voice to the rage of the disadvantaged, a language that was supposed to lead to appropriate political action'.²⁰³ Unlike Eurocentric leftism, however, Japan's search for a new language that traversed the Maoist theories of post-historical rage in both high philosophy and low culture to rethink the transformative processes of sensing and feeling history through the gekiga machine. In other words, gekiga sought to follow not only a logic of Marxian historiography in line with the work of Walter Benjamin, Louis Althusser, Henri Lefebvre, E.P. Thompson, Hayden White, and Raymond Williams in the West, but most importantly, a Deleuzian logic of iridescent and inhuman sensations, or what Alexander Galloway refers to as 'a post-hermeneutic marxism, or "marxism of the swarm."'²⁰⁴

Tatsumi's yakeato generation, disillusioned and disaffected, hot-headed and heady, were emblematic of revolution in post-war Japan. This new post-war generation transformed gekiga geeks into romantic ragers and peasant punks who sought to dehierarchise art, history, politics, and the very fabric of spacetime in everyday life by sketching ordinary lines into new

²⁰² Sloterdijk, p. 170.

²⁰³ Sloterdijk, p. 176.

²⁰⁴ Alexander Galloway, 'Introduction: Execrable Media' in *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014): 1-24 (p. 19).

lines of furious flight, by forcing each frame into motion, and by compressing each page of monochromatic chaos into exploded planes of immanence. This chapter claims that the mobilisation of gekiga was the strategic recuperation of rage, recircuiting and reengineering post-war structures of feeling into vitalising modes of blooming popular aesthetic production and political dissent.

Becoming-Gekiga: Furious Media and the Onto-Aesthetics of Gekiga

From the early days of gekiga's origins to the rise of otaku culture abroad, the movement produced an intensified aesthetic and ontological philosophy of rage and political disappointment. In this vulgar Left context, we must return to the roots of Deleuze's philosophies of art to examine manga as a philosophical machine that not only represents themes or ideas that are often read as representations, but rather, to read manga as a machine that produces intense, embodied affects and becomings. In this aesthetic, political, and philosophical register, gekiga thinks about the manga machine in a different light. Unlike the early work of Tezuka and his Tokyo contemporaries which specifically viewed manga as a didactic and pedagogical tool, Tatsumi and his ragtag band viewed gekiga as a revolution, viewing manga (and politics) as a porously rhizomatic body that enfolds mimetic forms of signification and representation into new assemblages, new bodies, new sensations, new situations, and even new states of matter. As an aesthetic philosophy, 'more physics than metaphysics', as Galloway writes,²⁰⁵ gekiga's aims need to be considered 'according to three other fundamental notions: the fluidity of matter, the elasticity of bodies, and motivating spirit as a mechanism'.²⁰⁶ Therefore, it is in this context that this chapter reads manga as 'an abstract Machine, of which each concrete assemblage is a multiplicity, a becoming, a segment, a vibration', according to Deleuze and Guattari.²⁰⁷ As Stephen Zepke writes,

²⁰⁵ Alexander Galloway, 'Deleuze, the analogical philosopher par excellence,' (4 November 2015) from *Culture and Communication*: <http://cultureandcommunication.org/galloway/deleuze-the-analogical-philosopher-par-excellence> [Accessed 20 December 2015].

²⁰⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. by Tom Conley (London: Continuum, 2003). p. 4. Hereafter *TF*.

²⁰⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 278.

Art as abstract machine's first principle: it is real and not a representation. Deleuze and Guattari, whether discussing art, philosophy, or anything else, will not stop coming back to this first principle. And as such, it immediately implies another – its necessary compliment – that constructing an abstract machine is to construct construction itself.²⁰⁸

For Zepke, Deleuzian aesthetic theory effectively traces the newness of affects and bodies, perceptions and realities through a three-pronged philosophical synthesis of Nietzsche on becoming-animal, Spinoza on immanence, and Bergson on temporal consciousness and vitalism.²⁰⁹ The writing machine, painting machine, music machine, and cinema machine function as abstract modes of expression in resistance to the clichéd projections of a world that 'appears as obedient and predictable representations'.²¹⁰ The task of the artist-philosopher (the gekiga artist), according to Deleuze is to resist 'all the banal and stereotypical re-productions of habit and cliché' in art, critical thought, and popular critique.²¹¹ This can be described as the Marxian cliché-busting potency of the gekiga mode of aesthetic, historical, philosophical production.

Returning to Tatsumi, note that gekiga philosophy is furiously intense, disruptive, turbulent, and fully embodied as a supersonic textual-visual media, a form that thinks through the problems of capital, technology, and modernisation through a logic of *inhuman* sensations. Gekiga is a furiously political and produced media form, revealing what McKenzie Wark describes as 'a plethora of protocols, an everyday poetics, a materialist attitude to life which does not foreclose or claim to command its mysteries: furious media'.²¹² Gekiga as not simply a manga metaphor for rage, but it is a machine for experiencing nomadic, nonhuman becomings through the technics of manga. For example, in Tatsumi's last chapter of *A Drifting Life*, we can see how these theories of becomings contributes to producing a new manga assemblage, a new kind of manga machine that recircuits an entirely new manga discourse – what manga formalists Natsume Fusanosuke and Kentarō Takekuma refer to as *manga*

²⁰⁸ Zepke, p. 1.

²⁰⁹ Zepke, p. 16.

²¹⁰ Zepke, p. 3.

²¹¹ Zepke, p. 29.

²¹² McKenzie Wark, 'Furious Media,' in *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014): 151-210 (p. 193).

hyōgenron ('a theory of manga expression') – around a networked and enfolded expression of exchanges and transformations between interior intensities and exterior conditions outside of mere representation.²¹³ In the last chapter of his gekiga revival retrospective, aptly entitled 'Fueled by Anger', Tatsumi reflects on the motivating spirit of gekiga in which the young protagonist Hiroshi Katsumi (Tatsumi's literary alter-ego) exits the cinema with his friend, and slowly drifts into the 15 June 1960 student protests of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in Tokyo's famous Hibiya Park. As Suzuki puts it, the treaty represented 'a struggle against American expansionism, the regimentation of Cold War logic, and the Japanese nation's direct and indirect complicity with it'.²¹⁴ Hiroshi and his friend, after exiting the cinema, are immediately 'dragged into the demonstration', and float adrift the teeming crowd. Emblematic of the manga's title, Hiroshi, swept up in the torrent of protesters exclaims: 'Japan too, is adrift!'²¹⁵ As soon as he blended back into the pack, Hiroshi 'felt a burning sense of elation and excitement', clearly depicted by the flowing sweat beads on his face and his raised right arm in dissent declaring 'no', mimicking the Zengakuren crowd's own opposition to the treaty.²¹⁶

In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, this affective eruption signals Hiroshi's becoming-animal, Tatsumi's becoming-gekiga. Instantly, Hiroshi is swiftly enfolded into the protest; the anger transforms the swarming pack of students and workers into 'a wolfing', 'a troop of monkeys, a school of fish', as they aggregate together to enact 'modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling' against the State apparatuses of nation and manga alike.²¹⁷ In this scene, Hiroshi and Tatsumi attempt to *articulate* a 'becoming that implies multiplicity, celerity, ubiquity, metamorphosis and treason, the power of affect' through the swarming of the crowd depicted in the swarming medium itself.²¹⁸ This final chapter politicises his entire life's work of *philosophising through gekiga*:

²¹³ Jaqueline Berndt, 'Ghostly: "Asian Graphic Narratives," *Nonnoba*, and Manga' in *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels: Contributions to the Theory and History of Graphic Narrative*, ed. by Daniel Stein and Jan-Noel Thon (Boston: De Gruyter, 2013). p. 366.

²¹⁴ Suzuki, p. 56.

²¹⁵ Tatsumi, p. 825.

²¹⁶ Tatsumi, p. 826.

²¹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 294.

²¹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 268.

He did not have a thorough understanding of the new security treaty, but he could not keep himself from shouting along with the crowd. This demonstration is a new force and it's trying to destroy something! It's an incredible force fueled by anger! That's the element the gekiga has forgotten...Anger!²¹⁹

Tatsumi reveals an important point in his illustrations: limited by language, Hiroshi could only effectively think and feel psychopolitical rage through images. Just as the first three panels of the manga enunciate the despair (and relief) of Japan's defeat and U.S. occupation in 1945, the manga ends with three infuriated panels emblematic of the global sixties. The top illustrates a teary eyed, catatonic Hiroshi, overcome by what Sloterdijk refers to as 'revolutionary affectivity'.²²⁰ The middle panel depicts an image of a tear-gas cloud choking a swarm of protesters during the 20 June Zengakuren riots outside of a seemingly smouldering diet building. This scene recounts the passing of the treaty and the subsequent resignation of the prime-minister Nishi Nobusuke. The bottom enframes a white spark that clashes in sharp relief against a sketched blackened background, giving the illusion of a flash of light; the flash functions as a stylised speech bubble, containing this final phrase: 'No! I'll never be done with gekiga!'²²¹ Following Deleuze and Guattari, the fits and starts of this final section highlight the predominance of an 'element of exteriority' in gekiga; these three panels in the words of Deleuze and Guattari

give time a new rhythm: an endless succession of catatonic episodes or fainting spells, and flashes or rushes. Catatonia is: "This affect is too strong for me", and a flash is: The power of this affect sweeps me away.²²²

It would appear that Tatsumi's vision of gekiga, like the logic of post-war counterculture and postmodernity, is a glass cannon, a punk ballad, a nervous breakdown, a tsunami wave, a berserker's rage, a 'Japanese fighter, interminably still, who then makes a move too quick to see [...] a succession of flights of madness and catatonic freezes in which no subjective

²¹⁹ Tatsumi, p. 827.

²²⁰ Sloterdijk, p. 118.

²²¹ Tatsumi, p. 828.

²²² Deleuze and Guattari, p. 393.

interiority remains'.²²³ Or more prosaically, gekiga is 'a theory and practice of *infuriating media*,' as Wark explains.²²⁴

The disavowal of language, or the refusal asserted in the 'no' speech act not only asserts the excommunicative process of political discourse, but it effectively highlights the primacy of the visual movement of gekiga, harking back to the nonhuman-prelingual pictorial turn which reminds us readers how to not only assess affectivity in aesthetic theory, but us to feel the politically reterritorialised sway of images. Zepke further elaborates on the process of becoming-animal in relation to art and philosophy: 'The revalued physiology of the artist-philosopher is no longer human, and has become animal. Critique thereby frees a new sensibility, an "animal sensibility" as Nietzsche calls it.'²²⁵ In this animal sensibility, language and consciousness revolves around the metaphysical and ontological differences of human and nonhuman experience encountered in the realm of aesthetico-philosophical critique and linguistic cognition. In a recent interview with Alexander Galloway on contemporary philosophy in Japan, Masaya Chiba recaps the past twenty years of animality in philosophy and critical theory by associating the beginning of the 'nonhuman turn' with the limits of language presented by poststructuralists and deconstructionists:

The nonhuman trend in theory could be interpreted ironically as a deadlock of problematizing a more distant and more hidden alterity. In the 2000s, we saw the fad of animality; Derrida's later lectures, Agamben's theory of *zoe*, or various concerns about bioethics, etc.²²⁶

Returning to the very real becoming-animal in gekiga, we must then be reminded of the swarming animal affects of Tatsumi and friends. Suzuki concludes on a similar note that Tatsumi's work relates the 'constrained condition' of everyday life with 'numerous appearances of animals and insects', and like reading Kafka, '[t]he reader constantly encounters rats, monkeys, cows, cockroaches, scorpions, eels, and dogs, all of which are

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Wark, 'Furious Media,' p. 160.

²²⁵ Zepke, p. 22.

²²⁶ Alexander Galloway and Masaya Chiba, 'The Desire Called Speculative Realism,' 25 April 2016. <http://cultureandcommunication.org/galloway/the-desire-called-speculative-realism> [Accessed 16 May 2016].

caged, trapped, or misplaced in urban, industrial environments'.²²⁷ Remembering Deleuze and Guattari's own definition of becoming-animal through Kafka,²²⁸ here too the rhizome and burrows of Tatsumi's gekiga uncover the 'underground intensities' of the wild that resists the institutional confines of modern life, as Deleuze concludes in his elegant reading of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*: 'the whole becoming-animal of Gregor, his becoming beetle, Junebug, dungbeetle, cockroach, which traces an intense line of fight in relation to the familial triangle but especially in relation to the bureaucratic and commercial triangle'.²²⁹

Therefore, it is important to remember the difference between animality as a form of representation (anthropomorphic metaphors) and animality as a material process of becoming-animal as we move forward. The representation of animality (or the anthropomorphising of the nonhuman) produces what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a *hard segment* of energy and thought, which Réda Bensmaïa characterises as 'the binary machine of social classes, sexes, neurosis, mysticism, and so on'.²³⁰ Avoiding a strictly binary representational mode, Bensmaïa illustrates how Benjamin's reading of becoming-animal in Kafka's works highlights the dangers of approaching Kafka through the hard segment of binary oppositions: 'There are two ways to miss the point of Kafka's works. One is to interpret them naturally, the other is the supernatural interpretation. Both the psychoanalytic and the theological interpretations equally miss the most essential points'.²³¹ Deleuze and Guattari – echoing Benjamin – conclude that 'becoming does not occur in the imagination, even when the imagination reaches the highest cosmic or dynamic level [...] Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor phantasies. They are

²²⁷ Suzuki, p. 58-59.

²²⁸ It is through Kafka's literary works that Deleuze and Guattari formulate their definition of becoming-animal that highlights the ends of representational semiotics, as they write: 'To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all significations, signifiers, and signified, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs. Kafka's animals never refer to a mythology or to archetypes but correspond solely to new levels, zones of liberated intensities where contents free themselves from their forms as well as from their expressions, from the signified that formalized them. There is no longer anything but movements, vibrations, thresholds in a deserted matter: animals, mice, dogs, apes, cockroaches [in Kafka's stories] are distinguished only by this or that threshold, this or that vibration, by the particular underground tunnel in the rhizome or the burrow', from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). p. 3. Hereafter *Kafta*.

²²⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, p. 14.

²³⁰ Réda Bensmaïa, 'Foreword: The Kafka Effect', trans. by Terry Cochran, in Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka*. p. x.

²³¹ Bensmaïa, p. ix.

perfectly real'.²³² In this reading then, Deleuze and Guattari urge us to break from the anthropocentric, binary-inducing molar moorings of modernity (progress, History, technological determinism), and instead, to seek becomings that access a prehistorical rage of the precultural, prelinguistic animal.²³³

In opposition to the hard segments of institutional life (of family, State, and Tokyo manga), Tatsumi's gekiga created new becomings by going berserk and becoming-animal. From the infuriated peasant of Shirato's feudal worlds to Tatsumi's post-war street-fighting man, gekiga exits the first half of the twentieth century with a defiant rage, 'a smoldering anger against the nationalist (and capitalist) grip over the formation of the nation'.²³⁴ In the final page of *A Drifting Life*, Hiroshi reifies his alliance with the fury of gekiga and the banzai rage of the Zengakuren movement, remaining content in replacing 'family feelings or State intelligibilities' (that are reinforced and manufactured by the manga machine of Tezuka and his contemporaries) with unwieldy 'pack affects' in his revivalist ode to gekiga.²³⁵ Tatsumi's gekiga philosophy initiated a recuperation of the vitalistic *need* for intensity and affects, an embodied and visually mediated reengineering of what Massumi refers to as 'virtual synaesthetic perspectives'.²³⁶ Infuriating and intermedial media machines like gekiga manga urge toward these virtual synaesthetic perspectives. Gekiga manga is an actively disruptive and mutable form of sensory embodiment and perceptual extension, reterritorialising long dormant affects that leap from the skin, constrict the muscles, and tear through the guts as animal intensities. For avant-gardist manga artists like Shirato, Fujio Fujiko, and Tatsumi, the rage of gekiga is best explored in three moves of becoming: becoming-animal, becoming-steel, and becoming-shadow. In these gekiga modes, inspired by both cinematic and proletarian art techniques, we experience a temporal rage against modernity, which in turn wakes us up, gets our blood pumping, raises the hair on our necks, causes tears, and elicits fears.

²³² Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 262.

²³³ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2005). p. 125. Hereafter *NP*.

²³⁴ Suzuki, p. 60.

²³⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 271.

²³⁶ Massumi, p. 96.

Gekiga Embodiment: The Phenomenology and Intermediality of Gekiga Manga

Before we can continue onward to understand gekiga techniques of nonhuman becomings, I would like to contemplate the nature of the gekiga machine alongside what Paul Stoller refers to as the boom of ‘sensuous scholarship’.²³⁷ Stoller, largely influenced by the anti-Cartesianism of Deleuze’s new materialism, Judith Butler’s gender and body studies, Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s existential phenomenology, and the post-colonial anthropological turn, notes the importance of sensuous scholarship, especially in relation to texts that are unreadable to the non-Cartesian eye: ‘it is representationally and analytically important to consider how perception in non-Western societies devolves not simply from vision (and the linked metaphors of reading and writing) but also from smell, touch, taste, and hearing’.²³⁸ Contemporary sensuous scholars including Laura Marks, Steven Shaviro, Lúcia Nagib, Vivian Sobchack, David Trotter, and Jennifer Barker have urged toward an aesthetic theory around the ‘lower senses’ through cinema and digital media, especially in the context of global, intercultural, transcultural, and cosmocultural cinema.²³⁹

Within visual studies, this debate between upper and lower senses is rooted in an ontological split between representational theory and existential phenomenology.²⁴⁰ While cinema scholars have led the way in visual phenomenology, the boom of sensuous scholarship seems to have eluded comics studies almost entirely. Shane Denson has recently begun to examine ‘a phenomenology of literary appreciation’ of reading comics, but does not attempt to approach a physiologically embodied reading of comics. Denson’s work does, however,

²³⁷ Paul Stoller claims that sensuous scholarship ‘is an attempt to reawaken profoundly the scholar’s body by demonstrating how the fusion of the intelligible and the sensible can be applied to scholarly practices and representations. In anthropology, for example, it is especially important to incorporate into ethnographic works the sensuous body – its smells, its tastes, textures, and sensations. Such inclusion is especially paramount in the ethnographic description of societies in which the Eurocentric notion of text – and of textual interpretations – is not important’. For more on the philosophical origins of Stoller’s claims, see *Sensuous Scholarship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997). p. xvi.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ For more on sensuous scholarship, affect studies, and cinema studies, see Vivian Sobchack’s *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), Steven Shaviro’s *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), Laura Marks’ *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), David Trotter’s *Cinema and Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), and Jennifer Barker’s *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

²⁴⁰ Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). p. 2.

examine the intermediality of the medium.²⁴¹ Importantly, McCloud does argue that the drawn image functions as a semiotic intermediary between the extension of our senses (a car, a pair of crutches, a pen) and our concepts (speed, support, signs). The extension of our senses, for McCloud, reaches a metonymic level of abstraction and realisation that mirrors the technological mediation of extensions. However, beyond McCloud's McLuhanite theory, he even attempts to approach a sensuous examination of comics, acknowledging that 'the idea that a picture can evoke an emotional or sensual response in the viewer is vital to the art of comics'.²⁴² McCloud, following Tom Gunning,²⁴³ argues that the advent of pre-cinematic technologies like the stroboscope, zoetrope, praxinoscope, kinematoscope, and phantasmatrope, influenced the evolution of simulating sound and motion in comics.²⁴⁴ In this context, he compares the scientific innovations of early cinematic technologies with

expressionism, as it came to be called, [which] didn't start as a scientific art, but rather as an honest expression of the internal turmoil these artists could not repress [...] As the new century got under way, cooler heads such as Wassily Kandinsky took great interest in the power of the line, shape and color to suggest the inner state of the artist and to provoke the five senses [...] Kandinsky and his peers were searching for an art that might somehow unite the senses -- and in doing so, unite the different artforms which appealed to those different senses. We call this idea synaesthetics.²⁴⁵

McCloud concludes that in relief to the 'abstract status of linguistic symbols', the expressionist potentiality of comics allows us to experience the invisible: smell, touch, taste, and sound.²⁴⁶ However, McCloud's limited phenomenology once again relies on identification over embodiment, which perpetuates the production and reproduction of the same, old signs.

The question remains, however: how does the sequence of images of networked narratives, affects, perceptions, and signs allow the viewer to embody the enframed

²⁴¹ Shane Denson, 'Afterword: Framing, Unframing, Reframing: Reconnecting the Transcultural Work of Comics', *Transnational Perspectives on Graphic Narratives: Comics at the Crossroads*, ed. by Daniel Stein, Shane Denson, and Christina Meyer (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013). p. 271.

²⁴² Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993). p. 121.

²⁴³ Tom Gunning, 'Attractions: How They Came into the World', in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. by Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006). p. 30.

²⁴⁴ McCloud, p. 108.

²⁴⁵ McCloud. pp. 122-3.

²⁴⁶ McCloud, p. 129.

relationality between text and image, sense and concept? Returning to the body, Natsume Fusanosuke, a descendent of famed surrealist novelist Sōseki Natsume, notes that the most unsettling feeling while reading manga is the sensation of disorder and chaos. While discussing manga in manga form (like McCloud's comic-textbook), Natsume illustrates many different uses of frames and gutters. On one page, he illustrates a terrified avatar of Natsume falling through broken and shattered frames. As his pictorial avatar flies through the page, he writes:

Actually, people like Tezuka Osamu during the age of the monthlies, really put this technique through the paces. But this sort of nonsense [fragmentary frames] is undeniably difficult to read...Also, it makes us feel uneasy. This is because in manga the edge of the frame represents order itself – that which sustains the drawings' sense of reality. If the frame should become fluid and unpredictable, the sense of reality gives way to insecurity. And if this technique is pushed to extremes, the narrative completely collapses.²⁴⁷

While an initial reading may allow us to compare Natsume's formalism to McCloud's concept of 'amplification through simplification',²⁴⁸ what Natsume actually illustrates is a visceral expression of vertigo as his illustrated alter-ego crashes through the non-traditional frames.²⁴⁹ For Natsume, narrative is the primary purpose of manga. However, as this page illustrates, embodiment, affect, and bodily responses disturb, rupture, and frighten the formalist reader and narrative consumer. White-eyed and queasy, Natsume's character crawls out from the broken panels.²⁵⁰ After realising that the force of the moving image was too fast, he redraws new frames that are symmetrical, orderly, and that imitate the one-point Cartesian perspective for an easy readerly experience. If continuity is the goal for Natsume, then gekiga artists like Tatsumi sought to dismantle continuity, to distort, bend, and break panels, frames, and lines to explore what the dissected body experiences, from the eyes to skin to limbs to guts.

²⁴⁷ Natsume Fusanosuke, 'Komatopia', trans. by Margherita Long, in *Mechademia (Volume 3): Origins* (2008). pp. 69-70.

²⁴⁸ McCloud, p. 30.

²⁴⁹ Natsume, p. 70.

²⁵⁰ Natsume, p. 71.

From an analysis of frame composition and lines of sight, Natsume importantly notes that manga, especially gekiga, began to imitate ‘a cinematic approach to angles and editing’ that opened up a ‘new territory for expression’.²⁵¹ This cinematic approach not only brought on innovative approaches to composition, but for the purpose of this chapter, I argue that as gekiga artists began to incorporate cinematic skills of editing and framing in their manga style, so too did they inherit a specific kind of philosophy of the cinematic body. It is important to borrow from recent work on cinema and embodiment, primarily because many of the same cinematic affects that are described by film phenomenologists translate effectively in an understanding of gekiga philosophy.

As a hybridised, intermedial, and transcultural form in between moving and unmoving pictures, let us turn to manga scholar Deborah Shamoon’s next question: ‘What does it mean to say that manga is inherently cinematic?’²⁵² Shamoon explains that ‘although manga and anime are easily seen as closely related in terms of both production and consumption, the relationship between manga and live-action cinema is less well known’.²⁵³ As she argues, most ‘editing and framing techniques from film have been borrowed by manga, including the close-up and shot-reverse-shot’ in order to enhance cinematic rhythm in storytelling, from the *jidaigeki* (‘historical drama’) films of Kurasawa Akira to the manga of Tatsumi and friends.²⁵⁴ Throughout the essay, Shamoon investigates the filmic influence on gekiga, and effectively locates many filmic qualities in the work of Tatsumi and his gekiga workshop. For Shamoon, the gekiga appropriation of filmic elements establishes a continuous cinematic narrative, bringing cinematicism to comics.

However, often when the word *cinematicism* is invoked, one must be categorically careful. For Shamoon and David Bordwell, cinematicism is a way of rethinking narrative through cinematic framing and editing (or filmic style).²⁵⁵ For Thomas Lamarre and Tom

²⁵¹ Natsume, p. 68.

²⁵² Deborah Shamoon, ‘Films on Paper: Cinematic Narrative in Gekiga’, in *Mangatopia: Essays on Manga and Anime in the Modern World*, ed. by Timothy Perper and Martha Cornog (Denver: Libraries Unlimited, 2011). p. 21.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Shamoon, p. 22.

²⁵⁵ For more on cinematic style and the narratives drawn from these techniques and oeuvres, see the works of David Bordwell, specifically *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1988), *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), *The Way Hollywood Tells it: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), and *Poetics of Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2008).

Gunning, cinematicism is as much a technological condition as a perceptual one.²⁵⁶ For Vivian Sobchack²⁵⁷ and Jennifer Barker,²⁵⁸ cinematicism is a bodily and phenomenological experience. While Shamoon's narratological history of gekiga effectively links the influence of cinematic narrative with gekiga – from the aspect-to-aspect frame transitions and the 'pillow shot' to Tatsumi's own personal admiration of Japanese and Western action cinema – I believe the relationship between gekiga and cinema is more effectively traced alongside tactility and affect, of speed and intensity.²⁵⁹

To understand the cinematic quality of gekiga, we must further theorise cinematic affect and embodiment through gekiga philosophy. As Jennifer Barker writes in *The Tactile Eye*, cinematic tactility is 'a general attitude toward the cinema that the human body enacts in particular ways'.²⁶⁰ She categorises the cine-tactile senses in three ways: haptically, kinaesthetically, and viscerally. While manga is an entirely different machine, I chose to draw from Barker to rethink the relationship between the image and the body as experienced in the manga machine. From the skin of the manga, so to speak, we haptically experience the changing of skins in becoming-animal, which functions as an affective response against the transcendence of humanist (classical, organic, in the words of Deleuze) thought in art. From the extensions of manga, we kinaesthetically experience a whirl of movement and intensity in becoming-steel, which serves as an affective response against the programmatic experience of technological overdevelopment. And finally, from the pools of black ink on the cheap white pulpy paper of manga, we viscerally experience the monochromatic interplay between black and white which allows us to explore the affective possibility of imperceptibility in reaction against modern subjectivity through becoming-shadow. In other words, this transition from gekiga to otaku philosophies occur in series like Miura's *Berserk* that emphasise becomings against subjectivities, nomadic memories over periodised modernities, all by exploring animal hybrids, chaosmic painterly practices,²⁶¹ and an aesthetics of deterritorialisation in shadows.

²⁵⁶ For more on the technological relations of cinema, see Lamarre's *Anime Machine* (p. 25) as well as Tom Gunning's seminal essay 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,' *Wide Angle* 8.3-4 (Fall 1986). pp. 56-63.

²⁵⁷ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 13.

²⁵⁸ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, p. 4.

²⁵⁹ Shamoon, pp. 27-8.

²⁶⁰ Barker, p. 3.

²⁶¹ Félix Guattari's term *chaosmic* describes an existential and ontological relation between creation and destruction, defined as such: 'The most originary, objectal intentionality defines itself against a background of chaosmosis. And chaos is not pure indifferenciation; it possesses a specific ontological texture. It is inhabited by

Tatsumi's Gekiga Sensorium: Three Intermedial Techniques of Gekiga Becomings

Tatsumi sets the precedent for these three forms of becoming against modernity in his life works. First, Tatsumi's fascination with becoming-animal is directed at the manga machine. In his chapter 'The Manga Monster', Hiroshi struggles to write a monster gekiga inspired by Honda Ishirō's cinematic classic, *Godzilla* (Toho, 1954). His idea is simple: 'I'm thinking of a story about a cobra that becomes gigantic because of nuclear experiments and begins attacking people. A forceful work! Page after page of blood-curdling terror'.²⁶² As he commits to becoming-gekiga and becoming-animal, he struggles to fully immerse himself in the nuances of becoming-cobra. As he begins thinking about how to write something new and shed his old skin, he thinks to himself: 'This will be an experimental work, free from the conventions of the manga format. It'll be manga that isn't manga'.²⁶³ Unfortunately, even Hiroshi, the young avant-gardist, finds himself unable to continue illustrating after one splash page that depicts two enraged cobras thrashing a modern Japanese city apart. Stuck in the conventional, narratively-focused manga machine, the narrator describes that '[i]t all started with the frustration of not being able to draw the scene of a cobra attacking the army as he wanted'.²⁶⁴ In resistance to the State, Hiroshi's cobras are caught in a standstill. Hiroshi, struggling with this narratological conundrum of representation, eventually abandons the traditional style of continuous storytelling and fully immerses himself into becoming-cobra, adhering to Zepke's claim that

virtual entities and modalities of alterity which have nothing universal about them. It is not therefore Being in general which irrupts in the chaosmic experience of psychosis, or in the pathic relationship one can enter into with it, but a signed and dated event, marking a destiny, inflecting previously stratified significations [...] This [...] is associated with an overwhelming feeling of imminent redemption of every possibility or, in other words, the alarming oscillation between a proliferating complexity of sense and total vacuity, a hopeless dereliction of existential chaosmosis', in *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. by Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 81. Zepke also claims in *Art as Abstract Machine* that chaosmosis is the oscillation 'between chaos and complexity, a coming-into-being which (re)creates the affect's finite existence' in the world to produce 'the virtual and infinite genetic plane on and through which the actual world appears and becomes. In this sense, chaosmosis is not chaos itself, but the autopoiesis of chaos into an expressive matter'. p. 155.

²⁶² Tatsumi, p. 368.

²⁶³ Tatsumi, p. 373.

²⁶⁴ Tatsumi, p. 375.

[t]he artist-philosopher's animal vigor is the antidote to the poison of representation and human rationality; it overcomes anti-artistic nihilism to restore life to its animal health. The artist-philosopher-animal will therefore embody critique in physiological becomings inseparable from the production of art.²⁶⁵

By challenging humanistic representation, Hiroshi discovers how to overcome 'the horror of the monster known as "manga"'.²⁶⁶ Importantly, we may read Barker's *amarys* as an effective way to conceptualise how the relationship between image and skin is entirely *textual*, *material*, and *textural*.²⁶⁷ Becoming-monster as Barker notes, settles 'at the tender surface of the body', on the skin of the changing of species, which as we will see, explains the process of berserking, a transhistorical form of intense transformation.²⁶⁸

At other moments, we might say that some pictures and the sequence of pictures demand a flurry of punches and kicks as we speed through the successively intense movement-images in any action manga. For Barker, this is where we begin to locate cinematic tactility beyond material and texture and off in the *spatial* distance of what Deleuze later refers to as the 'movement-image' in his *Cinema* texts.²⁶⁹ Barker writes that this kind of tactility can be felt 'kinaesthetically and muscularly, in the middle dimension for muscles, tendons, and bones that reach toward and through cinematic space'.²⁷⁰ Tatsumi experiences and re-enacts the kinaesthetic response of cinema in his chapter 'Desert Traveler' in *A Drifting Life*, in which he examines the sinewy brawn of the Japanese sumo-wrestler Rikidozan and his televised match against the American duo, the Sharpe Brothers, in distinctly sensuous and intense gekiga fashion.²⁷¹ Moreover, while the chapter title may conjure up images of the

²⁶⁵ Zepke, *Art as Abstract Machine*, p. 22.

²⁶⁶ Tatsumi, p. 377.

²⁶⁷ Barker, p. 24, p. 26, and p. 50.

²⁶⁸ Barker, p. 3.

²⁶⁹ Deleuze defines the *movement-image* in *CI* as such: 'the essence of the cinematographic movement-image lies in extracting from vehicles or moving bodies the movement which is their common substance, or extracting from movements the mobility which is their essence. That is what Bergson wanted: beginning from the body or moving thing to which our natural perception attaches movement as if it were a vehicle, to extract a simple coloured "spot", the movement-image, which is "reduced in itself to a series of extremely rapid oscillations" and "is in reality only a movement of movements". Now, because Bergson only considered what happened in the apparatus (the homogenous abstract movement of the procession of images) he believed the cinema to be incapable of that which the apparatus is in fact most capable, eminently capable of: the movement-image – that is, pure movement extracted from bodies or moving things', p. 27.

²⁷⁰ Barker, p. 3.

²⁷¹ Tatsumi, p. 261.

Deleuzo-Guattarian nomad always on the move, propelled by a perpetual kinaesthesia, we may think about it in relation to bodies pressed against heat, wind, grit, blood, and sand in the desert. More specifically, Tatsumi experiences the wind-blasted desert bodies of Kurosawa Akira's wandering rōnin in *Seven Samurai*; the intense speed and strength of the roving bodies even throws Hiroshi into *another* catatonic state after viewing the film for the first time:

The tremendous impact of the film and the serious portrayal of the seven samurai obliterated the conventions of the *jidaigeki* genre. In particular, Hiroshi felt as if the scales fell from his eyes as he watched the scene of the battle in the rain [...] When the lights came on, Hiroshi was in a daze and couldn't move.²⁷²

We later see Hiroshi practicing with half of a kendo stick in his living room on the next page. Instead of drawing his next manga, Hiroshi imitates each stroke of the blade from the film, mimicking each extension of the muscles, each move with simulated precision and imaginative play.²⁷³ He eventually translates these chaotic strikes and swipes with his pen, perfecting the gekiga practice of illustrating an excess of motion lines and other heavily shaded elements during scenes of constant motion. Moreover, this cinematic immersion manifests itself in his early manga series entitled *Shadow: Detective Book* and *The Silent Witness*, which although were widely criticised for their lack of 'humor' and 'punchlines', demands the reader to wind up their arms, unleash their legs, and ball up their fists as they experience frenetic action-to-action transitions, the flash of the gun or the blade, and the illusion of speed indicated with heavy movement lines, stilted shots, and large, imposing onomatopoeic kanji, all of which are contained and exposed in the panels.²⁷⁴

Gekiga then, like *jidaigeki*, utilises its own furious modes of expression to produce vertigo-inducing action and speed that shocks the muscles into movement within specific spatial enframements, transforming visual movement into a way of thinking, as Daisuke Miyao writes:

²⁷² Tatsumi, p. 272.

²⁷³ Tatsumi, p. 273.

²⁷⁴ Tatsumi, pp. 413-14.

jidaigeki fully employs effects lighting in low-key settings and enhances complex psychological states of the sword fighters. In *jidaigeki*, characters often wander in the dark, which is the perfect setting for spectacular sword fighting. Under the dim moonlight or street lamps, the swords of samurai warriors flash for a moment, as if they could not wait for bloodshed. Samurai warriors need to resort to their swords, which embody their spirits [...] The filmmaker Uratani Toshiro claims, “*Chanbara* is the boiling point where the “psychological climax” and “the visual climax” of the drama meet”.²⁷⁵

As we can see, the lighting and frenetic pace of action in *jidaigeki* cinema influenced the production of *gekiga* philosophy, urging toward kinaesthesia, producing new bodies of speeding round-house kicks and slick sword thrusts, expressed through cuts and shots of movement and force. Importantly, this style asks for a kind of kinaesthesia that thinks through what Lamarre refers to, in Deleuzian film terms, as ‘the force of the moving image’, which as he continues, further ‘implies a radical otherness, historicity (an explosion of the new), and heredity that makes for a *machine* prior to the apparatus or the technical ensemble’.²⁷⁶ While referring to anime, which I will turn to specifically in Chapter Four, it is important to think about *gekiga* philosophy as an urge to cinematise manga through speed of production or the illusion of speed illustrated. Both *gekiga* manga and anime illustrate the visual and semiotic puissance of an embodied simulation of intense affects and movements.

Like Hiroshi’s *gekiga* rage of the earlier section, we can feel the force of kinaesthesia becoming politicised with every punch and kick, every swing and slash. For Miyao, it is important to note that like *gekiga*’s own battle against the Tokyo manga machine in the 1950s,

jidaigeki became popular in almost exactly the same period as the proletarian arts movement in Japan developed and “faulted its discontent and contempt for the dominant culture”. Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto argues, “The vitality of *jidaigeki* in the 1920s and early 1930s was inseparable from young filmmakers’ anarchic rebellion against

²⁷⁵ Miyao, *The Aesthetics of Shadow*, p. 73.

²⁷⁶ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 15.

the establishment and, at an institutional level, small production companies' struggle against large capital".²⁷⁷

This proletarian battle against big Tokyo studios like Shochiku was not only reflected in the choice of premodern milieu, dire proletarian narratives, and alternative lighting and shooting techniques; additionally, like gekiga, the Marxian eruptions of jidaigeki can be felt in its cinematic thought on musculature. To literally *resist* and *struggle* against large capital, one must have strong enough muscles to hold oneself up against the winds and waves of Hollywood-like capital and Japanese pre-war imperialist ideologies. The choice for jidaigeki directors to film their actors within simulated battles of '[r]ealistic sword fighting, rather than the dance-like stylized type in Kabuki' more effectively expressed

the class consciousness of the political masses that emerged during the radical social changes and uncertainties in the first decades of the twentieth century and marked the major thematic concern in *taishu bungaku* [historical novels], even though in many dramas both *shinkokugeki* and Kabuki narrated the last days of the Edo period, when loyalists and shogunate supporters had engaged in bloody battles and fought for hegemony.²⁷⁸

In a similar way, Tatsumi reflects on jidaigeki's embodiment of sinew and steel to rethink political resistance as a proletarian warrior from either Shirato's ninja Marxist manga or Kurosawa's anti-war samurai showdown films. In other words, anyone can pick up gekiga and feel the revolutionary urge to fight, kick, and rebel, either as a peasant, a student, or a salaryman. Here, Deleuze and Guattari theorise that

[m]artial arts and state-of-the-art technologies have value only because they create the possibility of bringing together worker and warrior masses of a new type. The shared line of flight of the weapon and the tool: a pure possibility, a mutation.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Miyao, p. 68.

²⁷⁸ Miyao, p. 70.

²⁷⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 445.

This mutation of weapon-tool, of warrior-worker, of destruction-production is *becoming-steel*. Becoming-steel is most effectively felt in the joints, muscles, and tendons of gekiga, reminding us again of Fujio Fujiko's manga-mediated Maoism, one that sought to transform peasants (workers-students) into warriors of political change through the wild extensions of gekiga rage. For Miura's *Berserk*, this not only impacts his gekiga philosophy of becoming-animal, but most importantly for Guts, becoming-nomad and becoming-anomalous. As we will see in the next chapter, Guts' only form of resistance to the horrors of war, capital, and tyranny is to outpace the speed of the pack with his roving legs, to multiply in force and number as his muscles grow and constrict, to shake his surroundings with rebellious shouts, and to upend the State appropriated war machine (represented by Griffith and his band-turned-army) by going berserk. Upon first reading the manga, any unsuspecting reader might cringe at the way Miura's frames, transitions, and splash pages depict and mimic the shattering of bone, the tearing of tendons, and the eviscerating of flesh. We experience this resistance and rage primarily through the sharp lines and disfigured illustrations of Guts' bestial body and the gargantuan, pitch-black blade. At each swing of the blade, we are compelled to feel the inhuman speed and force of the movement-image crashing down on heaps and heaps of Guts' opponents, as Chapter Two explores in more detail.

The final mode of cinematic tactility for Barker is the more subtle, subterranean, uncontrollable visceral responses that resonate 'in the murky recesses of the body, where heart, lungs, pulsing fluids, and firing synapses receive, respond to, and re-enact the rhythms of cinema'.²⁸⁰ While the haptic and kinaesthetic can be thought in congress with materiality and spatiality, Barker's emphasis on rhythm indicates a *temporal* reading of visceral embodiment. Specifically, for Barker, the cinematic rhythms of image, movement, and sound skitter across on the surface of the skin, flit in and out of the eyes, and settle deep into the eardrums, pooling and seeping deeper into our inner organs without us even realising it. While images flow from the optic nerve to the mesencephalon, sounds travel from the auditory nerve to the brainstem. Synapses fire, chemicals spurt, and the rest of the nervous and endocrine system delivers sparks and jolts to our limbs and, most importantly, to our muddled inner organs as we immerse ourselves into cinematic bodies. Barker elaborates on this process:

²⁸⁰ Barker, p. 3.

The descent of touch into the body's depths necessitates its reconfiguration as a less volitional, less accessible sense [...] We no longer witness touch when it occurs in the inner organs, nor do we control the particular forms it takes. This is touch as it is experienced and enacted in a dimension of the body that we rarely if ever see for ourselves. The inner body is a secret, hidden by layers of muscle and flesh, our attention diverted from it by our daily engagement with the "world at hand". The visceral body makes itself known to us only in the most dramatic situations, of which [...] the film experience is one. Although the viscera rarely factor into our perceptual field, they are awakened and summoned through the surface body's engagement with the shapes and textures of cinema.²⁸¹

In this context, Barker claims that there are many ways in which a film can stimulate the viscera in this way: the wave of wailing string-instruments anticipating a climactic reveal in a noir mystery, the blood-curdling screams of a slasher flick, the jostling movement of the camera during an on-foot chase scene in an action movie, or the jump-scares that energise the tempo of monster movies. These specific moments in film allow the viewers to integrate their cerebral senses with their visceral senses, in which we recognise that '[t]he lived experience of the internal organs is that of a murky, viscous, pulsing system in which organs work in tandem to yield an overall effect, be it nausea, tension, aches, or jitteriness'.²⁸² However, as Natsume writes, unlike cinema, gekiga cannot inherently produce sound or put panels or frames into perpetual motion to evoke tension:

the temporality we experience in the images themselves is different from the immediate synchronization of time as perceived through film; it is rather an imaginary temporality created by the brain of the reader which naturally temporalizes the space of images and lines as such.²⁸³

²⁸¹ Barker, pp. 123-4.

²⁸² Barker, pp. 124-5.

²⁸³ Natsume Fusanosuke, 'Pictotext and Panels: Commonalities and Differences in Manga, Comics and BD', trans. by Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto in *Comics Worlds and the World of Comics: Towards Scholarship on a Global Scale*, ed. by Jaqueline Berndt (Kyoto: International Manga Research Center, Kyoto Seika University, 2010), p. 42.

Because of the material limitations of manga's ink-and-paper body, gekiga relies on an illustration of music in the form of signs and kanji as well as rough, gritty, quickly-sketched monochromatic illustrations that are often asymmetrically or diagonally framed.

In Tatsumi's chapter 'The Joy of Creation' in *A Drifting Life*, Hiroshi finally hit his stride after working with fellow gekiga artists Matsumoto Masahiko and Saito Takao during an intensive gekiga boot camp over one summer. Hiroshi begins his labour of love, *Black Snowstorm* (1956), which as he describes,

tells the story of a pianist who has been wrongly sentenced to prison for murder. While in transit through the mountains, the pianist finds himself handcuffed to a violent criminal, and together they hatch a plan to escape into the terrible snowstorm.²⁸⁴

The opening of *Black Snowstorm* simulates the introduction of a typical, pulpy noir film. Starting at the end of the narrative, Tatsumi depicts a detective in a trench-coat climbing up rickety old stairs in a rundown tenement. While the maddened pianist plays a frenetic tune, expressed by the bold, angular kanji, hiragana, and katakana, we experience the speed and pace (and temporality) of the musical machine, highlighted by the divided and split diagonal panels, especially in relief to the silent detective.

Centring cinematic-inspired gekiga rhythm on the sound of the piano, we traverse a new kind of visceral relationship between a virtual musical machine placed within an actual manga machine, like in classic Hollywood or film noir like *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942), *Detour* (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1945), or *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954).²⁸⁵ As if describing the scene, Deleuze and Guattari locate the importance of thinking through rhythm and music in order to discover alternative embodiments and interactions with temporality: 'the "pulsed time" of a formal and functional music based on values versus the "nonpulsed time" of a floating music, both floating and machinic, which has nothing but speeds or differences in dynamic'.²⁸⁶ Deleuze and Guattari recircuit the ontology of the musical-drawing-writing machine in this respect, seemingly speaking for Hiroshi's project, as if associating the gekiga writer with the maddened pianist

²⁸⁴ Tatsumi, p. 550.

²⁸⁵ Tatsumi, p. 381 and p. 423.

²⁸⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 262.

drawing their own diagonal, however fragile, outside points, outside coordinates and localizable connections, in order to float a sound block down a created, liberated line, in order to unleash in space this mobile and mutant sound block, a haecceity (for example, chromaticism, aggregates, and complex notes, but already the resources and possibilities of polyphony, etc.). Some have spoken of “oblique vectors” with respect to the organ. The diagonal is often composed of extremely complex lines and spaces of sound. Is that the secret of a little phrase or a rhythmic block?²⁸⁷

Even if gekiga cannot make sounds out of the black and white keys of a piano or produce an aggregate of individuated notes and pitches that form a perceptible aural rhythmic block, we can adopt and (mis)read Deleuze and Guattari’s abstraction of the *diagonal* and the *rhythmic* to further understand how *Black Snowstorm* assaults the viscera through an embodied simulation of cinematic sound and the murky, blackened gradient of film stock and celluloid.

Natsume traces the floating and machinic elements of musical temporality described by Deleuze and Guattari in gekiga. He writes that the monochromatic, onomatopoeic ‘depictions of environments and buildings’ adopts a cinematic rhythm and mode of temporality that resituates the cinematic spirit into the gekiga body, transforming a series of still images ‘into a scene’.²⁸⁸ From still panel to an immersive scene, Natsume claims that in addition to a cinematic simulation of *mise-en-scène*, other ‘special symbols that indicate the emotions and mood of the characters, make the reader experience a rich temporality, allowing them to enter the narrative universe’.²⁸⁹ The ‘rich temporality’ Natsume refers to is analogous to immersion and rhythm, a visceral embodiment of semiotic sound, which as Barker writes, allows the reader to ‘take notice of the body’s internal functions, its rhythms and sounds, which seem alien by virtue of their appearing to our own attention at all’.²⁹⁰ Therefore, the opening scene immerses readers in a mobile, pictorial, cinematic experience, as Natsume writes: ‘[p]anel layout, images and script create a compound that provokes a manga-specific temporality within the reader. Precisely this ensures the reader’s immersion into the

²⁸⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 297.

²⁸⁸ Natsume, ‘Pictotexts’, p. 42.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Barker, p. 127.

narrative’.²⁹¹ For example, this scene exposes ‘[n]ervousness, excitement, dread, passion’, which as Barker continues, ‘are felt deeply but affected and inflected by sensations and behaviors at the body’s surface’ through the form of *cinematised* manga.²⁹² Natsume explains that such responses might be elicited through other gekiga temporal structures, such as ‘the development of a broad range of temporal signs: speech balloons, motion lines, clouds of dust, fumes of anger, beads of sweat’.²⁹³

Importantly then, the pianist’s shadowy and ruddy complexion, white eyes, and sweaty cheeks reflect the psychosomatic rhythms of noir cinema which John Orr describes as a cinematic embodiment of ‘mystery, memory, suspense, ambivalence, terror’.²⁹⁴ Confronted by the detective, we feel specific

visceral feelings [that] also rise to the forefront of our experience, where they shape and color our entire bodily experience, in such forms as flushed skin, nausea, and facial expressions that allow others to read us like an open book.²⁹⁵

In reading these scenes, we feel the fear rise from the deepest depths of the solar plexus to the facial surface; guilt is written all over the pianist’s face through this noir-gekiga temporal assemblage, and we can feel it. This scene, like the murky nature of a thrilling noir flick, expresses the imperceptibility of the viscera by exposing unheard and discontinuous affects: ‘The tension between the perceived continuity of our bodies’ lived movement and the discontinuity that underlies it asserts itself sensually, though rarely explicitly, in the cinematic viewing experience’.²⁹⁶

Gekiga Manga and the Minor Art Practices of Miura and Yukimura

As Chapter Two and Three will indicate, *Berserk* and *Vinland Saga* deploy these gekiga techniques of becoming-animal, becoming-steel, and becoming-shadow not as simply stylistic tendencies or tropes. These are cinematic-inspired and embodied compositions that explore

²⁹¹ Natsume, p. 42.

²⁹² Barker, p. 123.

²⁹³ Natsume, p. 42.

²⁹⁴ John Orr, *Hitchcock and Twentieth-Century Cinema* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005). p. 7.

²⁹⁵ Barker, p. 123.

²⁹⁶ Barker, pp. 128-9.

modes of inhuman fury and the visceral imperceptibility of what Deleuze and Guattari call *detrterritorialisation*, the denaturalising and disarticulating process of forgetting ‘an ideology, method, or single metaphor’, and re-remembering how to ‘occupy the space of slippage that exists between disciplinary boundaries’ of thought, expression, and representation, as Kylie Message writes.²⁹⁷ The avant-garde, iconoclastic, nomadic style of becoming-gekiga manga melts away traditional humanist semiotics of human identity, and instead, transforms the human body into a space of deep, cosmic Otherness, an existential void, or what Deleuze and Guattari call a ‘black hole’, of becoming-unknown, of unknowing Being.²⁹⁸

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the ways in which gekiga manga allows us to read Deleuzian historical, philosophical, and aesthetic theory of nomadology, and how certain philosophical, political, and cultural determinants transformed manga into a powerful tool for the critique of post-war Japan, and in general, the post-war, globalising capitalistic world. Gekiga functions as a ‘minor art’, an insurgent, outsider art practice described by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* as a way toward experiencing minoration. Minor literature is not merely marginal literature, and it can be popular. It does not have to be avant-garde or new wave, but it can and must be always fight the norms, clichés, and ideological standards of dominant literature or art. In short, it must seek the creative eruption of the new. Moreover, ‘[t]he three characteristics of minor literature’, Deleuze writes, ‘are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation’.²⁹⁹ Anne Sauvagnargues clarifies how the visual arts can be included in Deleuze’s discourse on minor literature, writing that minor art is also ‘defined here by three relations of minoration, which concern the medium, the social body, and the subject-producer’.³⁰⁰ Instead of a minor linguistics, gekiga manga functions as a visual media (a supersonic media) that seeks to perform a minor semiotics, which is best described by ‘the relation between medium, expressive material, and literary language’ of the work from Tatsumi and the Gekiga Workshop. Tatsumi and his proletarian partners then mobilised a political discourse and assessed the collective value of gekiga.³⁰¹ Gekiga manga and its intermedial nature makes it part minor literature, part minor art. And as the prototype for the

²⁹⁷ Kylie Message, ‘Black Hole’, in *The Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2010). p. 33.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, p. 18.

³⁰⁰ Anne Sauvagnargues, *Deleuze and Art*, trans. by Samantha Bankston (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). p. 95.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

otaku movement that would take place in the 1980s as Ōtsuka Eiji contends, gekiga philosophy formed otaku culture as a minor art movement that became popular and exposed the intellectual and ethical pitfalls of the molar, majoritarian vision of the world and its histories.

It is for this reason that I chose to examine the nomadic memories of gekiga manga to examine how one is to feel or simulate historical forces and processes in a denaturalised context, beyond one fixed national, cultural, or linguistic perspective. Against the institutionally formed and replicated teleological, periodised, and provincialised historical discourses, I hope to pose a question: how do I, a subject formed by the global historical forces reinscribe my understanding of naturalised historical moments, events, or processes through a denaturalising medium like gekiga manga? How do I re-remember a memory of a people(s) that existed, lived, and created art and culture well before the existence of our modern centralised nation-states, neoliberal democracies, secular bureaucracies, and colonies of global capitalism? How do I recover memories of the traumas and desires of History outside of institutionally models?

To begin to answer these questions, I argue that through the affective potentialities and fabulations of a minor art, of a nomadology, we are able to view how overdetermined, paradoxical, mangled, and slippery historical representation can be, and how the recuperation of nomadological language for the minor art movement of otakuism, especially in the Anglophone speaking world, is becoming more necessary in the wake of a growing institutional discipline of fan studies, media studies, and visual studies. Additionally, since I am invested in the way we envision the world and its diverse histories, the next two chapters will examine how a gekiga-inspired minor art form can translate into otaku manga forms that allow for both an allegorical retreat into the chronopolitical anxieties of the post-historical era we are situated in. Following Braidotti, I contend that by applying a nomadology

to the reading of theoretical, social, and cultural texts, this means that one starts working from oral traces and affective imprints, i.e., more viscerally. The focus is not on representation or citation, but on the affective traces, on what is left over, what

remains, what has somehow caught and stuck around, the drags and the sediments of the reading and the cognitive process.³⁰²

The visceral moments of transhistorical events or modes (war, slavery, colonisation, institutional oppression, etc.) will not have the same impact, the same resonance if History is explained by ‘the supervising control of a conscious subject who centralizes and ordains the information according to a hierarchy of sensorial and cognitive data’.³⁰³ Rather, instead of basing historical criticism on adaptation, representation, and correlative accuracy, the next two chapters seek to explain the historical forces of feudal exploitation and political violence through the ‘multilayered levels of affectivity’ that form ‘the building blocks for creative transpositions’, which for the sake of the manga reader, ‘mark heightened levels of awareness and receptivity’ toward both the allegorical and mediation of philosophical experiences.³⁰⁴ Against the claim that the post-historical is a form of historical amnesia as Adornoian figures like Sawaragi Noi and Miyazaki Hayao postulate, I argue that the world-historical mission of resituating the chronopolitics of premodern, modern, and postmodern into the transhistorical begins with a process of becoming-minor, or becoming-Other, in otaku artefacts and discourse. Upon becoming-minor in manga, gekiga deploys techniques that always already deterritorialise by favouring a simulation and experience of becoming-Other in all forms, starting with ‘the process of becoming-animal/woman/minoritarian/nomadic’, as Braidotti reminds us.³⁰⁵

The next two chapters will establish the philosophical lineage of gekiga style in otaku manga like *Berserk* and *Vinland Saga*. The theme of becoming-nomad situates the focus of both manga series and through its form and philosophy, encouraging its readers to examine becoming-minoritarian through the manga war machine as both an allegorical and material discourse. Miura’s *Berserk* embraces the void, seeks a self-destructive deterritorialisation that upends the historical, while Yukimura’s *Vinland Saga* seeks lines of flight from the war machine itself. Through specific gekiga and otaku art practices, both manga series expose the chronopolitical dialectic split between premodern-modern by excavating nomadic memories that must be deployed to this day, for the sake of forming a furious semiotic blend of

³⁰² Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, p. 233.

³⁰³ Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, p. 234.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Braidotti, p. 221.

becomings: becoming-berserk, becoming-monster, becoming-steel, becoming-shadow, and many more manifestations. While Miura seeks a post-historical destruction of human time and temporality through a Nietzschean mobilisation of the movement-image, Yukimura seeks a Bergsonian transhistorical traversal across memory to examine a mutated version of historical embodiment in an over-accelerated movement-image. Both manga are intermedially constructed, inspired and informed by avant-garde, minor, and classical cinematic practices, which in turn, allows us to again extend the affective framework of Jennifer Barker's work on visual tactility to describe the minor art practices of gekiga revivalists like Miura and Yukimura, which as we will see, is a distinct blend of gekiga form and postmodern otaku sensibility (irony, self-reflexivity, excess, etc.).³⁰⁶ The purpose in exposing these nomadic memories and transhistorical becomings alongside a filmic and Deleuzo-Guattarian semiotic grid is to illustrate how different strands of a nomadology can compel us to feel specific pains, traumas, and horrors of History. Rather than explain chronopolitical distinctions between premodern or modern life, these manga expose the philosophical problems of how informatic or ideological systems shape and naturalise the telos of History, from national, regional, cultural, or linguistic perspectives.

³⁰⁶ Gekiga revivalism signalled a popular nihilistic reaction against the decadence of eighties consumer culture, which in Japan was often 'characterized by an apathetic (*shirake*) attitude', as Tomiko Yoda argues, defined often as 'a more upbeat, unapologetically apolitical, and consumerist [generation of] young men and women known as the "new species of man" (*shinjinrui*)', as she writes in her essay, 'The Rise and Fall of Maternal Society' in *Japan After Japan: Social and Cultural Life from the Recessionary 1990s to the Present*, ed. by Tomiko Yoda and Harry Harootunian (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). p. 255. As recounted by Yoda, the rise of the *shinjinrui* articulated the existential angst of consumer capitalism that is translated in Douglas Coupland's *Generation-X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* (London: Abacus, 1991) as Gen-X in North America, further explored in other popular postmodern works including Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* (1991) and Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996). Gen-X itself is a term that was defined by the *shinjinrui*; as Coupland's protagonist Andrew reads a Japanese periodical, he comes across the word *shinjinrui*, which described a generation of apolitical, bored, and stilted twenty-something year olds that are working themselves to death, almost literally. He responds by claiming that in North America, this kind of generation 'doesn't have a name – an X generation', p. 56.

Chapter Two: The Gothic Becomings of Miura Kentarō's Manga War Machines

In 1988, Miura Kentarō published his first *yomikiri* ('one shot comic') entitled *Berserk* in *Monthly Animal House*. Like most *yomikiri* in the 1980s, the continuation of these pilot projects was rare aside from a few exceptions including Okamura 'Buronson' Yoshiyuki and Hara Tetsuo's sci-fi gekiga classic *Fist of the North Star* (1982) as well as Toriyama Akira's cornerstone *shōnen* ('boys adventures') fighting manga *Dragon Ball* (1983). As a fusion of both gekiga and *shōnen* aesthetic styles, the original one-shot manga aptly titled 'The Prototype' combines a hardboiled style of writing and illustration with *shōnen* Gothic elements, resembling Kikuchi Hideyuki's gekiga-inspired novel series *Vampire Hunter D* (1983), Alan Moore's DC comic *Hellblazer* (1985), and Nintendo-Konami's *Castlevania* (1986).³⁰⁷

The prototype manga introduces the mercenary protagonist named Guts and his fairy sidekick Puck who hunt down demons called Apostles. The prototype series opens with Guts and Puck wandering on a long road traced by rows of impaled skeletons. At the end of the road of bodies, both stumble across a young girl named Frikka who is cornered by three rapist bandits. Guts quickly dispatches the three with his crossbow, saves the girl, and ransacks the bandits' wagon. Finding nothing of value, he leaves. Frikka bargains with Guts to take her back to her village; a reluctant, yet famished Guts accepts, only in exchange for a hot meal. When they arrive, Guts eats his meal and plans to leave immediately. Frikka and her family ask Guts to avenge them by killing the lord of the village named Vlad Tepes, an obvious allusion to Vlad the Impaler in the Dracula mythos. The villagers inform Guts that the lord was a brutal warrior as a young man. In his old age, the count grew bored and hungry for battle. To satiate his desires, he began to capture, torture, rape, and eat poor villagers for pleasure. Guts, unfazed by Vlad's exploits, leaves the village. As he departs the bounds of the village, Frikka attempts to convince him to help her by revealing that she is a maidservant of the lord – and his next victim. Begrudgingly, Guts appears at Tepes' castle just before the lord captures Frikka. Vlad transforms into a chimeric beast, revealing himself as 'the Dog

³⁰⁷ According to the 'About the Author' summary on the back cover of *Vampire Hunter D* (Volume 1), trans. by Kevin Leahy, (Milwaukie: Dark Horse, 2005), Kikuchi Hideyuki studied under Koike Kazuo, famed writer of gekiga classic *Lone Wolf and Cub*, while attending Aoyama Gakuin University in the late 1970s. Along with Stephen King and H.P. Lovecraft, Koike helped shape Kikuchi's aesthetic, language, and vision for his first novel, *Demon City Shinjuku* in 1982.

of Vana', a servant of deities of darkness, referred to later as Apostles. Guts battles the demon in heroic fashion, revealing the power of his sword, nicknamed Dragonslayer, his *prototype* canon-arm, his unusually reckless fighting style. Guts eventually slays the beast, but only by accessing his own monstrous powers which he gains by berserking and killing more demons. The series was renewed immediately, allowing Miura to continue to publish a few other series with the famous gekiga writer Buronson.

In 1989, Miura followed up the first brief arc of *Berserk* called 'The Black Swordsman' with an illustration of the manga *King of Wolves*, which was inspired by a failed film script that Buronson wrote. The manga was published in *Japanese Animal House* with moderate success. The manga details the pseudo-historical account of a Japanese historian named Iba who is captured on the Silk Road and enslaved by Genghis Khan's forces.³⁰⁸ As Iba's lover Kyoko searches for him, she later finds that the once frail and bookish scholar has become one of the khan's greatest fighters, strategists, and advisors. The narrative clearly draws on Japanese vagabond and *rōnin* ('wave-man', 'wandering warrior') romances from Zen warrior-poet Musashi Miyamoto,³⁰⁹ popularly adapted into *chanbara* films like Kurosawa Akira's *Seven Samurai*³¹⁰ (1954) and manga series like Inoue Takehito's *Vagabond* (1998), the postmodern spiritual successor to Koike and Goseki's series *Samurai Executioner* (1973-6).³¹¹ Between 1990 and 1992, Miura continued to collaborate with Buronson on a sequel to *King of Wolves* entitled *The Legend of the King of Wolves* (1992) as well as a new manga entitled *Japan* (1992), a post-apocalyptic fantasy which recounts the sinking of the Japanese archipelago, inspired by Komatsu Sakyo's sci-fi novel *Japan Sinks* (1973).³¹² In *Japan*, the yakuza antihero Katsuji Yashima is transported into the future to witness Japanese refugees flee to the West. Katsuji and his band end up in a dictatorial Europe where the remaining Japanese refugees have become slaves to fight for a fascistic, racist, xenophobic regime. In resistance, Katsuji seeks to band together disparate Japanese wanderers to form a renegade resistance group of wasteland warriors to fight against their oppressors, with resonances and influences from George Miller's *Mad Max* series.

³⁰⁸ Buronson and Miura Kentarō, *King of Wolves* (Milwaukie: Dark Horse, 2005).

³⁰⁹ Miyamoto Musashi, *A Way to Victory: The Annotated Book of Five Rings*, trans. by Hidy Ochiai (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 2001).

³¹⁰ Kurosawa Akira, *Seven Samurai*, Toho, 1954.

³¹¹ Paul Sutcliffe, 'Postmodern Representations of Pre-modern Edo period', in *Manga and Representations of Japanese History*, pp. 178-179.

³¹² Buronson, and Miura Kentarō, *Japan* (Milwaukie: Dark Horse, 2005).

Miura returned to writing *Berserk* in 1993, starting the Golden Age arc, which tells Guts' backstory. Like Iba in *King of Wolves* and the Japanese refugees in *Japan*, Guts is enslaved and trained when he is younger by a charismatic, Machiavellian nomadic warlord named Griffith. After winning a handful of victories on his own, Guts eventually becomes one of the most trusted captains in Griffith's famous mercenary army aptly named 'The Band of the Hawk'. Instead of being set in the thirteenth century Gobi Desert or in a not-so-distant futuristic hellscape, this arc is set in a Western medieval backdrop that emphasises the grim horrors of everyday life amidst the One Hundred Years War between the kingdoms of Midlands and Chuder, evoking historical allusions to the actual Hundreds' Years War between England and France (1337-1453 C.E.). Miura's Golden Age arc emphasises a social realist narrative, foregrounding the abject horror of State mobilised chivalric violence, the mass exploitation of peasants, and the expansive corruption of religious and State institutions.³¹³ Moreover, akin to a certain brand of Old Norse fatalism, the Golden Age arc produces no transcendental hero or redemptive allegory; like the mythic end of the Norse cosmos, Ragnarök, all the heroes, gods, and hopes for a better future die in the end of the arc. The idealised utopian socialist and anarcho-syndicalist leader of the Band of the Hawk, Griffith, betrays his band after gaining godly powers by a group of demons called The God Hand, and sacrifices his entire band to a swarm of hungry demons. Guts survives the horrifying onslaught, but in the process, loses his mind, his left hand, and his lover Casca. Cursed to be alive, Guts wanders the wilderness, hounded by monsters, demons, and ghosts, seeking revenge against Griffith, the God Hand, and any State institution (military, State, church, etc.) that gets in the way of his conspiratorial and existential warpath, or what Louis Althusser calls 'state apparatuses', or SAs.³¹⁴ Miura's grim, ruthless, and nihilistic narrative themes blends

³¹³ Peter Haidu, *The Subject Medieval/Modern*, pp. 10-38, pp. 41-56, pp. 157-179.

³¹⁴ Louis Althusser defines an *ideological* State apparatus as an institutional extension of State power that continually replicates the cultural forces of capital, as he explains in 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)': 'What are the ideological State apparatuses (ISAs)? They must not be confused with the (repressive) State apparatus. Remember that in Marxist theory, the State Apparatus (SA) contains: the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc., which constitute what I shall in future call the Repressive State Apparatus [...] I shall call Ideological State Apparatuses a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions. I propose an empirical list of these which will obviously have to be examined in detail, tested, corrected and reorganized. With all the reservations implied by this requirement, we can for the moment regard · the following institutions as Ideological State Apparatuses (the order in which I have listed them has no particular significance): the religious ISA (the system of the different Churches), the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private 'Schools'), the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA (the political system, including the different Parties), the trade-union ISA, the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.),

well with Buronson's own gekiga aesthetics, reflected by both of their fascinations in post-historical rage, inhuman becomings, an eternally war-torn world, a sunken Japan, and as Yoke-Sum Wong writes, 'the *constant presence of an end* that must be lived through'.³¹⁵ The centre of this gekiga recuperation is Miura's transcultural and transhistorical fascination with animality, monstrosity, and nomads, which is marked by Guts and his multiple mutations, from man to animal, wanderer to man of war, lone wolf to leader of the pack.

In this context, *Berserk* recuperates a gekiga-inspired transhistorical anthropology that explores the revolutionary potential of migrating intensities and swarming hordes, compelling us to experience what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a newly politicised nomadology that resists the hegemonic State myths of History.³¹⁶ The nomadology of *Berserk* is an account that explores the chronopolitical battles of the premodern-modern as a site of contention between 'a nomadism for true nomads', as well as for 'those who no longer move or imitate anything', 'of forgetting instead of remembering, for underdevelopment instead of progress toward development, in nomadism rather than sedentarity, to make a map instead of tracing', as Deleuze and Guattari write.³¹⁷ Miura's nomadology is a marginalised, mobile, and mutated vision of nonteleological histories and philosophies, an *antihistory* of thought and civilisation that celebrates barbarian, minoritarian, and conspiratorial oppositions to the hierarchised State, as expressed in art, philosophy, politics, and technology.³¹⁸

the cultural ISA (Literature, the Arts, sports, etc.)', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971). p. 143.

³¹⁵ Yoke-Sum Wong, 'A Presence of a Constant End: Contemporary Art and Popular Culture in Japan', in *The Ends of History: Questioning the Stakes of Historical Reason*, ed. by Amy Swiffen and Joshua Nichols (New York: Routledge, 2013). p. 98.

³¹⁶ It is important to note that in Miura's revival of gekiga philosophy, we see the unexpected mutation of post-war bohemianism, workerism, and avant-gardism in popular shōnen and seinen series like *Berserk*. These themes often pit an apathetic and anomalous antihero (often a bounty hunter, a rogue cyborg, or a mercenary soldier) against a rotten world of political corruption and cultural decadence, capitalist exploitation (often expressed in corporate or feudal modes) and institutional violence (in especially in military-industries and radical religious sects). Unlike the proletarian, Marxist, and minoritarian artists like Tatsumi, Shirato, and Mizuki, Miura's otaku generation inherited the political affects of rage, resentment, scepticism, and disappointment in an apolitical atmosphere where the difficulty of articulating political change manifested into alternative subcultural modes and media, as Ōtsuka explains in "Conversion Literature," p. xvii. It is in this context that *Berserk* and its predecessors like *Vinland Saga* engage within a raging zeitgeist that enunciated the concerns of economic precarity indicative of global capitalism and the cultural anxiety of overdevelopment. For more on Japanese aesthetics of precarity, see Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt and Roman Rosenbaum's *Visions of Precarity in Japanese Popular Culture and Literature* (London: Routledge, 2015) as well as Anne Allison's *Precarious Japan*, p. 4.

³¹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 26.

³¹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 394.

While Miura's nomadology explores a political anthropology of the global capitalist State in an alternative lens, it too deviates from most historical renditions of the evolutionary progress of the modern State, illustrating allegories of becoming-revolutionary. Indebted to anthropologists like George Dumézil and Pierre Clastres, Deleuze and Guattari examine the State 'as an overarching power that brings together labour power and the prior conditions for the constitution of labour power' as Kenneth Surin writes.³¹⁹ The State is not simply a mere socio-political machine that *evolves* beyond 'primitive' human tribal affiliations, producing civilised markers of progress and complexity.³²⁰ Furthermore, Deleuze claims that the State retains this omnipresent power of capital (surplus-value and abstracted accumulation) not only through premodern modes of agrarian slavery and feudal serfdom (Clastres) or modern modes of industrialised disciplinary social formations (Foucault), but through postmodern controlling mechanisms that cut across all modes of social existence (Guattari): 'the universality of capital is simultaneous with the omnipresence of everything that creates surplus-value, as human subjectivity, leisure, and play, and so on, are incorporated into the latest regimes of accumulation'.³²¹ To resist the pull of the State, we must avoid a history of the State; therefore, Deleuze and Guattari's study in nomadology – *A Thousand Plateaus* – explores nomadic manifestations across universal human histories, most often expressed in 'mythology, epic, drama, and games' as well in minor sciences like metallurgy and minor arts like metalworking, as Miura illustrates throughout his work.³²² These nomadic manifestations in art and technology weaponise an entire legion of oppositional and heretical philosophies, sciences, and organisations – or what Deleuze and Guattari call 'war machines' – that are 'always exterior to the State, even when the State uses it, appropriates it'.³²³ War machines are characterised by Deleuze and Guattari as anthropological imaginaries and experiments that expose a grand conspiracy against the centralised State apparatus, ranging from 'Kleist's skull-crushing war machine, the migratory war machine that the Vandals used to sack Rome, the gun that Black Panther George Jackson grabs on the run, and the queer war machine that excretes a thousand tiny sexes'.³²⁴

³¹⁹ Kenneth Surin, 'State' in *The Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2010). p. 268.

³²⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 268.

³²¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, pp. 268-9.

³²² Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 387.

³²³ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 268.

³²⁴ Andrew Culp, *Dark Deleuze* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016). p. 22.

In this framework, Miura's Band of the Hawk resemble the gekiga guerrillas of the previous chapter, relying on conspiratorial secrecy and intensified affects to produce a new roadmap for catastrophic politics, as represented by Griffith's rebellion against the king of Midlands. The Band of the Hawk not only assault the physical and material machines of the Midland state, but Guts and Griffith confront the very ideological, historical, and philosophical foundation of the State: capital. Miura's war machines manifest themselves in the forms of roving bands and clandestine insurgents, proliferating under strategic oppositions to the State, as Deleuze and Guattari write: 'Each time there is an operation against the State – insubordination, rioting, guerrilla warfare, or revolution as an act – it can be said that a war machine was revived'.³²⁵ Before Griffith's war machine can be appropriated into Midland's militia, military, and police force (Althusser's RSAs), the nomadic war machine must eschew History with fire, iron, and darkness. Miura's war machines are born and destroyed in their eternal battle against the hard might of the State's defences (military, state police, private armies, etc.) and the soft power of the State's coercive processes of appropriation.

Miura's Onto-Aesthetics of Becoming-Gothic

To offer iconoclastic alternatives to the State, we once again see how gekiga is mobilised as a nomadic weapon. Miura's use of the three gekiga techniques that, as Chapter One argued, reflect three raging modes of Deleuzian inhuman becomings to challenge the state apparatus of imperial histories: *becoming-monster* (oni), *becoming-steel* (katana), and *becoming-shadow* (kage).³²⁶ Aesthetically, we also see Miura constructs a Gothic-becoming that resembles what Deleuze refers to as

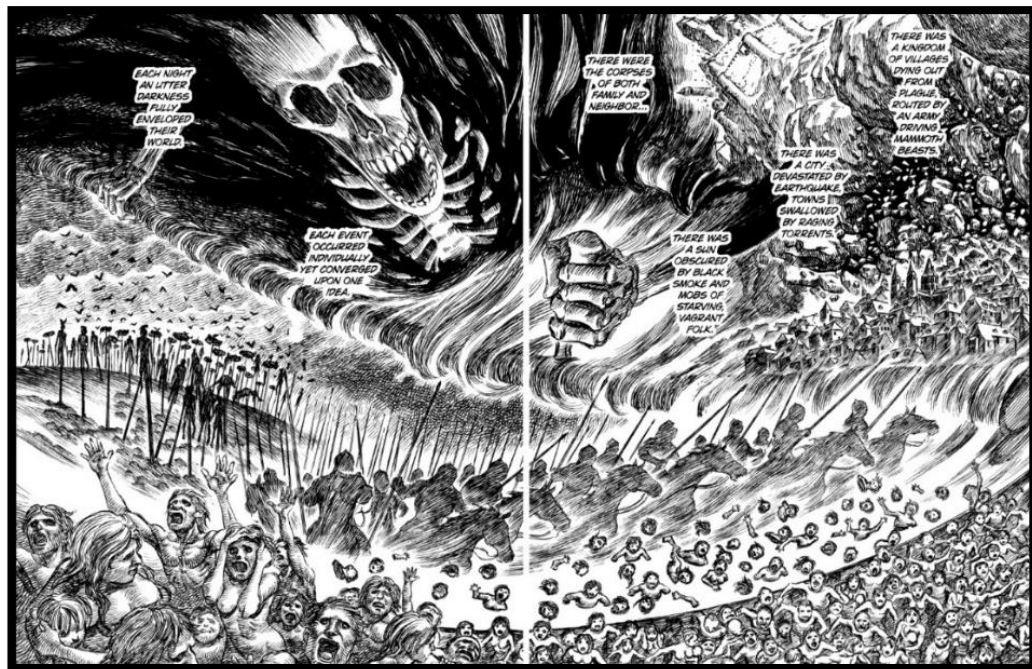
³²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 386.

³²⁶ These terms are interchangeable within the Deleuzo-Guattarian taxonomy of becomings (becoming-animal, becoming-intense, and becoming-imperceptible). I reintroduced them in the context of the gekiga revival movement, and into the rise of otakuism. Monsters, swords, and shadows are semiotic markers for gekiga becomings. Each sign has its own nomadology, and it is important to indicate the works of those scholars who have helped establish my own theorisation of gekiga becomings. in my own schema. For more information on the *oni* ('monster, ogre') in Japanese art and myth, see Noriko Reider's comprehensive and foundational text *Japanese Demon Lore: Oni from Ancient Times to the Present* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2010), as well as her essays 'Transformation of the Oni: From the Frightening and Diabolical to the Cute and Sexy' in *Asian Folklore Studies* 62 (2003), pp. 133-157 and 'Onmyōji: Sex, Pathos, and Grotesquery in Yumemakura Baku's Oni' in *Asian Folklore Studies* 66 (2007), pp. 107-124.

a “Gothic” world, which drowns and breaks the contours, which endows things with a non-organic life in which they lose their individuality, and which potentialises space, whilst making it something unlimited. Depth is the location of the struggle, which sometimes draws space into the bottomlessness of a black hole, and sometimes draws it toward the light.³²⁷

Like Deleuze’s description above, Miura’s oeuvre (inspired by Nagai) is darkly warped, often exhibiting sharp, angular, and aggressively pointed panels and illustrated figures, as well as fractured, flattened, oblique, and serpentine lines. While most of the manga is quite traditionally mangaesque and gekiga influenced, within battle scenes or moments of going- berserk, bodies, buildings, and landscapes that decorate the background are often shattered into flattened tableaux that are framed in asymmetrical angles, adorned with heavy streaks of ink that produce a violent and frenetic kind of shadow-play within panels and large splash pages. For Deleuze, the Gothic is not a genre. The Deleuzian Gothic is simply another term for a transhistorical abstract machine that has been long forgotten, primarily guided by bodies in motion along a flattened line. Whenever it is revived, it is often replaced by statist-classical aesthetic ideals or undermined by these ideals as inferior art productions.

Figure 1



³²⁷ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 111.

Accordingly, this kind of abstraction cannot simply be understood in teleological or chronopolitical terms as a premodern, modern, or postmodern phenomenon either; rather, it is a transhistorical and global aesthetic mode that ‘is opposed in principle to the organic representation of classical art’ and is additionally ‘decorative; it lies at the surface, but it is a material decoration that does not outline a form’, as he claims in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*.³²⁸ From seventh century Anglo-Saxon bejewelled treasure chests and twelfth century French cathedrals to sixteenth century Northern Italian paintings, the Deleuzian Gothic – an aesthetic category that ranges across centuries, Indo-European cultures, and expressive models under the term *nomadic* – resists the Aristotelian and Platonic models of aesthetic production, which ‘elevated form over matter and the intellectual over the sensuous’, essentially favouring ‘line over colour because it had the clarity necessary to translate the intellectual act of invention, whereas color was merely a property of matter, both of the thing and of the medium used to represent it’.³²⁹ Unlike the transcendent classical line, Deleuze characterises the Gothic line as a line that

never ceases to change direction, that is broken, split, diverted, turned in on itself, coiled up, or even extended beyond its natural limits, dying away in a “disordered convulsion”: there are *free marks* that extend or arrest the line, acting beneath or beyond representation. It is thus a geometry or a decoration that has become vital and profound, on the condition that it is no longer organic: it elevates mechanical forces to sensible intuition, it works through violent movements.³³⁰

The Gothic line and its free marks rely on bending, breaking, and segmenting lines to produce ‘a geometry in the service of “problems” and “accidents”, ablation, adjunction, projection, intersection’, which ‘escapes the optical to become haptic’ and interrupts the elegant flows of representation.³³¹ The process of becoming-gothic, as Deleuze has shown, is a transhistorical process of exiting the ‘purely optical space’ to enter ‘a violent manual space’, a virtually

³²⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. by Daniel Smith (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016). p. 33. Hereafter *FB*.

³²⁹ Zepke, p. 131.

³³⁰ Deleuze, *FB*, pp. 33-4.

³³¹ Zepke, p. 141.

synaesthetic and tactile experience that calls for all sensations to blend and break under the weight of the medium (as explored in the previous chapter).³³²

Additionally, the Gothic line is not limited to painting either; these free marks in the nomadic line can be reproduced in ink or iron, and are always affiliated with affect, animality, and tactility, as Deleuze notes:

If this Gothic line is also animalistic, or even anthropomorphic, it is not in the sense that it would rediscover forms, but because it is composed of strokes [*traits*] that confer on it an intense realism – traits of the body or the head, traits of animality and humanity. It is a realism of deformation, as opposed to the idealism of transformation; and the strokes do not constitute zones of indistinctness in the form, as in chiaroscuro, but zones of indiscernibility in the line, insofar as it is common to different animals, to the human and the animal, and to pure abstraction (serpent, beard, ribbon).³³³

Drawing from continental art historians like Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin, and Wilhelm Worringer, Deleuze shatters an anthropocentric and linear Western art history that champions classical and Renaissance humanism as expressed in *representational* aesthetics and ontology. Deleuze argues that unlike classical Greek art that seeks to replicate ‘the perfection of the optical form,’

[b]arbarian or Gothic art (in Worringer’s broad sense of the term) also dismantles organic representation [...] We are no longer directed toward the purely optical. On the contrary, the tactile once again assumes its pure activity; it is restored to the hand and given a speed, a violence, and a life that the eye can barely follow.³³⁴

The Transhistorical Abstract Line: Becoming-Nomad in Deleuzian Art History

While Deleuze’s reading of the Gothic line is situated in a Eurocentric context, opening first as an analysis of Indo-European nomadic cultures, we see how becoming-nomad can be a

³³² Deleuze, *FB*, p. 88.

³³³ Deleuze, *FB*, p. 90.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

transhistorical and transcultural process of deterritorialising imperial machines (writing machines, number machines, painting machines, music machines, manga machines, etc.) through the reproduction of tactile, affective, and animalised experiences of the abstract line. We must, however, while reading Deleuzian aesthetic theory, note that the abstract line (nomadic, metallic, Gothic, etc.) is a global and minoritarian response to centralised, imperial machinic processes of control exposed in the everyday production of art, politics, and philosophy, as Deleuze and Guattari explain:

in the absense of writing, or when people have no need for a writing system of their own because theirs is borrowed from more or less nearby empires (as was the case for the nomads), the line is necessarily abstract; it is necessarily invested with all the power of abstraction, which finds no other outlet. That is why we believe that the different major types of imperial lines – the Egyptian rectilinear line, the Assyrian line (or Greek) organic line, the supraphenomenal, encompassing Chinese line – convert the abstract line, rend it from its smooth space, and accord it concrete values.³³⁵

Thus, in a Japanese context, many scholars including Karatani Kōjin,³³⁶ Donald Keene,³³⁷ David Bell,³³⁸ Mark Donoghue,³³⁹ and Sandy Kita³⁴⁰ have illustrated that even after the appropriation of the writing system of China, Japanese literature and painting resisted the imperial (classical and Neo-Confucian) ‘supraphenomenal, encompassing Chinese line’ through the production of their own nativist abstract machines, including *waka* and *haikai* poetry, courtly *yamato-e* (line drawings) and proletarian *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints) paintings.³⁴¹ It is no wonder that Deleuze admires the Japanese line drawing, calling it ‘a pure

³³⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 548.

³³⁶ Karatani Kōjin, ‘The Landscape of Murakami Haruki: *Pinball in the Year 1973*’, trans. by Hisayo Suzuki, in *History and Repetition*, ed. by Seiji M. Lippit. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). pp. 117-50.

³³⁷ Donald Keene, *Seeds in the Heart: Japanese Literature from Earliest Times to the Late Sixteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

³³⁸ David Bell, ‘Finding *Iki*: *Iki* and the Floating World’ in *New Essays on Japanese Aesthetics* ed. by Minh Nguyen (Boulder: Lexington Books, 2018). pp. 369-82.

³³⁹ Mark Donoghue, ‘Hokusai, Deleuze and the Baroque’, in *Deleuze and Asia* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014). pp. 99-120.

³⁴⁰ Sandy Kita, *The Last Tosa: Iwasa Katsumochi Matabei, Bridge to Ukiyo-e* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i, 1999). p. 270.

³⁴¹ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). p. 50.

line traced by an unsupported hand, which passes across ages and reigns'.³⁴² Such pure lines cut across the tense borders of the written/painted, the imperial/nomadic, and the Chinese/Japanese aesthetic to produce an abstracted – or what Lamarre calls a 'distributive' – visual field that is seemingly always distorted, exploded, in flux, and incomplete. In this distributive visual field, seemingly always caught in between striated, hierarchised, transcendent, floating, and cosmic perspectives (orthographic, axonometric, linear) and smooth, dehierarchised, animalised, and affective embodiments (haptic, kinaesthetic, visceral); seemingly always becoming on the move.

Mark Donoghue recounts how this abstract (pure) Japanese line spatially and temporally diverged from seventh century China and converged into the seventeenth century Baroque line in the early nineteenth century cosmopolitan merchant capital of Edo (now Tokyo). For Donoghue, this convergence is best expressed in the work of the internationally famed printer, painter, and inventor of manga style, Hokusai Katsushika.³⁴³ Hokusai produced an eclectic and ornamental range of *yamato-e*, *ukiyo-e*, and manga that surveyed popular folk stories and images across all aspects of Japanese society. The content of Hokusai's work reflected the sensibilities, interests, and affects of a growing mercantile class and a consumer base that had a greater access and exposure to art, helping formulate the basis for the proletarian art movement in Meiji Japan. What makes Hokusai's work so unique, as Donoghue argues, is that not only did he experiment with traditional Chinese and nativist Japanese painting and printing methods, but he also experimented with continental European aesthetic techniques.

According to Donoghue, by the 1820s, Dutch trade in Nagasaki had brought a host of 'numerous copperplate Western landscape prints (*veduta*)' as well as translations of Dutch art books into Chinese, which may have led to misunderstandings for anyone reading who was not 'adequately literate in Chinese characters' like most members of the Edo literati and intelligentsia.³⁴⁴ Beyond these translated technique manuals came new technologies of viewing, including '*vue d'optique* (perspective view) prints designed to be viewed through a lens-based device called a "zograscope" to enhance the three-dimensional effect', as well as

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Robin Brenner, *Understanding Manga and Anime* (London: Libraries Unlimited, 2007). p. 3.

³⁴⁴ Donoghue, p. 108.

other optical devices including telescopes and microscopes.³⁴⁵ Donoghue further notes that early woodblock prints were vulgar, mutated replications that

often do not apply the rules of perspective consistently, since in many cases they include several vanishing points. Such inconsistency could evidence a misunderstanding of technique, and one should bear in mind that linear perspective in Japan in this period was a purely artistic technique. It was not underpinned by empirical philosophy or mathematics as in the West, so artists were free to deploy it in whatever manner they wished.³⁴⁶

It matters not if these misunderstandings originated in linguistics or aesthetics; what we know is that they were technically grounded, forming accidents and mistakes that created a new host of aesthetic bodies and potentialities. Under these conditions, Hokusai and his contemporaries produced an experimental, nomadic, wandering line that was both transhistorical and transcultural, excavated from the past of imperial China, enfolded into the present of feudal Japan, and extended out into the future of modern Europe and post-war Japan.

Importantly, Hokusai's work was firstly concerned with depth, or as Deleuze writes, the original 'location of the struggle' against mere representationalism and clichéd mimesis.³⁴⁷ Specifically, by experimenting with spatial and pictorial visual fields, Hokusai sought to 'employ orthographic, axonometric, and linear perspectives' all at once, which attempts to 'fuse 2D, 2.5D and 3D space',³⁴⁸ to subsequently 'create dynamic images'³⁴⁹ that seemed to move right off the print, as Donoghue writes. Donoghue refers to this perspective as a 'Baroque point of view' because per Deleuze, the abstract lines of Baroque art is tensely bound by *the fold*. Simon O'Sullivan defines the fold as a spatially-formulated 'critique of typical accounts of subjectivity, that presume a simple interiority and exteriority (appearances and essence, surface and depth). For the fold announces that the inside is nothing more than a

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 111.

³⁴⁸ Donoghue, p. 105.

³⁴⁹ Donoghue, p. 109.

fold of the outside'.³⁵⁰ In the words of Deleuze, Hokusai, therefore, enfolds Kanō (2D/Chinese), Tosa (2.5D/Japanese), and Baroque (3D/Western) styles together (unevenly yet masterfully) into a new form that signals a transhistorical 'transition', one that visually assembles and divides 'divergences into as many worlds as possible' through a combination of technical, technological, aesthetic, political, and material means.³⁵¹ From classical Chinese/Japanese courtly arts to international manga production, we must understand that the foldable abstract line (Gothic, Mongol, or Edo) mutates beyond the borders of nation, language, and culture. Through Deleuze's cartography of these nomadic and minor art forms, we learn that the only rules of the abstract line are that they must challenge visual perspective, dance frenetically, and darken the horizon, as if imagining the barbaric dreams of ending an age, a reign, and an imperium folding in on itself and collapsing.

Deborah Shamoan similarly draws from this Deleuzian philosophical and aesthetic treatment of the fold, examining the potentiality of flattening and distorting perspectives. Rather than exploring Hokusai's work like Donoghue, Shamoan examines avant-garde *shōjo* (girl comics) series, claiming that

if three-dimensional perspective in art is connected to Western philosophy and the idea of transcendence, then perhaps two-dimensionality is an expression of what Deleuze termed "immanence", in which there is nothing outside life and our experiences. Furthermore, Deleuze posits that the perceived differences between subject and object, inside and outside, and surface and depth are false binaries; instead he suggests that the "fold" as an alternative topology that creates a network of relationships without resorting to dualist concepts. In this light, then, superflat is an expression not of some gap or lack in meaning [...] but an expression of multiplicity within a single immanent plane of being.³⁵²

Just as the barbarian condition of Gothic art was recuperated by Western modernists and postmodernists alike, including painters like Jackson Pollock and Francis Bacon, here too

³⁵⁰ Simon O'Sullivan, 'Fold' in *The Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2010). p. 107.

³⁵¹ Deleuze, *TF*, p. 81.

³⁵² Deborah Shamoan, 'Situating the *Shōjo* in *Shōjo* Manga: Teenage Girls, Romance Comics, and Contemporary Japanese Culture', in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, ed. by Mark MacWilliams (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2008). p. 149.

Shamoon indicates how the contemporary otaku art style of *superflat*, pioneered by postmodern artist Murakami Takashi, influenced the production of more avant-garde manga series. Lamarre explains the phenomenon of superflat compositionally, which resembles Hokusai's work as much as it does explain the Deleuzian Gothic line and Baroque fold mentioned above:

When the background does not look farther away than the foreground, your eyes cannot detach, isolate, and hierarchically order the elements in the image. Instead, your eyes follow the lines that zigzag across the surface. Such images are structured to encourage lateral movement of eyes. Eyes begin scuttling, meandering, scanning, as if restlessly oscillating around a center that remains nonlocalizable.³⁵³

Superflat articulates a flattening that is like the Gothic line and Baroque fold. Deleuze writes that

by restoring an entire world of equal probabilities, by tracing lines that cross the entire painting and that start and continue off the frame, and by opposing to the organic notions of symmetry and center the power of a mechanical repetition elevated to intuition,

the Gothic line in turn produces a violent interruption of the anthropocentric and transcendental machine of representational aesthetics.³⁵⁴

Returning to *Berserk*, this transhistorical affiliation of the Gothic line, the Japanese pure line, the Baroque fold, and the postmodern aesthetic of superflat is best experienced in Miura's battle scenes as a frenetic decomposition of stable parts, images, and spatiotemporalities, dissolving at high speeds and reforming into a conjunctive synthesis of becoming-monster, becoming-steel, and becoming-shadow. Throughout this gekiga-gothic aesthetic, we experience all three inhuman becomings in Miura's manga war machine at once. First, becoming-monster is articulated by Miura's use of flattened depth, bodies, figures, and

³⁵³ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 111.

³⁵⁴ Deleuze, *FB*, p. 76.

temporalities on the haptic surface of the human body and the manga page. This produces an onto-aesthetic discourse on hybridity that, in the words of Walter Benjamin, ‘disrupts the entire hierarchy of creatures that is supposed to culminate in mankind’.³⁵⁵ This misanthropic and disanthropocentric philosophy is set into motion by Miura’s characterisation of Guts as hybridic and heterogenetic assemblage. This visual experiment of unbecoming-human proceeds further as we experience becoming-steel, which simulates the force of the image through Miura’s frenetic use of motion lines. Guts’ blade, Dragonslayer is the central object of speed, force, and vital traits of expression of becoming-nomad. Through the action-illustration of the blade, Miura blends bodies (faces, arms, weapons, etc.) and borders (frames, panels, text, etc.) together into a whirlwind of dark and fast strokes painted by Guts’ blade. From the monstrous heaping of bodies and cybernetic blending of tech with the organic body, the final stage of deterritorialising the historical subject is in Miura’s becoming-shadow, which is expressed by monochromatic illustrations of Guts’ face and body as an incomprehensible black hole, often spreading out to other sections of the manga page.

Flattening Bodies and Becoming-Monster in *Berserk*

In ‘The Prototype’, Guts’ monster-becomings takes place the moment he shears away his humanity with each monstrous berserking frenzy, which further pushes him beyond the borders of the human and deeper into the antediluvian depths of an ancient, chthonic fury.³⁵⁶ Thematically, we can read this pronouncement alongside Deleuze and Guattari as Vlad reassesses, challenges, and puzzles over Guts’ fragmented humanity, primarily signifying his affective transformation of becoming-animal. Throughout the series, just as Guts falls deeper into this abyss with each becoming-berserk, he is more frequently hounded by heaps of hybridised monsters and beasts, all of which culminate in his encounters with chimeric shapeshifters like Vlad Tepes, Nosferatu Zodd, and Wylad. Semiotically and metaphorically, Guts’ enemies establish a conjoined hybridic kinship as differing assemblages of the same cliché of the berserking man of war. In a materialist reading, however, Miura’s allegories can

³⁵⁵ Walter Benjamin, qtd. in Miriam Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). p. 171.

³⁵⁶ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 114.

be extended further, impelling us to ask: how can we experience these multiple pack affects and becomings-animals in the manga machine, as Tatsumi attempted in the previous chapter?

In Guts' battle with Vlad in 'The Prototype', four pages depict panels of cinematic close-ups of Vlad's fangs, horns, and snout in relation to Guts' own contorted face and superhero body. This image-to-image relation provides blueprints for becoming-monster in the manga machine. In the context of these jarring close-ups, the panels become sharp, asymmetrical, and angular. At key moments of becoming-monster, Miura produces a semiotic doubling and folding, or in a Deleuzian register, a *conjunction-disjunction* of the Guts-Vlad fold. This sequence, therefore, emphasises the serialised process of becoming-monster: from a close-up of Vlad's terrifying gaping maw and sharp fangs we cut to another close-up of Guts' iconic sarcastic and masochistic smirk; from a close-up of Vlad's bloodshot and bulging eyeballs we cut to another close-up of Guts' eye-patch and cool one-eyed stare; from a medium-shot of Vlad's hulking, hairy torso and legs we cut to a medium-shot of Guts' sleek, muscular body tightly packed into his embossed leather armour. In the words of Zepke, this sequence replicates animal affects and human percepts within the Deleuzian 'simulacral art-work', which he defines as 'a repetition of constitutive differences (forces) in an individuated series, a series that is constantly becoming-other as it continues to affirm (repeat) its difference from itself' in between the cinematic and manga machines.³⁵⁷ Like Deleuze's reading of Bacon's triptych, it is possible to read the serialised simulacral images of Miura's monstrous manga as an automated, intimate, and intuitive networked composition and decomposition of human-nonhuman images that in the words of Deleuze, 'brings [an artist's] entire set of techniques into play, and distinguishes them from the techniques of abstract and informal painting'.³⁵⁸ This alteration, difference, and repetition is mobilised in each panel, producing the illusion of many movements and virtual transformations, as nonhuman and human images are juxtaposed unevenly as close-up shots that conjoin singular points (fangs to smirk, horns to hair, fur to armour). As Guts berserks, these transitions speed up, resulting in a pseudo-animated experience of transformation, from one temporality to another, from one body to another.

Tom Conley reminds us that each doubling of virtual conjunctions between Guts-Vlad establishes an affective relation to temporality, memory, and becoming:

³⁵⁷ Deleuze, *FB*, p. 28.

³⁵⁸ Deleuze, *FB*, p. 76.

An inside and an outside and a past (memory) and a present (subjectivity) are two sides of a single surface. A person's relation with his or her body becomes both an archive and a diagram, a collection of subjectivations and a mental map charted on the basis of the past and drawn from events and elements in the ambient world.³⁵⁹

On this surface of the manga where diagrammatic illustrations of human-nonhuman forms traverse the past (Vlad), the present (Guts), and the future (Guts-Vlad) we see that, in the words of Nadine Boljkovac,

the doubling process is always on a repeating difference that produces the effect of a counter-actualisation, a doubling of actual self and virtual impersonal other as doubled by a memory-image's doubling of each perception-image, a virtual doubling of present launched simultaneously towards future and past.³⁶⁰

At the end of this virtual conjunction-disjunction, the battle scene functions as a brief animation of becoming-monster which we experience as if we were given a flipbook or kineograph, which were commonly used in early stages of manga and anime development.³⁶¹ Animated by affect and stimulated by speed, Miura's manga machine mobilises transhistorical becomings of post-historical forces, producing a seamless (and gapless) movement in between human-nonhuman images, History and nomadic memory.³⁶² In this folding of human-nonhuman images, such a sequence produces a circuit of Deleuze refers to as 'affection-images' of becoming-monster.³⁶³

Beyond simulacral alternation, we also experience a flattening of bodies and identities in the flows of 'the power-qualities' (or cinematic affects) of affection-images; Deleuze writes

³⁵⁹ Tom Conley, 'Foucault + Fold', *The Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2010). p. 115.

³⁶⁰ Nadine Boljkovac, *Untimely Affects: Gilles Deleuze and an Ethics of Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013). p. 139.

³⁶¹ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 87.

³⁶² Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 326.

³⁶³ Deleuze defines an 'affection-image' as a cinematic close-up, usually directed at the face or an icon on the screen. Affection-images, as Deleuze writes, are images 'that which occupies the gap between an action and a reaction, that which absorbs an external action and reacts on the inside', in 'Glossary' in *Cinema I*, p. 240.

that these affection-images (or close-ups) produce a space of affect primarily upon the close-up of the *face* and other conjunctive points (images like Guts' blade or Vlad's horns):

The pure affect, the pure expressed of the state of things in fact relates to a face which expresses it (or to several faces, or to equivalents, or to propositions). It is in the face – or the equivalent – which gathers and expresses the affect as a complex entity, and secures the virtual conjunctions between singular points of this entity (the brightness, the blade, the terror, the compassionate look...). Affects are not individuated like people or things, but nevertheless they do not blend into the indifference of the world. They have singularities which enter into virtual conjunction each time constitute a complex entity. It is like points of melting, of boiling, of condensation, of coagulation, etc.³⁶⁴

If we think of becoming-monster in terms of the flattening of multiplicities as Deleuze and Guattari explain, then we must think of how this *flattening* of pure affective power-qualities (or what Deleuze refers to as matter-flows or traits of expressions including brightness, colour, hardness, etc.) and spatiotemporality (what Deleuze refers to as 'a determinate space-time') produces this monstrous complex entity in the manga machine.³⁶⁵ Miura's coagulated conjunctions produce a virtual network of affect that binds together Guts-Vlad as enfolded doubles. This complex entity is a monstrous schematic for Guts' own future metamorphosis. Strictly speaking on cinema, Deleuze notes that this process of flattening into a complex entity is experienced in *affective cutting* or 'flowing close-ups', which he describes as "a continuous movement by which the camera passes from the close-up to the medium or the full shot *as* close-ups – by the absence of depth or the suppression of perspective'.³⁶⁶ Here, even without the camera, shots are reconstituted as affectively framed illustrations where 'howling lips or toothless sneers are cut into the mass of the face', or where 'the frame cuts a face horizontally, vertically, or aslant, obliquely' to indicate becoming-monster.³⁶⁷ Just then, perspective is blurred, and the unsettling sequence of becoming-monster overwhelms the third dimension, as

³⁶⁴ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 103.

³⁶⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 277.

³⁶⁶ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 107.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Deleuze notes: ‘By suppressing “atmospheric perspective”, [the artist] produces the triumph of a properly temporal or even spiritual perspective. Flattening the third dimension, [the artist] puts two-dimensional space into immediate relation with the affect’.³⁶⁸ Difference is *flattened*, and this ‘negation of depth and perspective, the ideal plane-ness of the image’ is sped up through the technical means of framing spaces via ‘cuttings and flowings’.³⁶⁹ We also see post-war Japanese cinema experiment with a similar kind of ‘flattening and dehierarchizing of the layers of the image’.³⁷⁰ described by Deleuze, as Luigi Martelli writes:

[Kurosawa] sought to give priority to camera angles which contribute to flattening the image, and in the absence of depth of field, to including an impression of transversal movement. These technical processes play a fundamentally important role to the extent that they tend to represent critical judgement, that of the hero who flows history through eyes which we identify.³⁷¹

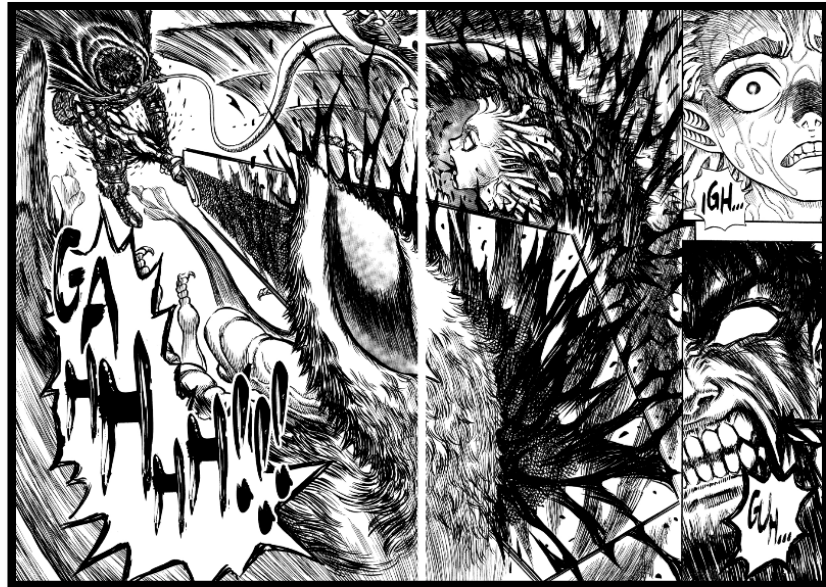


Figure 2

In the manga, however, it is the intermedial simulation of these cinematic compositions that can be experienced through specific transitions from image-to-image in a specific order and

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Lamarre, p. 113.

³⁷¹ Luigi Martelli qtd. in Deleuze, *CI*, p. 268.

frequency, which “will make all shots particular instances of close-ups, and inscribe them or combine them on the plane-ness of a single shot-sequence” that inherently produces an intermedial illusion of the mobilisation of becoming-monster as if on the big screen.³⁷² In different forms and muddled modes in mass repetition, pure difference, and superflattening, viewers experience Guts’ possible transformations on the skittering, vibrating, and exploding splash pages and fragmentary frames of cleaved, dismembered, and sheared human-animal images. These action illustrations dehierarchise smooth spaces of text and image, pulp and guts, man and animal, steel and bone along a painterly plane of immanent destruction, fulfilling the Deleuzian vision of the cosmic-artist:

The painter does not paint on an empty canvas, and neither does the writer write on a blank page; but the page or canvas is already so covered with preexisting, preestablished clichés that it is first necessary to erase, to clean, to flatten, even to shred, so as to let in a breath of air from the chaos that brings us the vision. When Fontana slashes the colored canvas with a razor, he does not tear the color in doing this. On the contrary, he makes us see the area of plain, uniform color, of pure color, through the slit.³⁷³

We experience becoming-monster not only in the representationalism of the monster as an identarian *other* as most monster theory will have us believe.³⁷⁴ Rather, we feel becoming-monster as a real flattening of species into broken bodies and perspectives, which is revealed in Miura’s profane and iconoclastic obliteration of the human-animal image. Furthermore, the intensified, abstracted forces the reader into simulating the raging pack affects in a haptic and transhistorical sense. As affection-images are scrambled, swarmed, dissembled, and disintegrated into fragmentary, hybridised bodies, we feel the possibility of simulating human-nonhuman histories through ‘a writing of blood and life’ on the lacerated skin of the bloody manga page, in a medium ‘opposed to the writing of the book’, as Deleuze darkly muses.³⁷⁵ Like Tatsumi, Miura constructs a berserking, mutative force of the nomadic war machine that

³⁷² Deleuze, *CI*, p. 107.

³⁷³ Deleuze and Guattari, *WP*, p. 204.

³⁷⁴ For more on monster theory, see Jeffery Jerome Cohen’s *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

³⁷⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. by Daniel Smith and Michael Greco (London: Verso, 1998). p. 128. Hereafter *Essays*.

challenges the dominance of state-mediated, imperial, and anthropocentric thought, flattening the ontological and historical differences of man-monster, human-animal, in the fluctuating body of Guts. In this onto-aesthetic field, we can see how line composition and colour infects the flattened, mutated, and ravaged manga surface, forming an even more violently decomposition of the human-nonhuman image to onto-aesthetic pulp, where the becoming-monster of the manga machine leaves transhistorical bodies ‘flayed open or otherwise disarranged like so much meat’.³⁷⁶

Mapping the Metallic Lines of Becoming-Steel

From this flattened onto-aesthetics of becoming-monster, we also see Miura deploy the Gothic line through the affective, frenetic illustrations of blade and body, of *becoming-steel*. In the same battle with Vlad, we must note that any illustration of the action-image of Guts’ blade is shrouded by an excess of motion lines that blends the immense blade into Guts-Vlad. Like the Gothic line, the blade directs the eyes toward an asymmetrical, orthogonal perspective. We see this in a panel which depicts Guts’ blade opening Vlad’s torso, splaying his guts across two other panels. In accordance with the Deleuzian Gothic, it is important to note that the blade is first set in a *diagonal* position to alter perspective. Initially, readers may give no mind to the diagonal placement of the blade; in any illustration, diagonal line composition establishes the illusion of movement or depth inside or outside of the illustration or painting. However, in any process of becoming-gothic, it is imperative to think about how the flat Gothic line alters, distorts, and destabilises linear perspective in the form of the *diagonal* because it ‘play[s] the role of connectors between points of different levels or moments, instituting in their turn frequencies and resonances on the basis of these points of variable horizon or verticon, contiguous or distant’ on a smooth space, like Hokusai’s orthographic line composed within an axonometric space.³⁷⁷

If a flattening of representations is the first step of becoming-gothic, then a transversal escape from representation is the next stage, as Deleuze elaborates:

³⁷⁶ Zepke, p. 186.

³⁷⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 326.

the line does not go from one point to another, but passes *between* points, continually changing direction, and attains a power greater than 1, becoming adequate to the entire surface. From this point of view, we can see how abstract painting remained figurative, since its line still delimited an outline. If we seek the precursors of this new path, of this radical manner of escaping the figurative, we will find them every time a great painter of the past stopped painting things in order “to paint between things”.³⁷⁸

The diagonal, abstracted Gothic line connects disparate points in order to avoid the hierarchised ordering of ‘rectilinear or unilinear’ geometric perspective.³⁷⁹ In this scene, the points across both Guts’ and Vlad’s flattened bodies are broken; in the space of a solid one-point Cartesian perspective, we see thin, sharp, and chaotic lines merge into Guts’ crude, chunky blade and Vlad’s exploding entrails and spurting blood.



Figure 3

The diagonal here – expressed by the blade – is both a Gothic line that challenges linear perspective as well as a line that combines its relationality of ‘viewer centred’ and ‘object centred’ perspectives, as Donoghue explains: ‘[t]he use of ‘object-centred’ orthographic projections together with the use of ‘viewer-centred’ linear perspective [...] mirrors this tension between absolute and relative clarity’ on the page.³⁸⁰ If the focal and vanishing points of each scene of becoming-monster is distorted or eliminated by flattening, then these broken points and connections appear in a whirling constellation, bound together by the immense force of the blade’s affective traits of expressions (weight, hardness, sharpness, speed, etc.). As the bodies rupture, the abstract line of the blade

³⁷⁸ Deleuze, *FB*, p. 105.

³⁷⁹ Deleuze, *ATP*, p. 550.

³⁸⁰ Donoghue, p. 115.

continues to mutate, losing itself in the kinaesthetic motion lines and inky viscera that flies off the smooth space of the manga page. In other moments, the blade seems to change states of matter in the illustrations; before the blade collides with the flattened surface, it remains solid (striated), sitting high above Guts' shoulders in a stable position and perspective. Once the blade is mobilised, its solid form dissolves, and the steel (like molten ore in the forge) becomes malleable (smooth), molecularly scrambling not only the image of the vitalised object, but the human viewer-position and perspective as well. Therefore, we may accurately redefine moments of becoming-steel as expressed in ink as an 'action painting, the "frenetic dance" of the painter around the painting', where Miura mobilises the Gothic line along the metallic contours of Guts' blade.³⁸¹ Here Miura tests the limits of representations in ink by thinking through iron, by favouring a nomadic, Gothic, and nonhuman perspective of what it is like to *feel steel*.

As Miura explores the Gothic line through the painterly properties of the exploding blade, we also see how he contextualises and historicises this abstract line along the Deleuzo-Guattarian 'metallic line', which they describe as a technological, aesthetic, and anthropological reconsideration of the nomadic sciences of metallurgy. For Deleuze and Guattari, the art of nomadic peoples including the Scythians, Hittites, Huns, Sarmatians, Mongols, Celts, and Germanics was overwhelmingly characterised by metalworking rather than the imperial arts of literature, architecture, and painting. Rather than using imperial ink, the nomadic war machine communicated affects through iron and ore, transforming weapons (the Scythian sabre) and tools (the anvil and hammer) into expressive technologies and mobile media, as Deleuze and Guattari write:

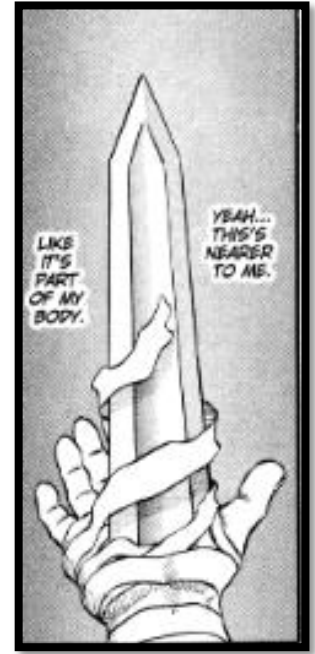
These fibulas, these gold or silver plaques, these pieces of jewelry, are attached to small movable objects; they are not easy to transport, but pertain to the object only as object in motion. These plaques constitute traits of expression of pure speed, carried on objects that are themselves mobile and moving.³⁸²

The 'ambulant smith' of barbarian and nomadic cultures ornamented mobile media like 'the horse's harness, the sheath of the sword, the warrior's garments, the handle of the weapon'

³⁸¹ Deleuze, *FB*, p. 106.

³⁸² Deleuze, *ATP*, p. 442.

with sparkling gemstones, intricate designs, and gold and silver filigree decorations, producing an ‘affective semiotic’ of the war machine, which is often articulated in mythic, spiritual, and vitalistic terms in heroic poetics.³⁸³ Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari, indebted to Dumézil’s extensive anthropological and philological reading of Indo-European cultures, conclude that the mythic men of war and their extensive assemblages (tool-weapon-animal) became the canvas (and interface) by which very real raging and speeding affects of the war machine could be expressed beyond the limits of language along an *abstract* (nomadic, Gothic, metallic) *line*. For Deleuze and Guattari, ‘metalworking was the “barbarian”, or nomad, art par excellence’ because instead of producing affective expressions through the writing machine of a sedentary, imperial, and stratified language of the State, ‘[m]etalworking, jewelry making, ornamentation, even decoration, [did] not form a writing, even though they have a power of abstraction that is in every way equal to that of writing’.³⁸⁴



Following Deleuze and Guattari, note that within *Berserk*, metallurgy effects two ‘new figures of a transhistorical assemblage (neither historical nor eternal, but untimely): the nomad warrior and the ambulant worker’.³⁸⁵ Miura recuperates both the frenetic warrior and the wandering smith by exploring the anthropological and transhistorical metallic line. Just like exploring becoming-monster, *Berserk* articulates becoming-steel through the manga page, pushing the limits of illustration and representation to its brink as ink turns to iron, or at least, imagines how steel feels. But before we can feel-steel, Miura implores us to think-steel, to think materially.

The nomadic warrior’s relation to becoming-steel is martial, bodily, kinaesthetic, prosthetic, extensive, and technologically integrated (cybernetically) into its inhuman forms of becomings.³⁸⁶ In the

Figure 4

³⁸³ Deleuze, *ATP*, p. 443.

³⁸⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 442-443.

³⁸⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 445.

³⁸⁶ For more on prosthetic aesthetics, see Hal Foster, *Prosthetic Gods* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004). Foster writes that, ‘Even with the new machines of transportation and representation of the Second Industrial Revolution, such as automobiles, airplanes, radio, and film, technology was still often regarded as a demonic

narrative, Miura recounts that to become the best warrior around, Guts must integrate the blade into the body, a common samurai trope across all forms of Japanese art and media:

Yeah... [my blade] is nearer to me. Like it's a part of my body. With this I've kept myself alive through more moments than I can count. Because this was there, I once again threw myself into the jaws of death. Almost the entire time I've been alive, this was next to me as a part of my body.³⁸⁷

In this very scene, a blade rises out of Guts' broken and bandaged right hand. Indeed, the clichéd man of war like Guts is an exceptional swordsman because he integrates the blade into his martial sensorium and into his own subjectivation. The blade is the technological extension of the warrior assemblage. Beyond the blade, however, as each battle tests Guts' body to its physical limits, we start seeing him integrate other steely technologies into his body to overcome insurmountable challenges. Later in the same arc, Guts' loses his left hand in a seemingly impossible battle against demons in Hell; he immediately replaces his hand with a metal prosthetic hand that also acts as a mini hand-cannon. Much later in the series, Guts' berserking powers are unimaginably powerful; to make sure Guts' body does not erupt into pulpy viscera, he is gifted the Berserker Armour by a witch. The armour, like a sci-fi nanotech or mecha suit, keeps his entire body and mind functioning as he berserks on his warpath. From Guts' sword, armour, and cannon arm, we initially contact pathways of becoming-steel in the series as a posthuman allegory for the integration of metallic technologies (tool-weapon assemblages) into the human sensorium. Along the metallic line, the nomadic warrior not only enters into a dark alliance with monsters, but also with the entire technological lineage of nomadic machines of war – the ancient sabre, the modern cannon, and the futuristic mech suit – producing a transhistorical cybernetic assemblage of steel and flesh.³⁸⁸ Not only is Miura fascinated in embodiment and technology, but he also explores how the integration of

supplement, an addition to the body that threatened a subtraction from it. After Marshall McLuhan, I will call this paradoxical view of technology as both extension and constriction of the body the double logic of the prosthesis. Today, this view might strike us as almost quaint, and certainly the body and the machine are no longer seen as so discrete. Yet this double logic governed the machinic imaginary of high modernism in the first decades of the twentieth century—underwrote its utopias of the body extended, even subsumed in new technologies, as well as its dystopias of the body reduced, even dismembered by them,' p. 109.

³⁸⁷ Miura Kentarō, *Berserk* (Volume 10), trans. by Duane Johnson (Milwaukie: Dark Horse, 2017). pp. 15-16.

³⁸⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 446.

nomadic, mobile, and metallic technologies recircuits the nomadic war machines' barbarian rage into 'active, revolutionary counterattacks' against the State in the form of the warrior-worker assemblage, as Deleuze and Guattari write: 'Martial arts and state-of-the-art technologies have value only because they create the possibility of bringing together worker and warrior masses of a new type'.³⁸⁹

Miura examines becoming-steel beyond the cybernetic integration of weapon and body, seeking out the ambulant worker's relation to becoming-steel. After Guts' first battle in Hell, Miura introduces us to Guts' ambulant smith, and old man named Godo. Guts arrives at Godo's workshop serendipitously after one of his mercenary members Rickett – a young aspiring engineer – rescues him with the help of the fateful Skull Knight. At Godo's smithy, Guts' cannon-arm is fitted, and while Guts rests and trains, Godo forges Dragonslayer. Godo is a cantankerous hermit and is often seen philosophising as he works at his forge. Godo was born into being a smith, and unlike artisans in the cities arming the military, he does not work in between value or labour; he simply worked as an exiled artisan, as Deleuze and Guattari write:

the organization that separates prospectors, merchants, and artisans already mutilates artisans in order to make "workers" of them. We will therefore define the artisan as one who is determined in such a way as to follow a flow of matter, a *machinic phylum*. The artisan is *the itinerant, the ambulant*.³⁹⁰

Godo as the ambulant smith, 'links metalworking to the weapon, and vice versa', as Deleuze and Guattari continue, making his minor art of metallurgy as a minor art that uses mineral, ore, fire, and steel to recreate 'traits of expression appropriate to weapons (the whole mythology of war not only subsists in money but in the active factor in it)'.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 445.

³⁹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 447.

³⁹¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 443.

At moments while forging, Godo dwells on the nature of time and rage, the differences between life from labour, and the possibility of joy in a world of unending destruction and war, seemingly channelling Miura's voice. Just as Guts explores the abstractions of rage and revolution in each swing, Godo hammers out abstract thoughts onto Guts' weapons and armour, creating the vital sparks of life in the process, as he claims: 'There is one thing I like 'bout being a blacksmith...Sparks. Sparks are nice. I get engulfed in 'em. It feels like my own life for an instant is springin' into the air before my eyes'.³⁹² Thinking through the nomadic science of

metallurgy in this context, Deleuze and Guattari write that there is a similar 'vital impulse'³⁹³ in the diagonally facing Gothic line that is then engraved and forged upon the metallic line:

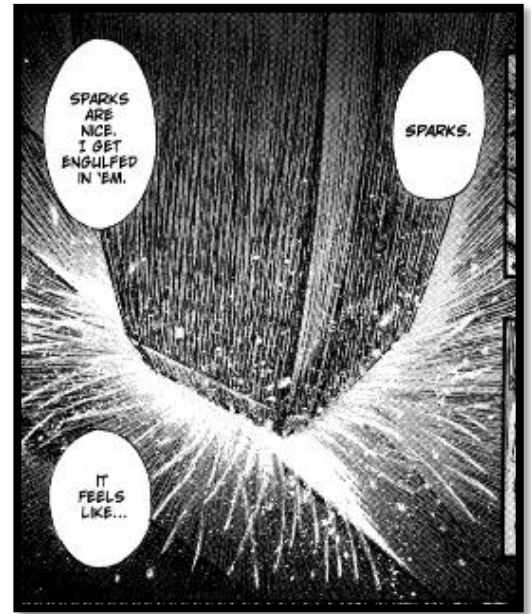


Figure 5

In short, what metal and metallurgy bring to light is a life proper to matter, a vital state of matter as such, a material vitalism that doubtless exists everywhere but is ordinarily hidden or covered, rendered unrecognizable, dissociated by the hylomorphic model. Metallurgy is the consciousness or thought of the matter-flow, and metal the correlate of this consciousness. As expressed in panmetallism, metal is coextensive to the whole of matter, and the whole of wood, the animals are populated by salts or mineral elements. Not everything is metal, but metal is everywhere. Metal is the conductor of all matter.³⁹⁴

As a conductor of all matter, metal produces all sensations. In this mediated metaphor of vitalism, readers begin to learn that once we think-steel, we can feel-steel; once we hammer steel, we can see sparks. Can we not read sparks as externalised vitalistic affects of becoming-

³⁹² Miura, *Berserk* (Volume 10), p. 14.

³⁹³ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 444.

³⁹⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 454.

steel? What are sparks but charged displacements of energy formed by colliding metal of varied traits of expression (affects), as Deleuze and Guattari reminds us:

metallurgy is inseparable from several lines of variation: variation between meteorites and indigenous metals; variation between ores and proportions of metal; variation between alloys, natural and artificial; variation between the operations performed upon a metal; variation between the [...] *affective qualities or traits of expression* of difference levels, corresponding to these singularities and operations (hardness, weight, color, etc.).³⁹⁵

Godo's speech and this action illustration to the left allows us to think as sparks, those affective remainders of energy that explode into thousands of molecular clusters and lines of flight once steel meets steel, making metal 'neither a thing nor an organism, but a *body* without organs'.³⁹⁶ Under intense friction, force, and frequency, energy erupts instantaneously as if on an overloaded electrical grid overloading the human circuit, and therefore, reinvigorating a nonorganic, 'phenomenology of matter' that challenges anthropocentric visions of the historical.³⁹⁷

However, like Guts, before we can think in sparks, we must witness and experience the transhistorical metalworking process, the barbarian art of exposing the vitalistic impulse of matter-movement through the Gothic line, as Deleuze and Guattari write: 'the machinic phylum or the metallic line passes through all of the assemblages: nothing is more deterritorialized than matter-movement. But it is not all in the same way, and the two communications are not symmetrical'.³⁹⁸ This deterritorialisation is replicated in the frenetic line composition (or broken free marks) in the panel that depicts Godo's hammer striking the anvil. First, note how Miura's black ink shading of the hammer resembles inorganic Gothic free marks; the lines bend, swerve, dance, and like the Japanese pure line, streak up and down across the contours of the hammer as if drawn by an unrestrained hand. This shaded and wild illustration of the hammer could be read as a way for Miura to play with texture and lighting, a move toward gekiga realism that at times sought photographic and cinematic realism. It could

³⁹⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 448.

³⁹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 454.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 458.

also indicate the quick movement of the hammer, a technique consistently used to mimic cinematic action-images. However, it may be more apt to examine how Miura's action illustration of the hammer reflects becoming-steel as an aesthetic and new materialist expression of nomadology and its transhistorical processes, in which the ink and paper simulates hammer and anvil, the inky streak as the metallic line.

Readers see that the hammer, the tool of the ambulant smith, in its static form contains potential energies and expressions. As it meets other matter forms, it becomes dynamic, ever-changing through movement, exploding on contact. This matter-movement is illustrated as an amalgamated, deformed, unrefined hunk of iron or steel just like Guts' Dragonslayer, reflecting the heterogenetic nature of smithing and becoming-steel. Each broken line crawls along the contained surface, vibrating madly, desperately struggling to escape its molecular confines. The interior, varied traits of expression (and molecular composition) of the hammer are exposed by each broken, black ink line that stretches and unfolds across its steely surface, further illustrating becoming-steel as a frenetic, kinaesthetic, and asymmetrical dance (movement) of molecular variants (matter) in one metallic assemblage. Upon impact, these interior expressions erupt into white sparks, contrasting brightly in relief to the broken, black ink contours of the hammer. As pure exteriority, these white sparks flow from the anvil and hammer like a fecund fountain of freshwater bursting from the earth, engulfing Godo, Guts, and the viewer in a flood of vitalistic affects: 'what metal and metallurgy bring to light is a life proper to matter, a vital state of matter as such, a material vitalism that doubtless exists everywhere [...] Even the waters, the grasses and varieties of wood, the animals are populated by salts or mineral elements'.³⁹⁹ In this network of minerals, plants, and animals, the ambulant smith produces a new materialism, a Bergsonian vitalism, that introduces a relationship between becoming-steel and becoming-animal, becoming-plant, becoming-Other.⁴⁰⁰ The collision of minerals is the formation of life, to Deleuze. And thus, once the readers begin to

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ For more on contemporary new materialism criticisms, see Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), Diana Coole and Samantha Frost's *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), Timothy Morton's *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013) and Graham Harman's *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (New York: Penguin, 2018). Simply put, new materialism and object-oriented ontology begs the question: how to we think about the experience and agency of nonhuman objects, and in what way can that alter our approaches to human perception?

think-steel and feel-steel, we can further experience the transhistorical, posthuman exuberance of the metallic line as it flows from one matter to another at intense speeds and frequencies, along asymmetrical topologies and frenetic lines of the technological lineage of steel – from the Scythian nomadic smiths, ‘the propagators of the saber, introducing it to the Hindus, Persians, and Arabs’ who were also ‘its first victims, they started on the receiving end’ to ‘the Chinese empire of the Ch’in and Han dynasties, the exclusive master of steel casting or crucible steel’.⁴⁰¹ At this point, Miura challenges the media of ink, paint, and paper to simulate the media of iron and steel in all its kinaesthetic compositions and technological lineages to mobilise another extension of the nomadic war machine. Associating the vitalistic impulses of metallurgy with manga production, Miura’s nomadic becoming of becoming-steel, then, produces a nomadology of the steely prosthesis, of philosophical forging, that aligns with Deleuze and Guattari’s third axiom about the nature of the nomadic war machine: ‘The nomad war machine is the form of expression, of which itinerant metallurgy is the correlative form of content’.⁴⁰²

Blackening It Out and Becoming-Shadow in *Berserk*

Finally, from the flattened depth and frenetic line composition of the Gothic line, we must turn to the most prominent element of becoming-gothic: the interplay between dark and light, of black and white on the icon of the face.⁴⁰³ In ‘The Prototype’, after Guts executes Vlad, Miura shades Guts’ face pitch black; his grimacing visage is featureless and formless, enveloped in shadows and revealing one flashing, pupil-less eye. This manga manifestation of chiaroscuro

⁴⁰¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 446.

⁴⁰² Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 458.

⁴⁰³ The visual icon of the human face and its antipode – the mask – have been a cornerstone of Japanese drama, literature, poetry, and the visual arts from the inception of Buddhist-inspired *gigaku* and *bugaku* dance drama forms of the seventh and eighth centuries (imported from China and India), to the defining art forms of contemporary Japan: manga and anime. The *gigaku* and *bugaku* masked religious dramas ‘eventually fed into Nō’, (p.viii) by the fourteenth century, making Nō the premier form of Japanese masked theatre, as Stanley Applebaum explains in the introduction to Friedrich Perzynski’s *Japanese No Masks: With 300 Illustrations of Authentic Historical Examples*, ed. and trans. by Stanley Applebaum (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2005). Furthermore, Nō theatre told secular and religious stories that drew ‘from the history and literature (and even from scholars’ comments on the literature) of Japan and, to a lesser extent, China’ (p. ix) as well as indigenous Shintō folktales, legends, and performed temple ceremonies. Nō is defined by its symbolic pantomime and acrobatic choreography, as well as the use of elaborate multi-layered costumes and carved masks. Nō would then influence kabuki theatre by the seventeenth century, which introduced the *samisen* in its musical composition as well as more elaborate, complex, and sophisticated masks and costumes, enhancing their performative, narrative, and semiotic import.

(or the treatment of shade and light in painting and drawing) functions as an aesthetic composition that exposes the interplay of black shading and white paper not only in the Gothic environment, but specifically on the face. This manga technique is ubiquitous, used in anime and video games to illustrate heightened forms of fury, directed at the world or onto the self. According to mangaesque semiotics, when a character's face is shaded, blacked out, or if their eyes are covered in entirety by hair or shadows, the audience understands that the character feels the many visceral affects described in Chapter One when discussing Tatsumi and Barker: terror, shame, sorrow, or fury. The intense affects deterritorialise the face as the site of whole, rationally-projected subjectivity, transforming it into an empty black hole, 'a zone of indiscernibility and imperceptibility passing in a transitional and liminal process of physical and semiotic articulation, in which a fixed location, form, and identity of things in the world are deterritorialized, destabilized, and transmuted', as Toshiya writes.⁴⁰⁴



Figure 6

While there is a long, complex history of masking the face in Japanese aesthetics,⁴⁰⁵ Daisuke Miyao writes that the introduction of cinema and the rise of its popularity throughout Japan

⁴⁰⁴ Toshiyo, p. 327.

⁴⁰⁵ Importantly, Karatani describes the significance of the face in Japanese philosophy, drawing from not only Nō, but also from *kabuki* theatre. Karatani writes: 'With its origins in puppet theatre, kabuki began with the substitution of humans for dolls. In order to dehumanize the actors on the stage and make them more doll-like, it was necessary to apply powder 'in an exaggerated manner' and perform spectacular actions which 'involved ridiculously grandiose movements of the body.' The heavily made-up, boldly patterned face of the kabuki actor was nothing other than a mask [...] audiences had found a vibrant meaning in the doll-like movements of the actors and in the masked face, the face as a figure; now they had to search for meaning "behind" the actor's ordinary face and gestures' (*Origins*, p. 57). Karatani further explains that before modern literature, art, drama, and cinema in Japan, Nō and kabuki theatre revealed allegorical and gestural formulations that the mask

sought the familiar faces and masks of Nō and kabuki theatre in the form of jidaigeki and very early samurai films in the silent film era. Moreover, not only did early Japanese cinema draw on a nostalgia of kabuki form,⁴⁰⁶ but it wrestled with the complexities of interiority when the naked face was overexposed by the lights, camera, and action of 1920s Tokyo, the avatar of Japan's accelerated modernisation.⁴⁰⁷ This conflict emerged as a powerful force that Miyao characterises as the reason for a desire to articulate a darkened form of cinema, a shadowy expressionism that revelled in the darkened faces, places, and spaces of Japan's pre-industrial, pre-electrical past.⁴⁰⁸

'conveyed a sense of reality to the audience,' whereby audiences of understood that 'the face as concept could be apprehended sensuously' (p. 57). Like medieval European and Japanese landscape painting, the face acts as an abstract landscape that is spatially ambiguous yet diagrammatic, as Deleuze and Guattari write in *ATP*: 'the traits of a face enter a real multiplicity or diagram with a trait of an unknown landscape, a trait of painting or music that is thereby effectively produced, created, according to quanta of absolute, positive deterritorialisation,' p. 211.

⁴⁰⁶ In a philosophical reading of kabuki theatre, the face – like a landscape (or territory) – is both an internal and external phenomenon, characterized as metaphorical, figural and imaginative, all while attempting to mobilise a social or personal reality of becomings and unbecomings, of traversal and mapping. Karatani explains that the premodern Japanese understanding of faciality – or, the intuitive comprehension of metaphorical semiotics, hermeneutics and models of interpretation, including iconographic symbolism, gestural allegory, and linguistic or pictorial representation – knew that 'through ornamentation [...] the face is endowed with its social existence, its human dignity, and its spiritual meaning. In other words, the human face was originally a figure, something like kanji, and it was only through a process of inversion that the "face as face" came into view' (*Origins*, p. 56). Karatani – like Deleuze and Guattari – warns that 'we should not conclude that a substantive "self" is concealed behind these masks', because beneath the mask is yet another deterritorialised space (p. 124). However, Karatani writes that this nomadic conceptualisation of faciality was overcome by the forces of modernity in the Meiji era, noting that along with discovering new forms of governance, centralisation, and institutional reform from Europe and North America, the proto-modern Japanese soon learned 'the discovery of the naked face' in literature and drama; this discovery would be, as Karatani characterises it, the reterritorialisation of occidental, Western-informed, Cartesian interiority (p. 57).

⁴⁰⁷ Miyao, p. 32.

⁴⁰⁸ Miyao's articulation of pre-cinematic faciality in Japanese aesthetics mirror's Karatani's readings of Meiji reforms in kabuki. Drawing from the avant-gardist kabuki actor Ichikawa Danjūrō IX (1868-1912) and dramatist Kawatake Mokuami, Karatani argues that Ichikawa and Kawatake reterritorialised the face in kabuki by removing the mask entirely to expose the human subject underneath the abstraction of the *real* and the *self*, writing that 'it was the familiar naked ('realistic') face that emerged at this time as something that conveyed meaning, and that meaning to be precise-was 'interiority.' Interiority was not something that had always existed, but only appeared as the result of the inversion of a semiotic constellation. No sooner had it appeared than it was seen as 'expressed' by the naked face' (p. 57). As soon as the naked face is exposed in kabuki and cinema, a new form of interiority and subjectivity was constructed. As Karatani concludes, while the rise of Meiji reforms in Japanese literature (the "I-novel") and kabuki theatre converged at the sudden development of cinema in the 1920s, the icon of the face addressed a crisis not only in Japanese cultural identity in an era of intense Westernisation, but most importantly, an existential crisis of individual subjectivity in the forges of technological modernity.

In this context, Miura's work traverses this very transhistorical lineage of what Yoshino Nobutaka ('a production designer at Shochiku, one of the major film companies in Japan') refers to as *kage no bigaku*, or an 'aesthetics of shadow'⁴⁰⁹:

The aesthetics of shadow that Japanese people created over a long period of time throughout long years stays deep inside of ourselves no matter how much social tendencies change. We want to bring out 'the aesthetics of shadow' from its hidden place, understand it correctly, and do our best to create Japanese cinema.⁴¹⁰

For Yoshino, these shadowy elements can be seen in Edo kabuki performance, medieval monochromatic ink paintings (*sumi-e*), postmodern Gutai abstract expressionism, and most importantly for this section, interwar Japanese Expressionist cinema. Miyao, however, also reminds us that this aesthetics of shadow was not purely a nativist Japanese invention. Cataloguing the influence of German Expressionism on early Japanese cinema, Miyao investigates how Japanese cinematographers and directors negotiated and engaged with Western cinema of light and shadow, drawing influences from not only Sternberg but also Robert Weine, Fritz Lang, Karl Heinz Martin, Carl Theodor Dreyer, and F.W. Murnau. According to Deleuze, German Expressionist cinema, which was imported by Japanese cinematographers in the late 1920s, exposed the

intensive play of light with the opaque, with darkness [*ténèbres*]. Their mixture is like the power which makes people fall into the black hole or ascend towards the light. This mixture constitutes a series, sometimes in an alternating form of streaks or lines, sometimes in the compact, ascending and descending form of all the degrees of shadow which have value as colours. The Expressionist face concentrates the intensive series, in both forms which disturb its outline and deprive it of its features. In the way the face participates in the non-organic life of things as the primary pole of Expressionism.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁹ See more on *kage no bigaku* in Tanizaki Jun'ichiro's *In Praise of Shadows*, trans. Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker (Sedgewick: Leete's Island Books, 1977).

⁴¹⁰ Yoshino Nobutaka, qtd. in Miyao, *Aesthetics of Shadow*, p. 1.

⁴¹¹ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 92.

Donald Richie writes too that German Expressionism offered an alternative modernity of Japan (or an *antimodernity*), that blended the faciality and tactility of the tradition of *kage no bigaku* with the German Gothic extremely well, producing films that were transcultural and transhistorical experiences of universally imperceptible and visceral affects of rage, fear, sorrow, and isolation.⁴¹² In a nomadology of this shadowy style, Miura explores a darkened vision of cinematicism in the manga machine, which he clearly articulates in the series through simulated close-ups (affection-images as any-space-whatever), reminiscent of German Expressionist, French New Wave, classical Hollywood noir, and B horror films. Like these film styles, Miura frames intense affects (a berserking rage) in symbolic, semiotic, and *expressive* ways in the close-up, which as Deleuze writes ‘gives pre-eminence to one of the two poles – reflecting face or intensive face’.⁴¹³ The imperceptibility of Guts’ face is highly intensive rather than reflective, and this appeal to the aesthetics of shadow clearly affirms Miyao’s motto: ‘*invisibility equals expressivity*’.⁴¹⁴



Figure 7

In this transcultural media archaeology of the Gothic line (Japanese pure line and the black line), we also see that with the abandonment of representative organic lines, colour and

⁴¹² Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film* (New York: Kodansha America, 2005). p. 85.

⁴¹³ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 92.

⁴¹⁴ Miyao, p. 13.

light (and conversely the absence of colour and light) became the focal point of a *tactile* expression in painting and film, according to Deleuze: ‘the modulation of color [...] recreates a properly *haptic* function in which the juxtaposition of pure tones arranged gradually on the flat surface forms a progression and a regression that culminates in a close vision’.⁴¹⁵ From Byzantine mosaics that made ‘black shores and white surfaces [...] resonate together’⁴¹⁶ to Francis Bacon’s abstract expressionist diagram that ‘tends toward white or [...] tends toward black and works with shadows or dark colors’,⁴¹⁷ Deleuze views the visceral expression of shadowplay as a deterritorialisation (and undermining) of the optical plane of vision, clarity, and the cerebral upper-bodily faculties that process sight into perception. Japanese Marxist film critic Iwasaki Akira writes something similar while examining Japanese Expressionism in 1928, writing: ‘We should not see only black-and-white dots, but should feel the flight of human souls because, on the screen, actual human beings with depths and “tactile values” and with reason and emotions are in motion’.⁴¹⁸ Following Iwasaki here, we can read Deleuze’s examination of Expressionist cinematography alongside a tactile discourse that extended across

a space of full shadows, or covered with shadows [...] We have seen how Expressionism operates with darkness and light, the opaque black background and the luminous principle: the two powers couple together gripping like wrestlers, giving space a great depth, a prominent and distorted perspective, which will be filled with shadows, sometimes in the form of alternating and contrasting streaks.⁴¹⁹

Like Deleuze’s cosmic artist, Miura engages with aesthetic principles of abstraction. Rather than exploring bodies or forces in the revealing light, Miura rages against representation, realism, and perception primarily by embracing the shadow. Furthermore, Miura’s action illustrations reflect not only a longer affective history of aesthetics of shadow that Deleuze and others explore in Expressionism, but they expose the power of shadow and the risk of overexposure.

⁴¹⁵ Deleuze, *FB*, p. 92

⁴¹⁶ Deleuze, *FB*, pp. 91-2.

⁴¹⁷ Deleuze, *FB*, p. 95.

⁴¹⁸ Iwasaki Akira, qtd. in Miyao, p. 128.

⁴¹⁹ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 111.

In *Berserk*, Miura blacks out Guts' face at each turn of his loss of his cerebral *rational* senses, yet articulates the complexities of the haptic, tactile, and facial sensations of becoming-shadow, of disappearing in to the furious abyss. Miura's techniques situate the face as the zone of indiscernibility, which Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the black hole of 'becoming-imperceptible'.⁴²⁰ Guts' becoming-shadow is a violent shattering of all becomings, a self-annihilating unbecoming that drains the remainders of previous becomings into a black hole, and completely obliterates any traces of constructed subjectivity or selfhood. Message writes that Deleuze and Guattari see the black hole as 'a possible end-point to certain acts of deterritorialisation', as well as 'a way of further conceptualising their notion of faciality'.⁴²¹ In order to forget the face (and banish the spectre of the Cartesian subject), Miura compels us to black it out, to unfold the face as a black mask that encircles and traps all modes of subjectivation in its dark swirls:

black holes exist as the binary co-requisite of the flat white surface, wall or landscape that nominally symbolises the generic white face of Christ. In order to break through the dominating white face, or wall of the signifier, and avoid being swallowed up by the black hole, one must renounce the face of becoming imperceptible. However, Deleuze and Guattari advise caution when embarking on such a line of flight. Indeed, they claim madness to be a definite danger associated with attempts to break out of the signifying system represented by the face.⁴²²

It is no wonder then that Guts' shadow-becomings are often set at the beginning or the end of berserking fits. As he falls into madness, Guts' 'dominating white face' of signification and subjectivation becomes imperceptible. The representational features and shapes of Guts' face and body – which usually follows a gekiga cinematic realism – become blurred, distorted, abstracted, and wildly expressive on the white page. As Culp writes, it is in

this strange zone of indiscernibility, [that] figuration recedes – it is right before our eyes, but we lose our ability to clarify the difference between a human body, a beast,

⁴²⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 298.

⁴²¹ Kylie Message, 'Black Hole', p. 35.

⁴²² Message, p. 35.

and meat. There is no mystical outside, just the unrelenting intrusion of ‘the fact that we are not yet thinking’.⁴²³

Miura compels us to feel the embodied affects of a nomadology of the Gothic by initially immersing our sensorium in the fractured body of the monster and in the dance of the blade. From feeling the flattening of species in becoming-monster and the frenetic force of the war machine in becoming-steel, Miura finally exposes us to the void, compelling us to feel the imperceptible, to deterritorialise not only our idols of Man (anthropocentrism) or of Progress (the technological condition), but of this very world itself. Therefore, within this void, Miura once again abstracts the representable and realistic in the manga form. Instead of blending monsters and weapons into Guts’ body, he transforms Guts into a nonorganic, raging, violent abyss of unmitigated visceral sensations and horrors. This is the furthest extent of becoming-gothic, where the flattening of depth and the frenetic decomposition of lines leaves us open to the ever-encroaching shadows, as Deleuze concludes:

a character may also become strangely and terribly flat, against the background of a luminous circle, or his shadow may lose all its thickness, by backlighting [*contre-jour*], on a white background; but it is by an ‘inversion of the values of light and dark’, by an inversion of perspective which puts depth to the forefront. Shadow then exercises all its anticipatory function, and presents the affect of Menace in its purest state.⁴²⁴

This is the visceral process of becoming-gothic that Miura brings out, exposing the *existentially* menacing forces of the nomad. As Message noted earlier, a complete process of going-berserk entails an entire relinquishing of human becomings, which ushers in an all-encompassing darkness on the horizon that blots out the sun, and produces a destructive, chaotic, violent, horrifying night land that ensures a complete undoing of History, philosophy, and knowledge-production. In doing so, Deleuze and Guattari remind us that the first place to deterritorialise is the face:

⁴²³ Culp, *Dark Deleuze*, p. 63.

⁴²⁴ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 112.

The face, what a horror. It is naturally a lunar landscape, with its pores, planes, matts, bright colors, whiteness, and holes: there is no need for a close-up to make it inhuman; it is naturally a close-up, and naturally inhuman, a monstrous hood.⁴²⁵

The penultimate gothic process of becoming-shadow and seeing the black hole of deterritorialisation is an experience that truly exposes the darkest elements of our species, as Francois Laruelle so too writes: ‘The night is this human, the human who does not speculate about man. Who am I, me who is? I am neither this reason nor this way of thinking, neither this question nor this speculation. I am this night’.⁴²⁶ For Guts, the face of the night is the only plateau worth roving; along its black contours, he does not seek representational or ontological answers to nonhuman questions of the black universe. In the unending night of History, Guts merely roves forward, becoming-monster when facing the abyss, becoming-steel to overcome the limits of the anthropocentric, and finally, becoming-shadow when the historical subject dissolves in the sun, blacked out by a cosmic darkness.

Berserk Goes Shōjo?: Becoming-Woman and Miura’s Little Witch of History

Even though this chapter has revealed the gekiga-revival furor of Miura’s war machines of mass deterritorialisation, there are problems with the tenor of this said masculinist violence of unbecoming, and the brutal nomadologies of becoming-monster, becoming-steel, and becoming-shadow. What is missing, perhaps, in this analysis, is yet another becoming that breaks through the institutionalised, masculinised, and imperial core of History, and opens forth the floodgates of millions of becomings: *the shōjo*, or the universal historical image of *the girl*. For Deleuze and Guattari, the girl is the most minor of all the voices in hegemonic histories, and because of that, the nomadologies of conspiritorial war, ontological usurpation, and masculinist resistance is enfeebled without that revolutionary charge from the awe-inspiring iconoclasm of the girl:

⁴²⁵ Deleuze, *ATP*, p. 211.

⁴²⁶ Francois Laruelle, qtd. in Alexander Galloway, *Laruelle: Against the Digital* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). p. 150.

The girl's becoming is stolen first, in order to impose a history, or prehistory, upon her. The boy's turn comes next, but it is by using the girl as an example, by pointing to the girl as the object of his desire, that an opposed organism, a dominant history is fabricated for him too.⁴²⁷

And hence, it is because of this that Miura's (boy) manga also finds its way to break through History through an experience of *becoming-woman*, a process of furiously unbecoming-man, of breaking the boundaries of the Majoritarian which then thrashes against Guts' Nietzschean war against the universe as the iconoclastic overman to instead produce life outside of this eternal struggle. It is in this way that Miura's formulation of a *shōjo* manga style takes hold throughout early parts of his series to describe Guts' relationship with Griffith, and then expands wildly in the last three arcs: the Conviction, Millennium Falcon, and Fantasia Arcs.

Following Guts after his war against the God Hand led by Griffith, his intense skirmishes with more fairytalesque Apostles, and the corrupt Holy See in the Conviction Arc, the Black Swordsmen ends up building a whole new band of misfits on his travels. By the end of the Millennium Falcon arc, Guts replaced his beloved nomadic war machine, the Band of the Hawk, with a quasi-filial tribe, or what Craig Svonkin and Steven Gould Axelrod refer to as 'a metafamily' of sorts.⁴²⁸ Within this metafamilial construct, Guts reconstitutes himself with the help of his nameless band, including (1) a catatonic Casca, (2) a plucky Puck, (3) a runaway boy thief named Isidro, (4) a former crusader of the Holy See named Farnese, (5) her previous lieutenant in the Holy Iron Chain Knights, Azan, (6) Farnese's servant and confidant Serpico, (7) Farnese's fiancé and captain of the Ys Fleet Roderick, (8) Roderick's best friend and the carnivalesque fop Magnifico, as well as two magical girls, (9) a merrow (mermaid-human hybrid) girl Isma, and (10) an apprentice witch Schierke (along with her elf companion named Ivalera, who falls in love with Puck). In this metafamilial band of outcasts and minor voices, it is Isma, and most importantly, Schierke, who have the most affective and rejuvenating hold on Guts, often soothing the uncontrollable cybernetic furor that overcomes him in his rages throughout the last two arcs, facilitating him with magic balms, spells, and childlike kindness. While I will examine the radical limitations of the war manga and its

⁴²⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 306.

⁴²⁸ Craig Svonkin and Steven Gould Axelrod, 'Introduction: The Metafamily', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 53.2, (2018), pp. 145-154.

gekiga revival machines in the next chapter, I wanted to conclude on the limitations of Miura's own work by illustrating his own shifting otaku approach to his B-film, Tarantinoesque, grindhouse manga that shatters bodies and blurs perspectives into a soupy black and bloody pulp. With the admission of his own desire to move beyond the limits of gekiga style, Miura experiments with *shōjo* style and content to escape the reterritorialising forces of an eternal world at war in *Berserk*.

While any description of *Berserk* barely resembles the tenets of *shōjo* style, *shōjo* manga critic Fujimoto Yukari met with Miura in an interview to ask how much he was influenced by *shōjo*, because as she astutely notes, while the series opens as a hypermasculine gekiga revivalist manga, it quickly matures by exploring Guts' loving relationships with Griffith (homosocial or homoerotic), Casca (heterosexual and romantic), and later, Schierke (paternal and familial) through an experimental blending of the masculine fury of the nomadic war machine with a hallucinatory and ornamental *shōjo* style. Miura in his interview explains:

Shōjo manga is all about expressing every feeling powerfully, and in that sense it's not as contrived as manga for men. Men's manga tends to come off as more calculated to sell well, whereas *shōjo* manga are somehow just...fluffier (*fuwa fuwa*). I realize that's not a very descriptive word, but anyway, that might be something I have in common with *shōjo* manga.⁴²⁹

Hence, Miura's commitment to *fuwa fuwa* is not merely a nod to ornamentation; it is consistent in his attempt to envision iconoclastic and embodied becomings, affects, and transforming bodies that spans many contradictory styles, genres, and techniques. Miura's recapitulation of *shōjo* style especially indicates how the production of a smooth haptic surface of trembling and bubbling affects, where said multiplicities *explode* on the body's surface into a loving *jouissance*, actively resituates Majoritarian experiences of war, Progress, and civilisation as subjective, humane, and everyday experiences of the minor.

Thus, beyond the world-ending fabulations of the raging beast, the heavy blade, and the black hole of *Berserk*, where the darkened universe and the deterritorialising gothic-

⁴²⁹ Mangabrog, 'Berserk Artist Kentaro Miura Interview: "I actually don't think I could let such a long grim story end with a grim ending"', 12 December 2015: <https://mangabrog.wordpress.com/2015/12/14/berserk-artist-kentaro-miura-interview-i-actually-dont-think-i-could-let-such-a-long-grim-story-end-with-a-grim-ending/> [Accessed 12 May 2016]

becomings consume the landscape and bodies of the gekiga revival war manga, Miura injects the magical girl and shōjo style throughout the rest of the series to break the contradictory usurpations of dominant and hegemonic patriarchal political spats (Guts and the nomadic war machine versus Griffith and the State-appropriated war machine) that were set up early in the series. Hence, following Deleuze and Guattari, Miura's shift away from phallogocentric fury reminds otaku readers of not only the mixing of demographics (male versus female manga readership), genres (war versus love manga), styles (vicious versus voluptuous), and modes (gekiga versus shōjo). Otaku are cleverly exposed to the revelations that *Berserk*, too, resonates as a nomadological text beyond its own limitations because it explores the guiding principle of undoing History, which for Miura and Deleuzo-Guattarian theory, begins in the eyes of the magical girl, the shōjo, and the reader who feels the sweeping formulations of becoming-woman, as Deleuze and Guattari write: 'The girl is like the block of becoming that remains contemporaneous to each opposable term, man, woman, child, adult. It is not the girl who becomes a woman; it is becoming-woman that produces the universal girl'.⁴³⁰ While this introduction to becoming-woman does not absolve Miura of his masculinist, Nietzschean attempt to overcome dominant, hegemonic chronopolitics, the exposure of the magical girl as the catalyst for revolutionary and iconoclastic thought is an appealing concept not only internalised by Miura, but specifically, by an avant-garde subset of *mangaka* and otaku media producers, ranging from Miyazaki Hayao to the Type-Moon corporation.

⁴³⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 305.

Chapter Three: Mobilising Memories of Escape in Yukimura Makoto's *Vinland Saga*

In Chapter Two, I examined the gekiga revivalist techniques and philosophies of Miura's *Berserk* as a diagrammatic template of post-historical rage, mobilised in themes and expressions of the nomadic war machine. While Miura's artful deployment of becoming-gothic exposed a transhistorical speculation about the molar position of History and its multiplying State ideologies, *Berserk*'s critique of History is entirely abstract. Yukimura Makoto's *Vinland Saga* (2005 –), on the other hand, is rooted more in specific chronopolitical discourse. *Vinland Saga*, like its post-*Berserk* manga kin mentioned earlier (*Claymore*, *Übel Blatt*, and *Attack on Titan*) is a sprawling, eclectic nomadology inspired by Western medievalism. Unlike its more fabulative, fantastic cousins, however, *Vinland Saga* engages with the specific minor histories of globally infamous sea nomads: the Vikings. Yukimura's rewriting of the late Viking Age primarily surveys the North Sea Empire of King Cnut, as well as dozens of other sea-faring territories, ranging from the North Atlantic, the Baltic and Mediterranean Sea, and even North America.

The series is perhaps best described as a *saga manga*, situating its narrative in between the history, legend, and heroic poetry of medieval northern Europe. Like medieval literature and poetry of the North Sea, Yukimura blends together the pseudo-historical, folk, religious, legendary, and mythic traditions of the Germanics and Celts with gritty political and military histories of competing chieftains, feuding tribes, wars of succession, and the expansion of slave economies, all of which mirrors Japan's own feudal histories. Focused primarily on the Norse colonisation of the North Atlantic (stretching from Canada in the west to Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands in the east), Yukimura draws from figures and tropes often recounted in chronicles, annals, and poems, ranging from Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* ('the disc of the world'), *Knýtlinga saga* (The Saga of Cnut's Descendant), *Jómsvíkinga saga* (The Saga of the Jomsvikings), *Grænlandinga saga* (The Saga of the Greenlanders) *Eiríks saga rauða* (The Saga of Erik the Red) to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (871-1154 C.E.) and the *Annals of Ulster* (431-1540 C.E.). Specifically, Yukimura retells the story of the Icelandic explorer Þorfinnr karlsefni Þórðarson (known in the series as Thorfinn Karlsefni) who attempts to establish a Norse colony in North America, which refers to the Vinland ('wine-land') settlement in modern-day Newfoundland, Canada.

In congress with rewriting saga myths, legends, and histories, Yukimura's manga draws from the afterlife of gekiga's legacy alongside Miura Kentarō's intense style, relying on a creative mixture of surrealism and social realism to reassess the historical subjectivity of the Vikings as a complex nomadic war machine of transformation, migration, and intensities. In a minor history of Viking life, Yukimura's saga manga separates the heroic legends from the brutal realities of Norse life. By denaturalising the historical assemblage of the Viking, Yukimura plays with 'a nomadic, nonlinear philosophy of time', as Rosi Braidotti writes, conflating, blending, and refashioning 'a zigzagging line of internally fractured coalitions of dynamic subjects-in-becoming' as an effective and imaginative engagement with the historical, political, and philosophical contexts of nomadism.⁴³¹ Furthermore, like gekiga manga, *Vinland Saga* explores a history of 'traumatic memories of pain, wound or abuse' that the imperial, centralised State (the Latinate Church of medieval Europe) systematically inflicts upon minoritarian figures; and unlike most gekiga manga, *Vinland Saga* goes further in its critique of the history of 'the Majority' by exposing how a roving nomadic war machine can become co-opted, centralised, and weaponised for the State.⁴³²

Like *Berserk*, the series explores gekiga revival themes of Deleuzo-Guattarian nomadism, imagining characters, scenes, events, and story arcs that struggle with the philosophical, political, and historical relationship between wandering, vengeance, existential dread, and the centralising projects of modernisation. Additionally, while reading the series, readers are bombarded with brutal scenes depicting slavery, rape, feudal exploitation, economic and social discrimination, gender inequality, xenophobia, religious intolerance, and the unending cycle of State violence. Yukimura's writes with an understated irony which describes these horrors of colonisation in a clinical, matter-of-fact fashion. Just as Yukimura's pragmatic writing style illustrates the banal everydayness and ubiquity of violence in Thorfinn's world at war as if in any documentary film, so too does his furiously expressive style – which resembles Miura's *becoming-gothic* style I discussed in the previous chapter – highlights the imperceptible *speed* and *movement* of the war machine.

⁴³¹ Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, p. 31.

⁴³² Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, pp. 31-2.

The Nomadic Memories of the Saga Manga

Eduardo Chavez notes in a 2005 review of *Vinland Saga* how much the series not only mimics Miura's themes of *Berserk*, but how it is clearly aesthetically indebted to the series as well. For Chavez, the violently shattered panel composition, fluid action set pieces, savagely illustrated graphic violence, and rhizomatic storytelling reminds readers of Miura's classic dark fantasy on the outset of reading the first volume.⁴³³ The image above shows a painterly insistence on an excessive use of motion lines, asymmetrical panels, intense close-ups, and quick action-to-action transitions that simulate the radical speed of the duel in action cinema, providing the manga a gekiga-inspired cinematic perspective of framing, editing, and storytelling. Like Miura's style of becoming-gothic as mentioned in the previous chapter, Yukimura is fascinated by exploring action set pieces through shots and frames that rely on angular panel composition to indicate the fragmentary nature of bodies in action, frenetic line composition to simulate intense speeds and differential forces, and monochromatic colour composition of blood spatter or shadowy close-ups to summon dark visceral affects.

Narratively, Yukimura produces an interconnected nexus of aleatory relations, in which characters, storylines, and histories collide at high speeds at different nodes of the Viking world. From issue to issue, we are swept across alternating geographies, ranging from harsh cold seas, rolling hills, labyrinthine woods, jagged mountains, brackish marshes, and frozen wastelands. At each node of difference, Yukimura illustrates a manga map that is meta-narratively annotated and commentated on in the marginalia of the bottom page. In these redrawn Viking topographies and topologies, we are caught in between random encounters and confrontations with not only alien environments, but anachronistically marked historical and legendary figures or groups, ranging from Prince Canute, Thorfinn, Leif Erikson, Thorkell the Tall, Sweyn Forkbeard, Askeladd (as King Arthur), the Jomsvikings, and the Varangian Guard. Like popular representations of the Sengoku period in Japanese media,⁴³⁴ Yukimura populates the Viking milieu with dozens of avatars and affects of the numerous northern war

⁴³³ Eduardo Chavez, 'Valhalla, I am Coming...', *MangaCast*, <http://mangacast.net/?p=259> [Accessed 3 June 2018].

⁴³⁴ Benjamin Wai-Ming Ng, 'The adaptation of Chinese history into Japanese popular culture: a study of Japanese manga, animated series and video games based on *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*', in *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History*, ed. by Roman Rosenbaum (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 234-50. See also Haruo Shirane's *Envisioning the Tale of Genji: Media, Gender, and Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

machines. Yukimura's seamless integration of numerous saga heroes and tropes (figures of nomadic affect), storylines and histories (figures of nomadic memory), and geographies and locations (figures of nomadic space) into a rhizomatic network of Viking-becomings, presenting one heterogenetic and fractal slice of the Viking world-image, all of which framed through the artful expression of action and speed in panel, line, and colour composition.

Additionally, Toshi Nakamura's review from *Kotaku East* in 2014 praises the manga's action illustrations, writing:

The author is practically a magician when it comes to panel placement, dynamic scene setting, and action sequences. It's rare that you find a manga that can not only successfully captivate you during the active sequences, but also does not bore you during the slow ones.⁴³⁵

Experiencing all forms of becoming-gothic in one sitting leaves the reader's brain reeling and short-circuiting, as Nakamura similarly writes: '[*Vinland Saga*] is definitely not "light reading" material. With all the action and drama that goes on, by the time you finish a chapter, you may find that you're tired without knowing why'.⁴³⁶ This mental exhaustion occurs primarily because Yukimura puts the representations of nomadism into motion as abstract and cinematic expressions of dizzying speed and movement of action-images, seemingly pushing the limits of what the action-image can do in manga form. Like Miura's profoundly schizophrenic time-warping monster-hunter fantasy that expressed an otaku philosophy of cruel and intense affects, *Vinland Saga* equally assess an otaku philosophy of *movement* throughout the Viking world, which simply functions as a historical milieu and a visual cipher for nomadic thought.

While the gekiga revival themes and aesthetics of *Berserk* are imported and appropriated by *Vinland Saga*, a philosophical split occurs between both series, primarily differentiating the gekiga-otaku aesthetic and political philosophies of Miura's world-shattering affects from Yukimura's world-escaping movements. Thematically, Miura envisions a world where the nomadic hatred and superhuman actions of Guts becomes an

⁴³⁵ Toshi Nakamura, 'This Manga is as Hardcore as the Vikings', *Kotaku* 10 July 2014 <https://kotaku.com/this-manga-is-as-hardcore-as-the-vikings-1602876456> [Accessed 2 May 2016].

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

ontological atomic weapon deployed to overturn our imaging and imagining of time and History itself. Yukimura, on the other hand, imagines a world plagued by what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as ‘a durable war machine’ that is always already appropriated by the State, and must be abandoned constantly.⁴³⁷

The tale opens by introducing Thorfinn traveling with a raiding party led by a swarthy half-Welsh Viking named Askeladd. Like many saga heroes, Thorfinn becomes a warrior at a very young age after being abducted by his captor Askeladd following the assassination of his father, Thors ‘the Troll’ Karlsefni, the strongest of all the Jomsvikings, a semi-legendary group of elite Baltic mercenaries and Viking brigands. Unlike most saga heroes, Thorfinn becomes a warrior through slavery, another gekiga theme addressed in the previous chapters. The first antagonist, Askeladd, retains Thorfinn until he can defeat Askeladd in a duel. Similarly, Miura’s protagonists discussed in the previous chapter – Iba from *King of Wolves* and Guts from *Berserk* – are also slave-warriors only allowed to leave after defeating their respective captors in combat. Yukimura emphasises slavery (over revenge or redemption) as the primary experience of the Viking Age, situating a critique of not only the North Sea Christian Empire of Cnut, but of the pagan nomadic war machine. As if echoing Deleuze and Guattari’s dark warning of the nomadic war machine, Yukimura depicts a stark world in which the roving experience of nomadic freedom explored in the previous chapter does not make its way into *Vinland Saga*.⁴³⁸ It is in this manga that Yukimura reveals the blueprints of the war machine’s engines, schematics for the ‘special body’ of the band composed of ‘the slave-infidel-foreigner’ assemblage, which as Deleuze and Guattari continue, ‘is the one who *becomes* a soldier and believer while remaining deterritorialized in relation to the lineages of the State. You have to be born an infidel to become a believer; you have to be born a slave to

⁴³⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 437.

⁴³⁸ Paul Patton writes that the ‘liberal or humanist concepts of negative or positive freedom’ that ‘define freedom in terms of a subject’s capacity to act without hindrance in the pursuit of its ends or in terms of its capacity to satisfy its most significant desires’ do not equate to Deleuze’s understanding of freedom as Nietzschean existential liberation (deterritorialisation) that celebrates nomadic thought, the traversal of lines of flight, and the reconstruction of smooth spaces. Patton writes: ‘Whereas the normative status of liberal freedom is unambiguously positive, “freedom” in this Deleuzian sense is more ambivalent. Freedom in this sense is indifferent to the desires, preferences and goals of the subject in that it may threaten as much as advance any of these. There is no telling in advance where such processes of mutation and change might lead. Similar comments may also be made about deterritorialisation, lines of flight or smooth space. In the absence of productive connections with other forces, lines of flight may turn destructive or simply lead to a new form of capture’, in ‘Freedom’, in *The Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2010). p. 119.

become a soldier'.⁴³⁹ Rather than imagine the war machine's iconoclastic potential as Miura does, Yukimura grounds his retelling of saga material in a dire world populated with the historical Others left out of the nomadic war machine, including wandering labourers, refugees, slaves, and veterans who face the systematic enclosure of their once open lifeworld.

As the series progresses, Thorfinn's pursuit for reclaiming his family honour through vengeance leads him to fight in Northumbria, Wessex, and Wales against Anglo-Saxon forces alongside the historical Prince Cnut (クヌート, *Kunūto*, translated into English as Canute in the series), a fascinating fictional and anachronistic departure from the sagas that illustrates how quickly the nomadic war machine capitulates with the formation of a new State. Along the way, Thorfinn and Askeladd help overthrow the Danish king Sweyn Forkbeard for Canute, defeat the Jomsviking-turned-jarl (earl) named Thorkell the Tall in combat twice, and finally settle their long-awaited duel. Askeladd dies before Thorfinn can kill him, and amidst the tumult of Canute's rise to the throne, he is captured and is sold into slavery. Subsequently, for an extended arc, Thorfinn transforms from a raging assassin into a philosophical pacifist, avoiding and deflecting all combat and violence just as his father taught him through hand-to-hand martial arts, even as he endures the traumas of his new social death.⁴⁴⁰ As a slave, he must come to terms with the gross injustices in his world, and must determine when to forcefully intervene against said injustices. Yukimura spends almost six full volumes exploring alternatives to the war machine in the form of the communitarian collective, which Thorfinn can only experience in thralldom on Ketil's farm. As if like any Kurosawan film (a great philosophical and formal influence in gekiga thought),⁴⁴¹ Yukimura's manga takes long

⁴³⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 434.

⁴⁴⁰ For more on 'social death', see Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1982). Patterson defines social death in relation to slavery as such: 'Slavery [...] is a highly symbolized domain of human experience. While all aspects of the relationship are symbolized, there is overwhelming concentration on the profound natal alienation of the slave. The reason for this is not hard to discern: it was the slave's isolation, his strangeness that most threatened the community and that most exercised that "primacy of feeling and willing over thinking" which is at the core of the symbolic mind. On the cognitive or mythic level, one dominant theme emerges, which lends an unusually loaded meaning to the act of natal alienation: this is the social death of the slave' (p. 38). In other words, the social existence of a slave is null-and-void in relation to dominant power structures (political agency, economic sufficiency, dignity of a lived existence, etc.). There is no *existential* escape from slavery.

⁴⁴¹ To understand how the Kurosawan condition influences the series, it is important to note that Kurosawa's works were not only instrumental in the development of gekiga aesthetics, but any historical manga series including Inoue Takehito's *Vagabond*, which as I have mentioned briefly in the previous chapters, is a postmodern template for Miura and Yukimura.

drawn out breathes between war and peace, between action and thought, as well as extend out lateral movements across the pages, including more wide shots, as Deleuze writes:

Kurosawa's work is animated by a breath which fills the duels and battles [...] The camera angle often forms a flattened image, which brings out the constant lateral movements. We can understand this great breath-space – whether expanded or contracted – if we refer to a Japanese topology.⁴⁴²

These volumes function as caesuras, or 'brutal ellipses in the story' as Deleuze writes while examining Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*, in which he argues that the tempo of both action and narrative (elements of the movement-image) is interrupted or extended out. As action hiccups or is slowed down, questions about the world, the situation at hand, and character motives take precedent over mere violent actions.⁴⁴³

This becomes the primary conflict in Ketil's farm: as the movement-images of the war machine are expedited at an increasingly destructive acceleration, the action form gasps violently as if out of breath. Within this bind between action and thought, we find that so too is Thorfinn caught in an endless duel against the nomadic war machine's demand for blood and the State's demand for obedience. As the accelerated action form is juxtaposed to the everyday farm-world later in the series, we can clearly see that the force of the action-image is expressed metaphorically throughout the medium and allegorical framework. As Thorfinn and the reader learn over time, the force of the action-image is as much under interrogation as the themes it enables, producing a magnificent metaphysical duel with numerous clashes, parries, feints, chases, and escapes, manifested within the exchange between action and thought (or mental) images. While Deleuze refer to the milieu and framing elements in Kurosawa's pseudo-historical, legendary, and premodern samurai period films, this chapter seeks to approach Yukimura's cinematic-inspired manga series through a similar theoretical lens.

In the Farmland arc, Thorfinn solves various social and ethical dilemmas brought on by slavery and colonisation. Against all odds, he helps runaway slaves and protects women, children, and the environment from the wrath of cruel taskmasters, swarthy henchmen, and

⁴⁴² Deleuze, *CI*, p. 210.

⁴⁴³ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 188.

impudent lords. He can only do this, however, after (1) questioning his surroundings and communities and what freedom means in political and existential terms,⁴⁴⁴ (2) pondering the nature of redemption in the fatalistic and inescapable Norse cosmos, and (3) examining how to do the right thing after assessing all outcomes, producing what Deleuze calls ‘the possibility and reality of sudden reversals of the situation’.⁴⁴⁵ As the series develops beyond the battlefield, Thorfinn’s primary concern is less about his seemingly eternal quest to define his subjectivity by his duties of vengeance and heroic action; rather, he becomes far more concerned with the double-bind of slavery and freedom, of exploring all the givens to therefore assess existence. In many respects, we may associate Thorfinn with the existential literary-philosophical traditions of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Melville, Kafka, Camus, Sōseki, and perhaps most obvious, Dostoevsky, as Deleuze elaborates on Kurosawa:

If there is a certain affinity between Kurosawa and Dostoevsky, it is precisely on this point. In Dostoevsky, the urgency of a situation, however great, is deliberately ignored by the hero, who first wants to look for a question which is still more pressing.⁴⁴⁶

In other words, as Thorfinn seeks more pressing questions on Ketil’s farm, his actions become imbued with more existential gravity, and are continually anchored by metaphysical quandaries that the action form cannot cathartically expunge.

It is for this that Yukimura explores utopian imaginaries and communities through the slavery arc, allowing Thorfinn the breath and space to face and question the dire realities of Norse slavery, centralisation, and Christianisation, as well as ponder other options of escape, rather than merely habitually act to affirm his heroic masculine Viking subjectivity.⁴⁴⁷ After freeing himself and his friends on the farm, Thorfinn returns to his family in Iceland after a decade abroad. While home, Thorfinn prepares to construct his own paradise outside of the

⁴⁴⁴ Patton, p. 119.

⁴⁴⁵ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 188.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ For more on Old Norse articulations of gendered subjectivity and becomings, see Jenny Jochens’ *Women in Old Norse Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), Judith Jesch’s *Women in the Viking Age* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2005) and Carol Clover and John Lindow’s *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005). Other works that are also important to note here include Ármann Jakobsson’s ‘Masculinity and Politics in *Njáls Saga*’, in *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 38.1 (2007), pp. 191-215 and David Clark’s *Gender, Violence, and the Past in Edda and Saga* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

war machine. With the help of the famous Icelandic explorer Leif Erikson (Ericson in the series), Thorfinn looks to escape his world defined by the ubiquity of war for a peaceful community of refugees, populated with many minoritarian voices of Norse society, ranging from disabled war veterans, orphaned children, former slaves, religious heretics, and widowed or unmarried women.⁴⁴⁸ As of the latest arc called ‘Baltic Sea War’, (2016-18) Thorfinn and friends must find a way to finance an expedition to Vinland, brokering with a slave-boss of Iceland and planning to trade in Greece. Yukimura establishes a possible historical alternative in which Thorfinn’s enterprise functions as a strategic response to the woes of the war machine. Thorfinn and his ragtag group of would-be revolutionaries are unable to escape the centralising State through the iconoclastic, anarchic, and nihilistic fury of their barbarian forbearers.

Unlike *Berserk*, Yukimura’s series does not celebrate the secrecy or speed of the war machine as a mode of destroying societies of discipline, control, or capture from the outside.⁴⁴⁹ Rather, the series emphasises the failure of the war machine in overcoming the hegemony of Modernity, the State, Capital, and History, as Culp warns in *Dark Deleuze*:

War machines are also the greatest villains of *A Thousand Plateaus*, making all other dangers “pale by comparison” – there is a constant state appropriation of the war machine that subordinates war to its own aims, the folly of the commercial war machine, the paranoia of the fascist war machine (not the state army of totalitarianism), and, worst of them all, the “worldwide war machine” of capitalism, “whose organization exceeds the State apparatus and passes into energy, military-industrial, and multinational complexes’ to wage peace on the whole world”.⁴⁵⁰

While there is tremendous revolutionary potential in revitalising the nomadic war machine of yore for a politics of resistance today, they are always at risk of transforming into tools of philosophical and political violence in the globalised and all-connected twenty-first century.

Yukimura’s approach to gekiga revival and politico-historical manga interrogates a long lineage of manga proletarian advocates, from Tezuka, Shirato, and Fujio Fujiko to gekiga

⁴⁴⁸ For a broader list of othered figures in Old Norse society, see Jochens (p. 21), Clover and Lindow (p. 56).

⁴⁴⁹ Gilles Deleuze, ‘Postscript on the Societies of Control’, in *October* 59 (Winter 1992), pp. 3-7. Hereafter ‘PS’.

⁴⁵⁰ Culp, *Dark Deleuze*, p. 22.

revivalists like Miura. In the latest arc, for example, the trading mission to Greece hits a snag when Thorfinn is recruited in a succession war for the Jomsvikings. Because his father was once the leader of the famed Baltic war machine, Thorfinn is the natural choice to mediate the internal strife of an adjacent tribal affinity, one that sits outside of the State and often threatens and colludes for/against it. Instead of diverting his travels to fight against the usurper Floki, Thorfinn chooses a third choice: escape. Yukimura depicts this abstract concept as a chase scene on the high seas. As the Jomsvikings gain on Thorfinn and his party, they dispatch a decoy ship, and he disappears into the woods away from his enemies. As the series continues, he avoids conflict with Floki's wily and sadistic grandson Garm, and through every attempt made possible, avoids the capitulation with both the nomadic war machine and the State-appropriated war machine. This is very different from what we expect as otaku readers of action manga: we expect our heroes to level up, gain new abilities, and after retreating, head straight to the source of evil and destroy it with powers beyond even the atomic imagination.⁴⁵¹ Under the logic of politicised gekiga or otaku affects as expressed in *Berserk*, these manga forms impel their readers to radically destroy this world by creating new war machines (abstract or real). Yukimura's *Vinland Saga*, on the other hand, asks us to use the manga machine's mobile (and otaku) qualities to envision ways to escape this world by reengineering old war machines into escape pods for any-world-whatever.

The Otaku World-Image of Historical Action in *Vinland Saga*

This chapter seeks to examine Yukimura's critical assessment of otaku onto-aesthetics of escape. Rather than confront this world and its 'organic regime' of images head on like Miura's nomadic force of nihilistic fury,⁴⁵² we see Yukimura dream of a 'crystalline

⁴⁵¹ For more on these shōnen tropes, see Andrew Terjesen's 'The Possibility of Perfection' in *Anime and Philosophy: Wide Eyed Wonder*, ed. by Josef Steiff (Chicago: Open Court, 2010). pp. 155-68.

⁴⁵² The organic regime of thought is the home of the movement-image. Organic collection of images are whole, representational, and mimetic in ontological terms, whereby truth (and the representations of truth in aesthetic form) is constructed and assessed by what the world is according to its ideal formulations (Plato's Forms, Aristotle's Nature, Aquinas' God, Descartes' Ideas/Senses, or Heidegger's Being) and the external reality that is formed in witnessing the relationship between the description of a sovereign actor in its constructed reality (a protagonist in a novel, a set design on stage, a long shot in a film). Narration and the description of events as 'real' therefore make an organic world its own mimetic replication of the classical forms of perception, as Deleuze writes of classical Hollywood cinema: 'It is not a matter of knowing if the object is really independent, it is not a matter of knowing if these are exteriors or scenery. What counts is that, whether they are scenery or exteriors, the setting described is presented as independent of the description which the camera gives of it, and

regime’⁴⁵³ of images outside of an eleventh century world (that mirrors a twenty-first century world) all together enclosed, where the impossibility of escape is clear and the end of one specific type of nomadic life is imminent, as Deleuze writes: ‘He who does not understand, he who is in a hurry to act because he believes he possesses all the givens of a situation and is content with this, will perish, by a wretched death [...] no flight is possible’.⁴⁵⁴ These questions of escape are exposed prosaically in the narrative, dialogue, and other representational qualities of the series, but Yukimura extends this philosophy into the post-cinematic body of the manga machine itself, pushing *the action-image* in manga to its breaking point, producing gaps and intervals between actions which signals what Deleuze calls ‘the crisis of the action-image’.⁴⁵⁵ By drawing primarily from a synthesis of Deleuzo-Guattarian nomadology and Deleuzian cinematic theory, I will be examining how *Vinland Saga* overloads the shōnen action manga with action-images to expose otaku philosophies of escape through the cinematographic manga machine. This break from the movement-image in the series becomes imbued with transhistorical possibilities, as Deleuze and Guattari write: ‘The dividing line passes not between history and memory but between punctual “history-

stands of a supposedly pre-existing reality’, in *Cinema II* (p. 122). Moreover, as Deleuze further writes, the organic is ‘a regime of localizable relations, actual linkages, legal, causal and logical connections’, (p. 123) whereby viewers know what is real and what is not real based on the logic of continuity and representational images or narration queues. According to D.N. Rodowick, the organic ‘is the *discovery* of concepts through negation, repetition, and identity toward ever more self-identical Being’, which is opposed to the nomadic (crystalline) ‘*creation* of concepts through difference and non-identity in a continually open Becoming’, as Miura’s illustrates in the nomadic memories and inhuman becomings, in *Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 85.

⁴⁵³ The crystalline regime of thought is the time-image. Crystalline images are abstract, imaginative, and always in flux. Compared to the organic regime, Deleuze writes that ‘the crystalline regime is completely different: the actual is cut off from its motor linkages, or the real from its legal connections, and the virtual, for its part, detaches itself from its actualizations, starts to be valid for itself’, *C2*, p. 123. As Markos Hadjioannou writes, ‘the crystalline regime renegotiates the distinction between real and imaginary leading to what is in fact an indecipherable indistinguishability between the two. The real and the imaginary within the crystal-image becomes facets of the same world. It is no longer the case that a dream is situated within reality, and analysed and justified on the basis of this reality. Rather, within the crystalline regime the dream becomes actual by transforming the real, while the real becomes simultaneously a manifestation of the dream,’ from ‘In Search of Lost Reality: Waltzing with Bashir’, in *Deleuze and Film*, ed. David Martin-Jones and William Brown (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012). p. 112.

⁴⁵⁴ Deleuze, *C1*, p. 212.

⁴⁵⁵ Deleuze describes the limitations of the movement-image throughout *Cinema I*, writing at the beginning of *Cinema II* that ‘the crisis of the action-image was defined by a number of characteristics: the form of the trip/ballad, the multiplication of clichés, the events that hardly concern those they happen to, in short the slackening of the sensory motor connections. All these characteristics were important but only in the sense of preliminary conditions. They made possible, but did not yet constitute, the new image’, *C2*, p. 3.

memory” systems and diagonal or multilinear assemblages, which are in no way eternal [...] they are transhistorical’.⁴⁵⁶

For this chapter, let us begin by thinking about the transhistorical assemblage of history-memory produced in *Vinland Saga* as a movement from action to memory images. After exploring transhistorical (or immanent) theories of time, I will then introduce specific Deleuzian cinematic terms from *Cinema I: The Movement Image* and *Cinema II: The Time-Image* to examine the ways in which Yukimura pushes the movement-image into crisis in the series to expose the allegories of action and its ethical and existential failings in the war machine.⁴⁵⁷ Yukimura exposes what Deleuze refers to as *false* action, or simply, self-reflexive and deconstructive actions that undermine heroic outcomes in the narrative. In the enunciating of the false, Yukimura forges new pathways beyond the banality of brutal action and into the philosophical possibilities of escape, which manifest primarily through a flow of memory-images that interrupt heroic action, narration, and characterisation. Yukimura’s attempt to place action into crisis in a historical milieu reveals a crisis in the remembering of time, especially after the disintegration of monolithic, antiquarian History, as Deleuze and Guattari affirm: ‘History may try to break its ties to memory; it may make the schemas of memory more elaborate, superpose and shift coordinates, emphasize connections, or deepen breaks’.⁴⁵⁸ It is for this reason that this series functions as an ideal bridge between the raging war machines of *Berserk* and the immanent time machines of the *Fate* series, pitting the crisis of action at the centre of the historical movements of manga and anime.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 326.

⁴⁵⁷ As I have mentioned in the Introduction and in Chapter One, I am aware that manga is not cinema, and that the semiotic discussions of comics in relation to cinematic terms may seem counter-intuitive. However, throughout Deleuze’s works on cinema and painting, he too mixes visual metaphors and philosophical analogies to replicate post-structural terms and concepts in an intermedial nexus. In this way, since comics and cinema share visual techniques and media histories, I think it is an effective philosophical strategy to situate Deleuzian cinematic semiotics in manga form.

⁴⁵⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 326.

⁴⁵⁹ Deleuze draws from the works of Henri Bergson to identify the philosophical puissance of cinematographic images in *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema II: The Time-Image*. Deleuze adopts an analytical taxonomy from Charles Peirce to identify two broad categories of images (movement-images and time-images) to explore the multidimensional elements of his own theories from previous works to identify how affect and temporality are conceived in the medium of cinema and in the brain of the viewers. With close to thirty terms in both texts, Deleuze compiles an extensive network of images that work between the poles of movement and time, between action and memory. These multitudes of images are constructed in two ways throughout both volumes, and they traverse Bergson’s metaphysical interest in matter (bodies) and memories (temporality), and where said images (and ideas) of matter and memory intersect on the screen and in the human brain.

As a reminder, the otaku world-image utilises an expansive network of transhistorical anachronisms to disrupt grand historical narratives of Progress, modernisation, and anthropocentrism. These anachronisms manifest as affective fabulations which shatter the boundaries of chronopolitical separations (premodern-modern-postmodern) by compelling viewers to feel the universality of the flickering, vibrating resonances of historical events, moments, or crises. As a crisis in chronopolitics, a new crisis in otaku histories emerges, one that breaks from the post-war dialectic of historical amnesia-nostalgia in Japanese media as discussed in Chapter One and produces a transversal discourse of re-remembering nomadic historiographies through the force of cinematographic images.⁴⁶⁰ In this context, let us return to the legacy of the crisis of action, but specifically within the form of manga. As we have already established in the previous two chapters, the cinematic element of manga has been theoretically and stylistically substantiated by numerous critics and a whole host of intermedial and visual studies approaches. If we enfold Deleuzian cinematic semiotics and film-philosophy – or what Deamer calls a *cineosis* – into an intermedial discourse on gekiga manga, we can more effectively witness the crisis of action as a crisis of historical thought in visual media.⁴⁶¹

In an iconic page from the series, we see a berserking Thorkell obliterate an entire Anglo-Saxon warband after setting a trap for them in the forests. On the first panel, an affection-image of Thorkell (the gap in between perception and action) is framed, simulating his body cruising at a quick clip (indicated by the excessive motion lines), accompanied by textually mediated sound of a battle cry. In the next panel, we see an arcing explosion of blood, body parts, and weapons, like the action-images from *Berserk* as explored in the previous chapter. As the affection-image returns in the next page on top of Yukimura's

⁴⁶⁰ The first Bergsonian cinematographic image expresses perception through 'the sensory motor system' of the human body, which David Deamer notes must 'obey the laws of physics, chemistry and biology and thus will determine appropriate reactions, the world in turn becoming subject to the action produced by bodies', *Deleuze's Cinema Books: Three Introductions to the Taxonomy of Images* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2016), p. xvii. In a Deleuzian register, this is what he refers to as *the movement-image*, which extends visual, auditory, and tactile perception to an indeterminate assemblage of affects that prompt different actions and reactions from different bodies. Deamer explains that the movement-image works as a simple formula: perception → affect → action (p. 7). The second cinematographic image is the memory image. Deamer explains that the memory image produces perception through remembered or habitualised actions: '[t]he body, then, is a memory-image, an image composed of habitualised memories, not only oriented as perception → affect → action, but also as perception ← affect ← action', which in turn produces two types of recollective responses: a movement or action produced out of habit or one produced in order to make the present recognisable in *conjunction with the past* (p. 9). The latter refers to what Deleuze calls *the time-image* in cinema, which he argues, explores duration, spiritual consciousness, abstract thought, and virtual (or possible) outcomes.

⁴⁶¹ David Deamer, *Deleuze's Cinema Books*, p. xvii.

textual-image hierarchy of intensity, we experience the mania of the war machine in the face and body of the man of war and historical action.



Figure 8

Thorkell, like Guts and other anti-heroes in shōnen series, is not only a blood crazed berserker, but a Nietzschean overman that professes and practices the arts of affirmation and destruction that, as Culp writes, allows any leader of a war machine to ‘philosophize with a hammer, rendered here in the voice of Krishna: “I am become Time, the destroyer of worlds”’.⁴⁶² Yukimura constructs action panels and action-to-action transitions that illustrate Thorkell’s own onto-aesthetic project of creation and destruction on the battlefield; like Yukimura, Thorkell is surgically accurate and masterfully artful with each assertion of action, with each swing of his axe, with each charge of his body against other bodies. In this composition of the action-image, Yukimura’s otaku philosophies of intense affect and movement echo Stephen Zepke’s reading of Deleuzo-Guattarian onto-aesthetics: ‘No creation without destruction [...] This is the destruction-creation of the aesthetic paradigm, and defines the conditions for any work of art, the break that allows it to create the spilled and broken world’.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶² Culp, *Dark Deleuze*, p. 23.

⁴⁶³ Zepke, *Art as Abstract Machine*, p. 223.

Yukimura's composition of this page directs us back to an affective and nomadic remembering, in which 'power-qualities become "forces", that is to say are actualized in particular state of things, determinate space-times, geographical and historical milieu, collective agents or individual peoples'.⁴⁶⁴ Yukimura maps out our perception of the historic situation like a battle which might be more accurately defined as a *slice* or snapshot of the war machine at work. In his intense action illustrations capture the raging nomadic affects of the war machine against the Anglo-Saxon/Christian State apparatus, readers begin to notice that '[w]hen qualities and powers are apprehended as actualised in states of things, in milieu which are geographically and historically determinable, we enter into the realm of the action-image'.⁴⁶⁵

From the affection-images of Thorkell, action becomes the necessary next step in the traditional 'large form'⁴⁶⁶ SAS (situation → action → situation) cinematic sequence which guides perception by situations that must be resolved by actions, and are further created anew from subsequent violent actions until the end of the oppositional forces in the film. Large form is traditionally Hegelian in its approach to the historical and the philosophic, seemingly playing out the tensions of dialectical thought in action cinema. To fulfil and resolve the historical situation at hand – the battle, or as Deleuze writes, 'the binomial'⁴⁶⁷ duel between opposing forces – perceptions and affects of the war machine collide against those of the State, resulting in an eruption of elaborately illustrated and choreographed killings that solve the immediate historical situation through 'senseless, brutal action' as Deleuze notes when examining the large form in Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*.⁴⁶⁸ While I will return to the Kurosawan condition of action later, it is simply important to introduce the notion that Yukimura excels at mimicking the Kurosawan large form in manga as much as he does in exploring how this dominance of the historical action-image often used in the traditional cinema genre of westerns or the crime film, which dwells on the 'making of time an endless cycle of suffering', as Stephen Price writes of *Seven Samurai*.⁴⁶⁹ This pushes the vehemence

⁴⁶⁴ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 109.

⁴⁶⁵ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 139.

⁴⁶⁶ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 160.

⁴⁶⁷ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 161.

⁴⁶⁸ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 210.

⁴⁶⁹ Stephen Price, *The Warrior's Camera: The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). p. 215.

of violent action-images into historical – and for Yukimura’s Thorfinn – ethico-historical crisis. We might refer to the exploration of the crisis as ‘an expansion of the large form’ where Yukimura ‘goes beyond the situation towards a question and raises the givens to the status of givens of the question, no longer of the situation’.⁴⁷⁰

From Yukimura’s inheritance of the Kurosawan expansion of large form, we now must also address the movement from affective histories of violence, conflict, and warfare through action-images to what Deleuze calls ‘the origin of Kurosawa’s oneirism’,⁴⁷¹ or his reliance on depicting new situations through fantastic, hallucinatory, and dreamlike images of a fading nomadic life, which triggers the crisis of action. In this example, Yukimura depict a collage (or a manga montage) of faces, milieu, and objects that Thorfinn remembers as he slowly loses consciousness at the end of the first arc. After the assassination of Sweyn Forkbeard, the killing of Askeladd, and being sent into slavery by his foil Canute, all of Thorfinn’s nomadic memories flood into one superflattened, fragmentary mosaic, highlighting the decentring crisis of remembering (or imaging) the world outside of himself, as Deamer reminds us: ‘no longer is there a fixed and solid centre that can process affects as lucid expressions, a centre that can adequately react to and perform acts upon the world; a centre whose thoughts can be reliably traced, depicted and defined’.⁴⁷² As we can see, these crystal-images call into question the seemingly linear or determined situations and perceptions of the movement-image in this scene through its ‘[d]ispersed centres, disjunctive temporality and displaced spatiality’.⁴⁷³

Since this is a splash page that sits outside of the sequential art schema of the rest of the chapter, it sits outside of the actions of the current fight between Canute, Askeladd, and Thorfinn in Sweyn’s hall, representing a still montage ‘used to link images to image in a sinuous trajectory: from environment to environment, from event to event, from character to character along a line of flight’, as Deamer writes.⁴⁷⁴ These heterogeneous images that were once anchored by action sequences at one point between chapter one and fifty-seven erupt onto a flat surface, refracting and reflecting the memory of the Viking world-image in crystalline form, which as Thomas Lamarre writes, ‘evokes the distributive visual field [...] to

⁴⁷⁰ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 211.

⁴⁷¹ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 212.

⁴⁷² Deamer, p. 14.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Deamer, p. 78.

make claims for the end of all hierarchies – those of history, of modernity, of the subject'.⁴⁷⁵ Unlike the many flashback recollection-images strewn about the first half of the series, this distributive mosaic brings together these recollections in one space, outside of the stream of movement and within a newly realised temporal pool. This image of temporality is a manga manifestation of Bergson's concept of duration of the present-past,⁴⁷⁶ Nietzsche's *Untimely Mediations* in historical consciousness,⁴⁷⁷ and Deleuze's crystal-image in cinema, which, as he elaborates:

reveals a direct time-image, and no longer an indirect image of time deriving from movement. It does not abstract time; it does better: it reverses its subordination in relation to movement [...] What the crystal reveals or makes visible is the hidden ground of time, that is, its differentiation into two flows, that of presents which pass and that of pasts which are preserved. Time simultaneously makes the present pass and preserves the past in itself.⁴⁷⁸

This shocks the centred characters out of their habitualised actions, displacing action-images with images of memories, dreams, and hallucinations, as Lamarre affirms: 'The action-image is not only stretched out; it becomes populated with affective responses, mood swings, and emotional values. We are then shocked into thought and remembrance'.⁴⁷⁹

The radically immanent emergence of nomadic memory illustrates a process of drawing Thorfinn away from what he thought was an actualisation of becoming-Viking, reflecting the horrors of his reliance on masculinist heroic action. Similarly, Lamarre describes a conflicted Thorfinn in similar ways while discussing the action-image in avant-garde manga and anime:

⁴⁷⁵ Thomas Lamarre, 'Otaku Movement' in *Japan After Japan: Social and Cultural Life from the Recessionary 1990s to the Present*, ed. by Tomiko Yoda and Harry Harootunian, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). p. 368.

⁴⁷⁶ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 34 and p. 80.

⁴⁷⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 326.

⁴⁷⁸ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 103.

⁴⁷⁹ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 200.

With the crisis in the action-image and the emergence of a modern cinema that coordinates various kinds of time-image, Deleuze sees a tendency toward protagonists who are confused about which way to go or unable to act effectively, and toward stories in which orientation gives way to disorientation, and action gives way to reflection recollection, memory, and other emotional and affective tendencies.⁴⁸⁰

The crisis of action relies on the movement toward time-images, ones that produces a set of ‘[s]equences [that] may appear to have no relation; cuts between images stymie the flow; characters become ciphers, shadows, even disappear’.⁴⁸¹ In the distributive field of nomadic memory images, Thorfinn rethink his actions and relationships as mere sequences and ciphers in this collage-montage. The frenetic close-ups of blades and blood flying are displaced across this plane intermittently among affective facial expressions of his closest loved ones and enemies. This manic mosaic below in Figure 9 reveals how Thorfinn’s memories deterritorialise his own warped perceptions of action amidst a cosmology of sheer fatalism and heroic masculinity. By interrogating these actions, Thorfinn morphs into a character of inaction and introspection as a slave, a character who must experience the traumas (rather than liberties) of the war machine immanently rather than dialectically.



Figure 9

⁴⁸⁰ Lamarre, p. 199.

⁴⁸¹ Deamer, p. 14.

From here, we must note that this collage-montage image is preceded by a page with three panels that more accurately situated a flow of images that reflects the crisis of action itself, exposing what Deamer calls a ‘liquid perception’ – which puts the panels ‘into motion, a flowing movement of continuous reframing’.⁴⁸² In this subsequent page, readers see a medium shot of Askeladd’s stabbed torso (perception-image), a close-up shot of Thorfinn’s wide open eye (affection-image), and a point-of-view shot of the ceiling (action in crisis) that depicts the rafters swirling, distorting, and bending in a vertigo-inducing motion. As Deleuze writes, this scene is the crucible of the crisis in the series, in which

The most “healthy” illusions fall. The first things to be compromised everywhere are the linkages of situation-action, action-reaction, excitation-response, in short, the sensory-motor links which produced the action-image. Realism, despite all its violence – or rather with all its violence which remains sensory-motor – is oblivious to this new state of things where the synsigns disperse and the indices become confused.⁴⁸³

Thorfinn’s illusions rupture into a splintered series of disjointed signs, displacing his seemingly centralised subjectivity and agency into refractory affection-images of nomadic becomings, including becoming-god (Canute), becoming-woman (Yifa), becoming-troll (Thors), becoming-nomad (Thorfinn), becoming-berserker (Bjorn), and becoming-seer (Willibald). This crisis in action reflects a crisis in perception of spacetime and subjectivity, by which the manga distributive field pushes what Deleuze calls ‘the actual images [... to] encounter the virtual’ in violent and abrupt ways, making narrative, character, and allegorical frameworks unusually suspect to criticism and interrogation in the distributive field.⁴⁸⁴ This memory image condensates, producing a ‘gaseous perception’ which Deamer defines as ‘an acented series of ahuman heterogeneous spaces necessarily escaping temporal linearity [...] where the creation of a subject remains only a possibility, any human image an image like any other (landscape, vegetation, the animal, an object)’.⁴⁸⁵ The gaseous perception of the Viking world-image is established in this assemblage of images of the everyday life of nomadic experience. In this collage, images of the natural harbours of Iceland, wooded forests of

⁴⁸² Deamer, p. 79.

⁴⁸³ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 230.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Deamer, pp. 79-80.

England, a lone wolf, a battle-worn dagger, and a dragonhead on the prow of a longship flood the frame and Thorfinn's memories. Yukimura places these still nonhuman images in juxtaposition with photographic images as of family, friends, and enemies to establish semiotic conjunctions and linkages between affective objects and subjects, like in Miura's *Berserk*. Each close-up expresses diverse and intensive nomadic affects, binding inhuman becomings (becoming-wolf, becoming-dagger, becoming-dragonship) to Thorfinn's sense of becoming-Viking. Among these images are onomatopoeic kana (あ, 'a'), signalling emotive and auditory exhalations like heavy breaths, booming screams, or short sighs. As we witness the memory-images flood Thorfinn's mind's eye, we also feel a shortness of breath as he huffs and puffs before losing consciousness. As his memory overflows, short-circuits, and leaves Thorfinn and Yukimura questioning the nature of their own relation to historical enclosure. Yukimura similarly asks the Japanese reader what it means to be a Viking in a once nomadic society that, like the rapidly modernising Meiji State, quickly rose to prominence through a century of intense centralisation, Christianisation, and colonisation?⁴⁸⁶ *Vinland Saga* inadvertently draws from a universal question about how communitarian nomads should live in an era defined by the sedentary systems of imperial control, asking how must the nomad (like Thorfinn, like the otaku) existentially face the end of nomadic insurgencies in History?

In this allegorical schema, just as the illusion of Vikingness shatters under the pressure of action in crisis, so too does the readerly expectation of a dialectical resolution between binomial forces of History: the hidden historical sovereign of Askeladd and the nomadic victim of History, Thorfinn. Otaku expect from reading fighting manga that after each failed duel, Thorfinn's powers will grow stronger and his reflexes quicker, so that someday, he may defeat and kill Askeladd, restoring order and justice through the large form sequence. For otaku readers, this scene is interruptive and divisive, primarily because the clichéd promise of

⁴⁸⁶ Yukimura's first edition of *Vinland Saga* prompts this very question as the impetus for writing the series. On the outset of Volume 1, he writes: 'I don't really understand the source of the name "Viking." I know that it's said the base of the name is 'vik,' which means inlet. They used inlets as natural ports, building villages within them, raising sheep and pigs, cultivating small amounts of land and fashioning tools, eating barley, herrings, whales and seals, drinking beer, crying, laughing, and falling in love. Their piratical nature tends to precede them, but I would like to continue studying them and portraying them in various other ways', from Yukimura Makoto's *Vinland Saga* (Volume 1), trans. by Stephen Paul (London: Kodansha Europe, 2013), p. ii. This theme of questioning the myths of Viking society permeates throughout the series, but it is intensified as a nomadological examination through Thorfinn's own existential questions about his relationship to Vikingness, or at least more expansively, to the fading nomadic pagan life that became obsolete in a centralising, Latinate eleventh century Northern Europe. For more on the anxieties of the loss of Vikingness in the eleventh century, see Judith Jesch's *The Viking Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1-4.

resolution in shōnen (and seinen) fighting manga genre – which is based around a series of tensely bound duels of individual and cosmic proportions, often ending in a close, pyrrhic victory of our protagonist seeking vengeance – disperses into thin air, leaving an anti-climactic implosion of the action manga’s logic of the duel. This illusion is exposed even further as the final page of this sequence shows: a full-page close-up of Thorfinn’s blade. This image produces a ‘solid perception’, which focalises all attention on the dagger and its agency, provenance, and movement throughout the series in relation to Thorfinn. Out of context, we may view this close-up of the dagger as cinematographic means of constituting what Deamer calls ‘the purest subjective image, a subject at the centre of the world, a solid I’.⁴⁸⁷

However, even this perceptive field of wholeness and figurative focalisation shatters as this perception-image reveals itself as a pictorial index that automatically links us back to the past, undermining the entire plot and Thorfinn’s journeys of the first fifty-four chapters. Readers of the manga will notice the significance of the dagger was on the ground by a swooning Thorfinn in Sweyn’s throne room. It is a recollection-image that returns us back in time, even without a successive flashback on the next page. This blade, first shown in chapter eight, recounts the moment when Thors finds a young Thorfinn pilfering through a weapon crate as a young child, discovering the said dagger. Upon discovering him, Thors reprimands Thorfinn, wisely admonishing him: ‘You have no enemies. No one...has any enemies. There is no one that you should hurt’.⁴⁸⁸ This memory-image of the blade functions as Yukimura’s crystalline solution to the war machine: to slow down the violent historical actions of the war machine for the sake of accessing memories of pacifist resistance.



Figure 10

⁴⁸⁷ Deamer, p. 78.

⁴⁸⁸ Yukimura, VS, Chapter 7, p. 60.

Through this recollection-image, Thors' philosophical imperative reappears in Thorfinn's hallucinatory break from historical subjectivity. Thors' pacifism undermines the entire plot of the series, clearly emphasising that there is a necessity for questioning the world, not fighting it relentlessly. Additionally, with this emergence of time-images from the collage of shattering becomings and Thors' dagger, Thorfinn and the readers realise that the entire journey, including heaps of battles, conspiracies, and betrayals, has all been a failure of the promises of Viking redemption through masculinist, violent, and sovereign heroic action. The ruse of the plot is clearly condemned by Yukimura at this break in the arc. The action plot device of traditional historical manga is upended, pushing its focus away from the war machine, which produce systems that rely too much on what Simon Critchley refers to as 'the model of tragic action', which for Japanese pacifists like Kurosawa and Yukimura is clearly 'too decanted, too clean, too heroic' for experiencing the latent terror of the war machine.⁴⁸⁹

Finally, as the illusion of the situation is exposed by the emergence of the time-image, we witness the 'five apparent characteristics of the crisis in the action image: *the dispersive situation, the deliberately weak links, the voyage form, the consciousness of clichés*, the condemnation of the plot'.⁴⁹⁰ Let us note that in the context of the series, all characteristics manifest themselves after this collage-montage is exposed: (1) the failure of the binomial duel between Thorfinn and Askeladd is revealed as a mirage; (2) Thorfinn's fragmentary memory montage reveals weak links in action and subjectivation; (3) the war form narrative of targeting, traveling, and destroying transforms into the voyage form of wandering and escape; (4) Yukimura parodies historical manga clichés of patricidal retribution, for example; and (5) the plots that accompany these clichés in the action form are condemned by Yukimura's Brechtian touch. These characteristics direct our attention away from the sensory-motor schema of heroic action and toward a thinking-manga that returns us back to the greatest question of *Seven Samurai*, which, as Deleuze ponders:

is not "Can the village be defended?" but "What is a samurai today, at this particular moment of History?" And the response, which comes with the question, once it is

⁴⁸⁹ Simon Critchley, *Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas and Contemporary French Thought* (London: Verso, 1999). p. 229.

⁴⁹⁰ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 214.

finally reached, will be that the samurai have become shadows who no longer have a place, either with the rich or with the poor (the peasants have been the true victors).⁴⁹¹

This is the question that remains at the very end of the first arc of *Vinland Saga*, beckoning Thorfinn and the readers to ponder: what is a Viking today, at this specific moment of History? How does the otaku world-image shape the nomadic memories of not only a Viking on the run, but a global otaku reader stuck in the throes of precarity and capital? And almost identical to the Kurosawan response to fading samurai and rōnin in the late sixteenth century, so too does the fading Viking of the eleventh century face extinction through endless bloodshed, tribal infighting, and a mass capitulation with the State apparatuses of ecclesiastic and secular empires. Questions of History come into focus as historical action dissipates or becomes irresolvable, and therefore, the crisis of action exposes a crystalline thought that poses another question rather than positions another action. The large action form is stretched to its furthest limits, producing gaps in action that are filled with mental images, from horrifying dream-images to contemplative shots of the landscape. Like Kurosawa, Yukimura poses metaphysical questions in the collage-montage and the subsequent panels, which emerge alongside latent crystal-images, which stand in opposition to what Deleuze calls the organic regime of images.

The False Farmland: The Extreme Limit of the Large Form and the Crystalline Regime

The second half of the series witness the extreme limits of the action form and the bubbling up of the time-image in a world tensely bound by the organic and crystalline regimes of the cinematographic gekiga image. As Deleuze writes, the difference between the organic (kinetic) and crystalline (chronic) regime of images can be seen in four categories: (1) description of the world,⁴⁹² (2) the perceptive divide between the real-imaginary,⁴⁹³ (3) narrative (including styles of narration and character development),⁴⁹⁴ and (4) the role of truth.⁴⁹⁵ As the series continues onward from its breaking point in the first arc, these four

⁴⁹¹ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 213.

⁴⁹² Deleuze, *C2*, p. 131.

⁴⁹³ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 132.

⁴⁹⁴ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 133.

⁴⁹⁵ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 135.

criteria for crystalline emergence alter the entire Viking world-image that the first arc set up in relationship with the action-image, an image of nomadic becomings defined by a crucial ‘spatio-temporal advance’ in the retributionary form that as Deleuze argues, ‘is intertwined with the process of actualization, by which the hero becomes “capable” of action; and his power becomes equal to that of the encompasser’.⁴⁹⁶

After the end of the first arc, readers are introduced to an organic regime of realist narrative, which is characteristically defined by an ‘economy of narration’ that

appears both in the concrete shape of the action-image and hodological space and in the abstract figure of the movement-image and Euclidean space. Movements and actions may present many obvious anomalies, breaks, insertions, superimpositions and decompositions: they nonetheless obey laws which are based on the distribution of *centres of forces* in space.⁴⁹⁷

Realism for Deleuze can be expressed in an economy of action (movement) and milieu (space). Chapter fifty-five depicts the transportation of Einar to Ketil’s farm in Denmark as the introduction to the Farmland arc, which functions as a narrative alibi that introduces us to a ragged Thorfinn. On Ketil’s farm, readers are also introduced to the master Ketil ‘Iron Fist’, and his family in an organic, or what Deamer calls a ‘classical realist’, mode.⁴⁹⁸ Yukimura introduces Ketil, his eldest son Thorgil, his youngest son Orman, and his retired father Sverker. As the limits of the action-image lurk, we get a glimpse into the masculinist Viking tropes in these men: Ketil, the kind yet ambitious master who gave up his heroic life for commerce; Thorgil, the valiant and brave adventurer who hungers for battle Orman is the eager teen upstart who must choose between individual honour and familial duty; and finally, Sverker, the ugly old hermit and make-shift wise man who works the fields for existential fulfilment. More clichéd figures appear on the farmland, including three swarthy farm bodyguards named Badger, Fox, and their leader Snake, and the lone female slave named Arneis. Badger and Fox are cast as big-talking henchmen, Snake is depicted as a talented yet lazy outlaw who seeks absolution by taking care of old Sverker, and Arneis is described as a

⁴⁹⁶ Deleuze, *C1*, p. 174.

⁴⁹⁷ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 133.

⁴⁹⁸ Deamer, p. 265.

despairing beauty who enters the narrative simply as a romantic interest of the benevolent Einar, while simultaneously contained by her sexually abusive master, Ketil. Loads of movement-image clichés emerge in this arc, in between the gekiga and otaku models, ranging from the gekiga becoming-animal motifs of the bandits-turned-bodyguards to the otaku shōnen hero Orman who, in seemingly harmless fashion, pretends to be a warrior. Yet, as we will see, the expectations of shōnen tropes fall in on themselves as the movement-image fails to resolve the social realist conflicts, which in turn challenges male-coded otaku sensibilities.

The initial conflicts are ordinary and unexceptional, socially realist and naturalist in description. Thorfinn makes numerous, repetitive, and automatic actions that do not produce new actions of historical movement. These actions are directed not at a character or a collective, but at his environment where agrarian labour takes precedent over martial action. Instead of witnessing more fiery duels in the forests or swashbuckling battles on the high seas, action-images of woodchopping, weeding, tilling, and reaping dominate the milieu. There is no primary narrative established until more than halfway through the arc itself, which seemingly functions as another ruse set up against otaku expectations. This arc follows the logic of the indexical, equivocal, and vectoral, producing an assemblage of loose encounters and narratives between the three slaves (Arneis, Einar, and Thorfinn), Ketil's family (Ketil, Thorgil, Orman, and Sverker), the three guards (Badger, Fox, and Snake), the environment (from forest to farmland), and finally, the fated arrival of King Canute seeking to take Ketil's farm by force. The goals at hand are minimal and ordinary, and they are narratively and thematically predetermined by the alibi of Thorfinn's physical enclosure as a slave and mental enclosure as a victim of trauma. Throughout the opening of the arc, there are numerous landscape shots of the nearby forests that are about to or have been cleared by Thorfinn and Einar. These successively transformative shots result in animating a changing environment as in any time-lapse video, symbolising (albeit in a cliché manner) Thorfinn's ability to cultivate life after destroying so much of it as a member of the war machine. And yet, because this chapter reveals weak points of the action-image, Yukimura centres the action around 'the absence of plot', where readers learn that 'the action-image disappears in favour of the purely visual image of what a character *is*'.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁹ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 14.

Even as this arc meanders through the repetitive motions of a trauma victim, the character actions gradually increase after the revelation of freedom is exposed: Ketil informs Thorfinn and Einar that if they can improve the farm's production by leaps and bounds (which no other slaves were able to do for their land owners), they will be able to find ways to buy their freedom much sooner than they expected. Herein lies another seemingly impossible goal: to cultivate infertile land in an inhospitable place. The goal of the first arc wrested on the impossibility of redemption through retribution, and this arc now seeks the seeming impossibility of freedom through slavery (and the wilful capitulation with the exploitation of labour). Because of this, action does not completely disappear, but it mutates into agrarian action within a social-realist gekiga register. Thorfinn and Einar are faced with numerous obstacles: first they must clear the land of trees, next they need a horse to help pull the tree stumps up, and from this point, they require more tools and favourable weather. For example, chapters sixty-three and sixty-four (entitled 'We Need A Horse' and 'We Need A Horse 2') blend together narrative elements of Japanese farming and community simulation video games popularised by *Harvest Moon* (Nintendo, 1996) and *Animal Crossing* (Nintendo, 2001) with the everyday ordinariness of farming labour in the Icelandic family sagas of *Njáls saga*, *Porgils saga*, *Hrafnkels saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*.⁵⁰⁰

As the two improve the unfarmable land, other figures enter the narrative, and transform the weak action links into classical-realist motives. The farming arc disassembles into yet another battlefield for the State to capture and ensnare, as Deleuze and Guattari write:

Not only, as Hegel said, does every State imply "the essential moments of its existence as a State", but there is a unique moment, in the sense of a coupling of forces, and this moment of the State is capture, bond, knot, *nexum*, magical capture.⁵⁰¹

Because of Ketil's ambition, Canute hears tell of the wealth of his once infertile lands, and seeks to seize them for himself. Ketil's son, Thorgil, a berserker who has served on dozens of raiding missions with and against Canute's forces, overhears that Canute – in his bid to

⁵⁰⁰ For more on Icelandic farm sagas, see: William R. Short's *Icelanders in the Viking Age: The People of the Sagas* (London: McFarland & Company, 2010). p. 74. Also see Carol Clover's essay, 'Icelandic Family Sagas (*Íslendingasögur*)' in *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005). p. 271.

⁵⁰¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 508.

centralise both Denmark and England – has been eying Ketil’s lands in Jutland. Canute then demands an exorbitant amount of tribute, and Ketil refuses, attempting to renegotiate. Canute refuses, and Thorgil, on his own behalf, seeks to provoke a war with the king. In order to start the war that he so desperately craves to fight, Thorgil constructs a conspiracy on the farm for his cowardly father, coercing his younger brother Orman to kill a man in a duel. This is no regular duel, however: it is a thinly veiled assassination. Thorgil constructs a situation in town that places Orman and Canute’s messenger in the same bustling street. Thorgil pushes Orman into the messenger, the messenger gets upset, Orman takes offence, and a weak brawl over honour ensues. However, after fleeing from the fight, Orman is thrown back into the fray with his untested blade, and the frightened teen kills the king’s messenger in cold blood, bringing the wrath of Canute and his forces to the farm. Thorgil’s plan goes off without a hitch, yet he becomes suspicious, and rightfully so: we learn that Canute’s agents had infiltrated the guardhouse that Thorgil frequents, and his plan to bring Canute to the farm for a duel had been revealed and anticipated. Orman, in other words, does not kill the king’s messenger, but rather, a poor man dressed in messenger’s garb. The heroic plot begins to develop massive holes and breaks, all of which favour Canute’s own State war machine: anticipating Thorgil’s own assassination attempt, Canute constructs a counter-feint, gaining the legalistic justification to brand Ketil and his family traitors, legitimising his forceful seizure of the lands. The slaves remain on the outside of this grand conspiracy until it threatens their lives. Thorgil’s berserking war machine is mobilised against Canute’s State-appropriated war machine, and to the dismay of the reader, the slaves, and Thorfinn, war is completely inescapable even in this backwaters region of rural Jutland.

Deamer examines the limits of the action-image through this shift from the nomadic memories of suffering to the histories of sovereign action, which as he writes, ‘is such a transformation in form that [it] tempts us to see a betrayal, a turning away from the social-realist political stance’.⁵⁰² It is extremely important to note that at this shift from social realism to classical realism, both the limits of the action-image’s narrative structure altogether, as Deamer concludes:

⁵⁰² Deamer, p. 265.

It is this extreme limit of the action-image that inspires the structure of narration [...] through a comparison of forms (the large, classical realism; and the small form; social realism). Such an arrangement creates not only a discourse between both but – necessarily – a reflection upon each by the other.⁵⁰³

The reflection of both is purely in relation to the war machine, and this intersection of multiple forms of narration and experience of war prompts the emergence of a pacifist history-memory of not the iconoclastic berserker, but the nonviolent swordsman. This conflict arises through a crystalline narration, which Deleuze defines as ‘a collapse of sensory-motor schema. Sensory-motor situations have given way to pure optical and sound situations to which characters, who have become seers, cannot or will not react, so great is their need to ‘see’ properly what there is in the situation’.⁵⁰⁴

At the very moment that the organic narration implodes, agrarian and martial action-images blur; the peasant-warrior assemblage represented by Ketil’s family rises against the State in this social-realist milieu to only fall clumsily on its own sword in a parody of the classical realist mode of historical action, played out in Orman’s blundering murders and Thorgil’s foolish conspiracies. This then is the revelation of the falsity of classical realism, as Deleuze writes:

Making-false becomes the sign of a new realism, in opposition to the making-true of the old. Clumsy fights, badly aimed punches or shots, a whole out-of-phase of action and speech replace the too perfect duels of American Realism [...] Under this power of the false all images become clichés, sometimes because their clumsiness is shown, sometimes because their apparent perfection is attacked.⁵⁰⁵

The false action is exposed as a Brechtian effect, alienating the audience from their sense of diegetic escape, and thus, revealing the failure of action in this historical manga form, as Alexander Galloway explains that the falsifying (denaturalising) powers of enfoldment, reversal, and the direct address are effective techniques of ‘foregrounding the apparatus,’

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Deleuze, *C2*, pp. 133-4.

⁵⁰⁵ Deleuze, *C1*, p. 237.

which he explains, ‘is a Brechtian mode, a Godardian mode, a Benjaminian mode [...that] implicitly participates in this tradition, despite being lowbrow and satirical in tone’.⁵⁰⁶

As yet another ruse is revealed by Yukimura, so too are the heroic men of the war machine exposed as violently dangerous villains, morphing the seemingly heroic nomadic Viking tropes into colossal critiques of said action tropes exposed in war manga. Ketil the Iron Fist – who we originally learned to be a once brave and honourable warrior – lies about his war record and is further exposed as a domestic batterer and rapist, claiming Arneis as his sex slave. In fear of her leaving with her escaped husband Gardar, he beats her to death. Thorgil’s thirst for war against the king is not revolutionary, but simply psychopathic: Thorgil finds any reason to slaughter any living being in his way, including innocent women and children. Even Canute – who in the first arc was a quiet pacifist traumatised by the images of his brother’s murder which he witnesses in the throne room as a child – takes up the sword, learns to fight, and at the very end of his confrontation with Thorgil’s forces, clumsily disengages in masked terror. All these examples illustrate that the reader cannot find resolution in these flimsy false actions and clichés of historical violence anymore because they betray the social-realist truths (and horrors) of war machine, because these villains are not truly nomadic anymore.

Yukimura’s initial organic narration of the war machine’s engines of heroic action and necessary conspiracy are placed into stark contrast then with the social realist milieu of slave life that the Farmland arc introduces. This is the crystalline power of the false, as Deleuze writes: ‘It is a power of the false which replaces and supersedes the form of the true, because it poses the simultaneity of impossible presents, or the coexistence of not-necessarily true pasts’.⁵⁰⁷ In this Brechtian field, historical action become denaturalised.

Moreover, we can see the power of the false manifest in dream forms as well, importantly altering the relation between the real and imaginary, which also constitutes another divide between the organic and the crystalline. It is important that as the small and large forms collide, they introduce the temptation of martial action into Thorfinn’s warless world of wheat farming. After a rival farmer sabotages the newly budding wheat fields that Thorfinn and Einar laboured months over, Yukimura illustrates a splash page of a medium shot depicting Thorfinn throw a huge punch into the face of the perpetrators. A brawl ensues and immediately we lose sight of Thorfinn and Einar, and are introduced to another crisis of

⁵⁰⁶ Alexander Galloway, *The Interface Effect* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012). p. 40.

⁵⁰⁷ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 156.

action moment: Thorfinn slips into a nightmare, which we experience in the first-person perspective. In these dream-images, Thorfinn's hands desperately losing grip on the side of a cliff, slipping as he falls deeper into a black abyss. As the darkness dissipates, Thorfinn lies in a pit of undead corpses dressed in Viking garb, described in Norse folklore and myth as *draugr*. These draugrs lunge at Thorfinn, and in this undead hell, we learn that these hundreds of hungry corpses were once Thorfinn's victims. An undead Askeladd appears, and through exposition he tells Thorfinn that this dark hell (similar to the hellish otherworld in *Berserk*) is Valhalla, the paradise for Odin's champions who have fought brave in battle, preserved by an economy of honour so that someday, they may fight against Odin's rivals at the end of days. To highlight the falsity of expectations, just before we are introduced to Askeladd, Yukimura illustrates a cover page that depicts a box of text defining Valhalla from the heroic saga perspective, with images of legions of Viking warriors standing at attention to the Valkyries. This juxtaposition between the expectations of a heroic Norse afterlife and the reality of mass murder shocks Thorfinn and the reader into rethinking the Viking world-image once prescribed to the anti-Christian war machine, which quickly becomes subsumed by the Christian war machine of Canute and others.

The critique of Norse honour society is also associated with the split between the real and imaginary here in these dreams. At moments, Thorfinn drifts off, awakening with *draugrs* at his back. After his battle with his rival farmers, we are unsure of where we have landed due to Yukimura's use of false continuity editing style with his images. In other words, we experience these dreams of a hellish Valhalla in between two chapters in a simultaneously continuous and discontinuous fashion. These dream-images take place in Thorfinn's mindscape, but at other times, they infiltrated the world of the living, and in between martial actions, we must ask: is Thorfinn dreaming or hallucinating? Are these rich dreams – which as Deamer clarifies, are 'explicitly signalled, and accompanied by ornate transformations'⁵⁰⁸ – or are these restricted dreams, which Deamer describes as dream-images that do not signal a shift from the waking to the dream worlds, but rather, '[t]he dream itself may resemble the everyday world more or less, the everyday reality of the awake character; yet it will have a certain uncanniness, it will be somehow impossible'.⁵⁰⁹ As these mental images of Thorfinn's guilt and trauma manifest themselves in his world of the ordinary, readers lose confidence in

⁵⁰⁸ Deamer, p. 123.

⁵⁰⁹ Deamer, p. 124.

the farmland as a centred overworld itself. These dreams function as another reminder that the action form is in constant crisis in this arc. The critique of Norse cosmology is exposed in the dream-image, not the action-image like Kurosawan oneirism, which as Deleuze writes, explores ‘the hallucinatory visions’ as not only ‘subjective images, but rather figures of the thought which discovers the givens of a transcendent question, in so far as they belong to the world, to the deepest part of the world’.⁵¹⁰

In between gaps of action and hallucinatory visions, Canute’s binomial world of the large form and Thorfinn’s rhizomatic world of the small form collide, rupture, and explode. The false farmland is exposed. It is not a world where reflection remains eternal, nor is it the pristine pastoral. It is a world at war as much as any other. And yet, what we learn from this crystalline exposure of the farmland is that there are many more questions that Thorfinn must explore about the war machine and the State-appropriation of it: how can we retool it, how durable is it, is it associated with the social-realist experience, and how can we deter its appropriation? These questions lead us to the end of the arc where Thorfinn must decide to choose between two options presented to him, once again in binomial fashion: (a) Canute’s conversion to a seemingly corporate-Christianity and the new State it represents; or (b) Thorgil’s rampaging resistance of the decaying, sedentary Norse war machine. Not surprisingly, Thorfinn chooses neither. Rather, like a Norse Bartleby, he chooses to abdicate the options given to him, producing new ways of thinking-escape through both affirmation and negation. By thinking-escape and transforming the crisis of action into a space to contemplate god, death, and time, the betrayals exposed in the overarching action plots of Canute and Ketil’s family is undermined. Both choices seem ridiculous, which is articulated by Thorfinn in his escape from Garm later in the series: ‘Only two choices? That’s ridiculous! There’s gotta be more choices! To find alternatives is the whole purpose of this trip!’⁵¹¹ Deleuze similarly writes of the logic of potentiality and lines of flight from the centre, echoing Thorfinn’s escape:

this divergence is affirmed in such a way that the either...or itself becomes a pure affirmation. Instead of a certain number of predicates being excluded from a thing in

⁵¹⁰ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 212.

⁵¹¹ Yukimura, Volume 10, p. 57.

virtue of the identity of its concept, each ‘thing’ opens itself up to the infinity of predicates through which it passes, as it loses its center, its identity as concept or as self.⁵¹²

Before he can escape for good, however, Thorfinn must confront the extreme limit of the action form within the trope of the binomial duel itself. After the fight between Canute and Thorgil’s forces, Thorfinn rushes to stop the fighting, demanding to speak to Canute. Without weapon or armour, he approaches a captain, who rebuffs Thorfinn by laughing hysterically at his request. Immediately, the nameless warrior challenges him to a duel. As the warrior prepares for a fight, Thorfinn declines and instead challenges the warrior to an endurance match. The rules are simple: if Thorfinn endures one hundred blows, he will be given a chance to speak to Canute. The warrior accepts, and in an inversion of the binomial duel we witnessed in the first arc, Thorfinn’s inaction produces a radical response to violence in both saga and shōnen form. At first, Thorfinn dodges each attack, bending and weaving in between blows. As time wears on though, he begins to take more and more punches. The crowd of warriors (like the otaku reader) is stunned, and the brutal force of the movement-image to excess is felt in each frame. As each punch is landed on Thorfinn’s face, the signifier of the facial icon break and bleeds, shattering under the force of the action-image. The force of the action-image becomes excruciatingly painful, not exhilarating. For once, we feel like Thorfinn’s nameless opponents from the first arc, and the extreme limit of the action form is placed into its final stage: self-reflexive implosion. Even while Thorfinn’s face becomes less recognisable from each punch, Canute recognises him from a distance, only by nature of his tenacity. Inspired by what he viewed as a Christian gesture, he stops the fight and the two finally converse. It is here that Yukimura frames both Canute and Thorfinn’s utopian futures outside of the narrative and within the pillow shot, moving us away from the fractured movement-image of Thorfinn’s act of pacifist resistance and closer to images of crystalline pauses in between the irresolvable actions amidst the ubiquity of war.

⁵¹² Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. by Mark Lester and ed. by Constantin V. Boundas (London: Continuum, 2004). p. 199. Hereafter *LS*.

Any-Worlds-Whatever: Looking to the Sky and Yearning for the Sea in the Pillow Shot

As the Farmland arc illustrates, both forms of the action-image are extended and combined so to break the unrestrained force of the movement-image. As action breaks, it is made false, inverted, and denaturalised so to reveal itself as a swarm of empty clichés and signifiers, juxtaposing elements of parody or critique. There is inherently a limitation to the action form and the making-false of action, as Deleuze reminds us at the end of *Cinema I*:

But, if everything is clichés and a plot to exchange and propagate them, the only result seems to be a cinema of parody or contempt [...] if images have become clichés, internally as well as externally, how can an Image be extracted from all these clichés, ‘just an image’, an autonomous mental image? An image *must* emerge from the set of clichés...With what politics and what consequences? What is an image which would not be a cliché? Where does the cliché end and the image begin? But, if the question has no immediate answer, it is precisely because the set of preceding characteristics do not constitute the new mental image which is being sought.⁵¹³

Deleuze anticipates the rise of the crystalline as the answer to the recursive eternal return of self-reflexively parodies and critiques of said action clichés. In *Vinland Saga*, the ruptured action form of the Farmland arc pits small-large form and social-classical realism against each other, produces a shattering of spacetime and history-memory in the manga. The gaps in between action and thought increase the tension between the organic and crystalline not only in the narrative or themes of the series, but also in the rise of a specific kind of crystalline image (any-space-whatever) that Noël Burch refers to as ‘the pillow shot’ in the manga.⁵¹⁴

Deborah Shamoon’s ground-breaking essay on gekiga and cinema, ‘Film on Paper: Cinematic Narrative in Gekiga’ expands on the cinematic history of gekiga to illustrate a schematic comparison between gekiga artists like Tatsumi Yoshihiro, Tezuka Osamu, Kazuo Koike and Gōseki Kojima and the postwar films of Kurosawa and Ozu. Drawing on an art

⁵¹³ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 238.

⁵¹⁴ For more on the pillow shot (especially the etymology of the phrase), see Noel Burch’s *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema*, ed. by Annette Michelson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). p. 160.

history that compares the innovations in postwar Japanese cinema with those in gekiga manga, Shamoon examines the limits of the action form in post-war gekiga manga and film by arguing that one of the distinguishing elements of gekiga style manga was the emergence of the pillow shot.⁵¹⁵ Shamoon defines this shot as:

a moment in which the camera cuts away from the main action to a static view of scenery, such as buildings, trees, or objects within a room. It is distinct from the establishing shot because it does not always occur at the beginning of a scene; it is also distinct from the insert or cutaway shot because it does not necessarily contain significant diegetic information. For instance, rather than fixing the location of the action, a pillow shot might depict generalized environmental details such as clouds, or multiple scenes around the same city. The purpose of the pillow shot is to set a mood rather than establish the location of the action or move the plot forward.⁵¹⁶

Shamoon associates this pillow shot with the dominance of the ‘aspect-to-aspect transition’, which Scott McCloud defines in his taxonomy of transitions in *Understanding Comics* as

an integral part of Japanese mainstream comics almost from the very beginning. Most often used to establish a mood or a sense of place, time seems to stand still in these quiet, contemplative combinations. Even sequence, while still an issue, seems far less important here than in other transitions.⁵¹⁷

It is important to note that while Shamoon agrees with Burch and McCloud’s taxonomy, she reminds us that their conclusions on the pillow shot are unfortunately orientalist, reducing the pillow shot to an empty ornamentation that can only be explained as a Zen hang-up of a long lost Shinto-Buddhist past: ‘Unfortunately, McCloud falls into the same kind of Orientalist essentializing as Burch, and mistakenly attributes the aspect-to-aspect transition to a legacy from classical Japanese art’.⁵¹⁸ As a way to recontextualise the importance of the pillow shot

⁵¹⁵ Deborah Shamoon, ‘Films on Paper: Cinematic Narrative in Gekiga’, p. 22.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, p. 79.

⁵¹⁸ Shamoon, p. 24.

outside of essentialist arguments about pseudo-Zen orientalist thought and its influences in Japanese cinematic culture, Shamoon focuses on the aesthetic innovations of both postwar filmmakers and gekiga artists, emphasising the ways in which action and duration are constantly in flux, opening up questions about existence, war, and time in postwar Japan.⁵¹⁹ It is in this context that Shamoon notes that the significance of the pillow shot in Japanese cinema emerged primarily in the historical mode of samurai cinema:

In *jidaigeki* (historical dramas), particularly *chanbara* (action featuring sword-fighting), the pillow shot often appears in moments of great emotional tension. It may seem counterproductive to a Western audience to cut away from the main character's face just as the scene is reaching a climax, but the pillow shot here serves to underscore the emotion of the moment.⁵²⁰

The post-war inheritors of the *jidaigeki* and *chanbara* style in manga and cinema not only framed the tension between binomial forces in duels with the pillow shot, but as Daisuke Miyao writes, these artists also used the pillow shot to enframe the existential terrors of endless cycles of bloodshed expressed in samurai theatre, poetry, and early cinema:

Samurai warriors need to resort to their swords, which embody their souls, to prove themselves, but they often suffer from the act of killing: an existentialist crisis. Some even decide to dump their swords – their identities – in order to deviate from the past.⁵²¹

Thus, *jidaigeki* and *chanbara* utilised the pillow shot to interrupt action and narrative, briefly examining the memory-images of the results of a war machine run amok. The rise of the pillow shot occurs at this moment amidst action and historical drama first: the question of killing transforms from an affective and ethical question into questions of existence and history-memory, and the thinking-image of the pillow shot forces contemplation to override

⁵¹⁹ Shamoon, p. 26.

⁵²⁰ Shamoon, p. 24.

⁵²¹ Daisuke Miyao, *The Aesthetics of Shadow*, p. 73.

action, and inherently produces a gap between the cycles of blood that expose the sights and sounds of History in the blood and screams of its victims.

While Shamoon does note that the importance of the pillow shot is that it provides numerous cinematic narrative styles to manga form, I would like to extend Shamoon's findings further in a Deleuzian context to argue that the increased reliance on the pillow shot and aspect-to-aspect transition in action manga reveals the latent emergence of the crystalline from the crisis of action. Deleuze also writes of the pillow shot, calling it a 'suspension of human presence, passage to the inanimate, but also reverse passage, pivot, emblem, contribution to the flatness of the image, pictorial composition'.⁵²² He also writes that the pillow shot captures pure optical (opsign) and sound (sonsign) situations, often of 'empty spaces, without characters or movement', usually framed as 'interiors emptied of their occupants, deserted exteriors or landscapes in nature' that accordingly reveal 'instances of pure contemplation, and immediately bring about the identity of the mental and the physical, the real and the imaginary, the subject and the object, the world and the I'.⁵²³ In specific contexts too, we might associate the pillow shot with Deleuze's *any-space-whatever*,⁵²⁴ which although was initially designated as a sign to the movement-image (in relation to the affection-image), urges toward the crystalline in specific nonhuman conditions, as Deamer writes:

such mappings have a certain fragility: in other conditions (set free from the movement-image) an any-space-whatever can become an opsign-sonsign, a pure optical and sound situation, a time-image, an actual on-screen de-differentiated visual and audio image. Without human centres to express affects there is a univocal coalescence of genetic forces: the coalescence of indeterminacy."⁵²⁵

⁵²² Deleuze, *C2*, Note 29, p. 294.

⁵²³ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 14.

⁵²⁴ Deleuze defines any-space-whatever as such: 'Space is no longer a particular determined space, it has become *any-space-whatever* [...] Any space whatever is not an abstract universal, in all times, in all places. It is a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways. It is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible. What in fact manifests the instability, the heterogeneity, the absence of link of such a place, is a richness in potentials or singularities which are, as it were, prior conditions of all actualization, all determination', *C1*, pp. 112-113.

⁵²⁵ Deamer, p. 197.

And yet, movement cannot be completely supplanted in relation to any-space-whatever. For Deamer, this nonhuman state of the any-space-whatever works in between the organic and crystalline regimes, signalling an attempt at ‘overcoming the affection-image (the compositions of the dividual and the icon) and the movement-image, and becoming a time-image’, which can only manifest itself by pitting two images against each other on one flattened plane: ‘the image of thought that arises through the sensory-motor system where recognition operate and affects are mapped as coherent states; and the image of thought that ungrounds such recognitions’.⁵²⁶ This is what the pillow shot in cinema and the aspect-to-aspect transition in comics reveals. The intermedial combination expressed in gekiga and later in otaku manga highlights how the pillow shot is a latent bubbling up of the crystalline which only appears in the gaps between movements (percepts, affects, or actions).

This bring us back to the way in which Yukimura uses the pillow shot generations removed from its gekiga’s formations, and in its otaku transformations. In *Vinland Saga*, Yukimura designs a substantial increase of aspect-to-aspect transitions take place after the crisis of action at the end of the first arc, placing the remaining two arcs in the current serialised triptych in asymmetrical relations to the false action of the war machine.⁵²⁷ Immediately, we begin to see more nonhuman panels infiltrate the action form, morphing the respiratory extensions and contractions of Kurosawa’s large form action-images into the amorphous spaces of Ozu, which manifest themselves as pillow shots of the sky and sea. These are the shots that – unlike their earthly variants of war-torn and timeworn landscapes linked to the affective icons of Canute, Askeladd, and Thorfinn – ‘are raised to the state of any-space-whatevers, whether by disconnection, or vacuity’.⁵²⁸ The pillow shot in gekiga functions as a metaphysical gaze that recircuits the sensory-motor situations of actions toward an optical-sound-tactile grid. Here we move from the Kurosawan crisis of action to the Ozuan emergence of time, which we can only experience as we move from the heroic and historical to the ordinary and unremarkable. This most obviously takes place in the narrative as Yukimura resituates ‘a set of power-qualities as actualised in a milieu’, as Deleuze writes, from the actions and affects of the battlefield to the everyday occurrences of slave life on a farm.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁶ Deamer, p. 198.

⁵²⁷ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 237.

⁵²⁸ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 16.

⁵²⁹ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 161.

The first few pillow shots take place early in the series associating Thorfinn and Canute with affection-images that signify their utopian visions. The first pillow shot occurs in the second chapter. After celebrating a successful raiding venture in the Frankish kingdoms, Thorfinn comes across a female slave. As the pair stand against the dark reaches of the ocean, the slave gazes beyond the empty expanse and muses: ‘If I ran, ran as far as I could. Ran across the sea...what would be there? If there was a land...beyond the horizon...a land without wars and without slaves. A land of peace’.⁵³⁰ After this page, two panels depict a medium shot of a snowy seascape in the top panel with a text bubble and a close-up of Thorfinn’s baleful eyes in the bottom panel. Within the text bubble across the empty dark ocean, it reads: ‘Somewhere...not here’.⁵³¹ Immediately we are introduced to Thorfinn’s philosophies of escape in this affection-image, and it leads to a flashback, (or an indirect time-image that relies on movement to tell time).⁵³² In another example, much later in the arc, Canute converts to Christianity after witnessing a horrific battle in which a fellow berserker named Bjorn loses his wits and nearly kills the prince with his bare hands. After soothing the warrior with a loving embrace, Bjorn dies, and Canute reflects on his world at war. As he speaks to Thorfinn and Askeladd, Canute’s resolve is set. Two pages illustrate a conversation about the brutalities of the pagan war machine. Canute learns that in order to overcome this, he must look to the heavens for answers. In this exchange, two pillow shots appear. The first is sandwiched between close-ups of Askeladd, Thorfinn, and Canute, depicting an aerial shot of idyllic farmland. Within this shot, shining skies, clear rivers and lakes, tilled earth, rolling hills, and patchy forests appear. There are two text bubbles that read: ‘I will create a utopia down here on earth. A peaceful...and prosperous one. A sanctuary for those that are alive, and yet, in turmoil’.⁵³³ After this full page, there are three more successive shots of Canute staring into the sky while proclaiming his divine justification for uniting the pagans under the banner of Christ throughout the North Sea. As the scene ends, Canute’s final pillow shot is depicted as one medium shot directed at a cross on top of a chapel in the foreground and an empty blue sky in the background. Between these two pillow shots, we learn to think through the nonhuman perspectives of the sea and the sky. And yet, those perspectives are linked to the humanistic intentions of both avatars of the Viking world-image: Thorfinn, the nomadic

⁵³⁰ Yukimura, *Vinland Saga* (Volume 8), p. 126.

⁵³¹ Yukimura, p. 127.

⁵³² Deleuze, *C2*, p. 21.

⁵³³ Yukimura, *Vinland Saga* (Volume 7), p. 242.

escape artist of yore, and Canute, the imperial Christian convert and divinely ordained despot. However, while these two pillow shots are introduced in relation to altering visions of the future, we do not see them as crystalline images. The affection-image inherently binds them, and relies on exposing more of the narrative and character motives through their juxtapositions between speech and action. Albeit these images cannot entirely be constituted as Ozuan pillow shots, for example. They do, however, urge us towards thinking beyond movement and into pure optical and sound situations after the crisis of action emerges at the end of the arc and throughout the entirety of the Farmland arc.



Figure 11

The pivotal moment that signals a move toward the logic of the pillow shots as any-space-whatever (or a crystalline pillow shot) occurs after the end of the first arc and just before we are dropped into the everyday of Ketil's farm. Yukimura opens the second half of the series in chapter fifty-five entitled 'Slave' with two panels of a dark stormy sky with an aspect-to-aspect transition. The first panel depicts a point-of-view shot pointing directly at the darkened sky. The spatial perspective is jarring and disorientating at first, but after viewing it in context with the second panel, this image simulates a viewer staring up at the rain as it falls. This panel depicts 'a space which is disconnected, purely optical, sound or even tactile', which becomes even more

impactful if we view the central text bubble as a water droplet falling into the eye of the viewer, just before it disperses.⁵³⁴ Within the bubble is a translation of stanza 50 from *Hávamál* ('Sayings of the high one'), an eddic poem collected in the thirteenth century Codex Regius manuscript that contains poetic musings from Odin: 'The fir trees standing on this

⁵³⁴ Deleuze, C2, p. 134.

sterile land withers away. Not even the bark nor leaves can protect them from that fate. It is the same for people, loved by no one. Why must we live such long lives?’⁵³⁵ As our eyes stand still on the panel, taking more time to contemplate the poetic verse, the spatial perspective of the sky, and the blurred vision of the droplet-bubble, we fall into the next panel depicting a medium shot of lightning breaking across the sky, accompanied by the kana onomatopoeia simulating the crackling sound of thunder and the rushing torrent (simulating a sonsign). The next page that follows is a traditional establishing long shot (as a splash page) of a ship in the middle of the storm, wrestling the churning waves as if in any Hokusai or Turner painting.

This page reveals the first critical dimension of the emergence of a new temporal image: the *crystalline description* of Thorfinn’s new Viking world-image. Deleuze writes that unlike organic description, which presents the setting ‘as independent of the description which the camera gives of it, and stands for a supposedly pre-existing reality’, crystalline description, rather, ‘stands for its object, replaces it, both create and erases it [...] and constantly gives way to other descriptions which contradict, displace, or modify the preceding ones’.⁵³⁶ This crystalline description is set into motion by the flattening of perspective which emphasises the tactility of the eye: we can feel the water hit our pupils as we stare into the pouring rain, and in this still moment, the text of the poem floats in the droplet-bubble, which at once supersedes and is subordinated by this gaze into the sky. Similarly, just as Deleuze writes that ‘Kurosawa is one of the greatest film-makers of rain’, so too can we argue that Yukimura inherits this gaze into the sky, using the framing of rain to – as Kurosawa does – alter the perspective, eventually producing ‘a flattened image, which brings out the constant lateral movements’, which exposes us to the naturalist, vitalist, and existentialist impulses of the crystalline arc.⁵³⁷

Unlike Kurosawa, Yukimura’s schematic of images deploys a world devoid of humans, pushing these pillow shots into any-space-whatever. In other words, we do not see the same cinematic rain so famously shot as in the final battle of *Seven Samurai* in this image, which we may see in Inoue’s *Vagabond*, for example. Instead, we are introduced to two shots

⁵³⁵ See the original: ‘Hrörnar þöll, / sú er stendr þorpi á, / hlýr-at henni börkr né barr; / svá er maðr, / sá er manngi ann. / Hvat skal hann lengi lifa?’ Compared to Carolyn Larrington’s translation, in *A Store of Common Sense: Gnostic Theme and Wisdom in Old Icelandic and Old English Wisdom Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 47: ‘The fir-tree withers which stands on the farm-stead, / neither bark nor needles protect it; / so it is with the man whom no one loves, / how should he live for long?’

⁵³⁶ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 131.

⁵³⁷ Deleuze, *C1*, p. 210.

that allow us to ‘experience time in its raw state’ as Deamer writes, which like the pillow shot’s literary cousin – the ‘empty verse’ in classical Japanese landscape poetry – exposes a nonhuman perspective of deep time and natural history.⁵³⁸ This is made more obvious with Yukimura’s focalisation of the Odinic landscape poem in the droplet-bubble, in which an omnipotent and omniscient Odin sorrowfully meditates on the greatest of all human plights: existential alienation. This is not described in human terms, however. Through the nonhuman perspective of the dying fir-tree and the pillow shot as any-space-whatever, we experience the metaphysical question posed by Yukimura in inhuman and vitalistic terms. Additionally, this text-image relation follows the Kurosawan condition, in which the poem resembles the voiceover or text expositions at the beginning of his films, mediating the pressing philosophical question through the images of cinematic weather and atmospheric change.⁵³⁹ These pillow shots bind together the Kurosawan question (mediated through weather and poetic exposition) with the banality of Ozu, in which ‘the action-image disappears in favour of the purely visual image’.⁵⁴⁰ Therefore, because of these reasons – (1) the simulation of a unique camera angle, (2) the blurred perspective, and (3) nonhuman descriptions – time flattens and spreads across a plane of consistency. Instead of experiencing time through the movement-image as a mere flashback, we experience it through the Deleuzo-Guattarian durations of ‘a season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date’, which allows the manga to express the intensities of ‘rain, hail, wind, pestilential air’ as ‘concrete individuations that have a status of their own and direct the metamorphosis of things and subjects’.⁵⁴¹ This pillow shot signals the emergence of a crystalline vision of any-space-whatever, which celebrates the banal temporality of the everyday as much as the sublime temporality of the earth, wind, and sea. While this is the first in many pillow shots in the second half of the series that sits alone without an accompanying human perception, we shall see how others throughout the second arc mutate and transform the action form in crisis into fractal fissures of crystalline thought.

As this crystalline pillow shot opens up to the shadowy Farmland arc with a poetic contemplation of an eternal struggle against enfeebled action, more philosophical pillow shots occur in relation to the extreme limits of the action form, especially at the very end of the arc.

⁵³⁸ Burch, pp. 160-1.

⁵³⁹ Kristi McKim, *Cinema as Weather: Stylistic Screens and Atmospheric Change* (London: Routledge, 2013). p. 129.

⁵⁴⁰ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 14.

⁵⁴¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 288.

Remembering the first instances of pseudo-pillow shots, Yukimura brings us back to the two altering visions of experiencing what I call ‘any-worlds-whatever’ outside of the war machine: one of the sky and one of the sea. Narratively, each one corresponds to previous recollection-images of young Canute and Thorfinn from the previous arc, in which they find their own solutions to the war machine. In a fated final exchange at the end of the Farmland arc, Canute looks to the sky again, chastising Thorfinn for his interference with his seizure of Ketil’s farm. On the two-page panel used for most pillow shots in the series, readers see a close-up of the sky, with a faded sun sitting behind clouds as if drifting off into the sunset. Expressed in three text bubbles, Canute’s vision for a Pauline kingdom of heaven on earth has shifted drastically from when he was an ambitious Christian convert. Through a Machiavellian conflation of political nihilism and Christianity indicative of theocratic warlords like Constantine or Charlemagne, the despot proclaims: ‘To build a paradise here on earth, is to go against his intended natural order. It is an insurrection against God’.⁵⁴² In the next panel Canute’s body is cast into imperceptible shadows (becoming-shadow) as he concludes: ‘Humans are not destined to be happy under his divine plans. Those who have lost their love are fated to suffer forever’.⁵⁴³



Figure 12

The remaining panels of the page distinctly hierarchise Canute’s position with the pillow shot. As Canute stands in the foreground of a medium shot in the next page, his stature overwhelms

⁵⁴² Yukimura, *Vinland Saga* (Volume 12), p. 391.

⁵⁴³ Yukimura, p. 392.

the sea and sky behind him. As he stands against this any-space-whatever, it mutates into a false pillow shot, fixed to striated hierarchies of divine and institutional order. Canute's philosophical and physical positioning becomes invasive, violently penetrative, and ontologically invasive.⁵⁴⁴ Rather than merely transitioning from aspect-to-aspect in order to set a mood or to decentre human perspectives, this shot centres on Canute's misappropriation of the gaze of transcendence, as Emmanuel Lévinas bemoans in *God, Death, and Time*:

The sky calls for a gaze other than that of a vision that is already an aiming and proceeds from need and to the pursuit of things. It calls for eyes purified of covetousness, a gaze other than that of the hunter with all his ruse, awaiting the capture. Thus the eyes turned toward the sky separate themselves in some fashion from the body in which they are implanted.⁵⁴⁵

Once more, even as the formal composition of these pillow shots stand in opposition to Canute's sovereign stand against the sea, Yukimura makes-false the ontological and philosophical project of this mad metaphysician. Canute, in an oddly comical ending to his speech, proclaims that he can make the waves stop moving on his command, empowered by God's grace. In yet another making-false of action clichés, the god-king is betrayed: in this attempt at stopping the sea in alternating close-ups of the sea and his face, nothing happens. No one on the beach says a word, and convinced by his own delusions, Canute continues onward with his maddened rant. In negation of this clearly humorous delusion, Yukimura does not make the scene funny: as the remaining characters on the beach look outward to the sea, we do not laugh, even in this absurd moment. Otaku readers – quite used to the mad sovereign cliché – are accustomed to this unsettling, terrifying, and tragic fall of a utopian thinker. And yet, in this moment, we feel the weight of this new world-image set in: the nomadic geographies of the Viking world-image are now enclosed, and this passing world has been re-envisioned by a despot who against all odds, overexposes the imperceptible cracks of Viking history-memory with his feverishly divine visions of purification. The nomadic becomes expunged, for in Canute's cosmology (like Askeladd's rant in a hellish Valhalla), 'the bringers

⁵⁴⁴ For more on ontological targeting, see Samuel Weber's *Targets of Opportunity: On the Militarization of Thinking* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005). pp. 1-21 and pp. 90-108.

⁵⁴⁵ Emmanuel Lévinas, *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). p. 163.

of chaos and destruction' must be kept out of paradise. Even the metaphysical becomes imperial, and can only be felt in this intense inversion of the pillow shot.

As Yukimura's eternal sky and sea pillow shots interrupt and make-false Canute's theocratic sovereign speeches, they also reveal the failure of any attempt at striating the most *sacred* – in a Levinasian sense – nonhuman images: the sky and the sea. As the vitalism and spirituality of the crystalline challenges Canute's ontological perspective, Yukimura inverts the gaze of transcendence in this final pillow shot of the sun setting on the Viking era. The arc does not end on a parody of Canute's gaze of transcendence, however. Rather, as Canute dips deeper into madness – curiously signified by the accompanying dream-image of his father's decapitated talking head that insists that the rebellious slaves must die – Thorfinn proclaims that rather than face Canute's State-appropriated war machine head on, that rather he wishes to run away. Canute scoffs, yet readers are made aware that as the mad king contends that his empire will be inescapable one day, Thorfinn remains committed to escaping, declaring once and for all to find 'a place untouched by [Canute's] authority,' and to create "a place for those who cannot live in the world".⁵⁴⁶ While the writing is clichéd and perhaps far too heroic in register, what is important, once again, is the way in which this pillow shot of the sea reoccurs at crystalline pauses: the camera obscura transforms our attention to a flattened tableau of sea and sky into one seascape that holds together the multitudes of affects and temporalities within a tensely bound network of possible routes away from Canute and his imperium. The nomadic gaze of multiple escapes in the sea sits in opposition to the striated heavens of Canute. Rather than functioning as a defiantly mutated action-image, this emergent crystal-image of the smooth sea and sky offers a new hope for not only the escape of our characters from a world at war, but an escape for our movement-images beyond the capture of the war machine into any-worlds-whatever.

⁵⁴⁶ Yukimura, *Vinland Saga* (Volume 12), p. 383.

Part II: The Anime Time Machine



This is a still from Anno Hideaki's controversial anime film *The End of Evangelion* (Gainax, 1997), which offers an intense, surreal, and horrifying alternative ending to his *mecha* anime television series, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, often regarded as the modern progenitor of otaku philosophies.

Chapter Four: The Rise of the Anime-Image and the Otaku Philosophies of Immanence

The Introduction and Part I introduced Deleuzian philosophies of affect and movement (and the limits of both) in an examination of manga as a post-historical abstract machine. In the manga machine, I specifically asked how manga in its gekiga form addressed questions about History in both a post-historical and transhistorical manner. By thinking through the cinematicism of the post-war gekiga movement in manga and its revivalist predecessors of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, Chapters Two and Three surveyed Miura's *Berserk* and Yukimura's *Vinland Saga* as nomadological interrogations of furious affects and movements of images. Both series approach nomadic memories by deterritorialising the logic of an imperial-historical milieu of feudal, premodern worlds at war. By challenging a localised, linear historiography, these series promulgate anachronism by conflating periods and historical analogies to articulate postmodern fears of overdevelopment. Furthermore, Miura and Yukimura assess moving histories (rather than sedentary histories) within in a mobile medium to formally and philosophically explore nomadic becomings of many sorts as alternatives to the grand narratives of a cohesive, global world history. The flattening of affects and movements onto the manga page also entailed a new way of thinking through the nomadological project of Miura and Yukimura. Themes of furious iconoclasm and enfeebling enclosure presented Miura with an option to translate these representations into inhuman becomings, abstract expressions of the ontology of berserking, a critical component to the nomadic war machine. On the other hand, Yukimura addresses the violent force of the movement-image, and continuously calls into question the ontologies of action-images in order to resist the temptations of the nomadic war machine that *Vinland Saga* views as not entirely revolutionary or iconoclastic. Rather, Yukimura presents an image of the nomadic war machine as always already appropriated by the State. In both manga series then, Miura and Yukimura approach Deleuzian themes of nomadology through the philosophies of intensity and movement, which as I have argued, align with the gekiga-otaku logic of *flattened ontologies* as explored in the Introduction.

However, while I purposefully present the manga machine as a text-image artefact that expressed counter-histories through an intermedial onto-aesthetics of becoming-nomad, there are emerging complications arising in relation to the distinctions between manga and anime as either still or moving images. It is for this reason that I chose manga series that are informed

by this intermedial bind, but also address the material limits of the manga machine, just like their gekiga forefathers. The material limitations might best be described as virtual simulations (rather than actual realisations) of an automatic relay and composition of moving images and sounds. Without a valued assessment of the effectiveness of a pictorial simulation or a cinematographic realisation of optical or sound situations, the differentiation is important to note on a philosophical level because it forces us to ask, ‘who is doing the thinking here: me or the machine?’

In fact, Deleuze makes a similar point, differentiating pictorial images and cinematographic images not by ontological or aesthetic specificity, but rather, by technological specificity. As a response to the shift from movement to time in new cinema, Deleuze offers up a specific technical and technological differentiation of cinema and still or sequential pictorial forms (from paintings to manga) that simulate movement, writing that

Those who first made and thought about cinema began from a simple idea: cinema as industrial art achieves self-movement, automatic movement, it makes movement the immediate given of the image. This kind of movement no longer depends on a moving body or an object which realizes it, nor on a spirit which reconstitutes it. It is the image which itself moves in itself. In this sense, therefore, it is neither figurative nor abstract. It could be said that this was already the case with all artistic images; and Eisenstein constantly analyses the paintings of Da Vinci and El Greco as if they were cinematographic images [...] But pictorial images are nevertheless immobile in themselves so that it is the mind which has to “make” movement.⁵⁴⁷

In this context then, if we follow Deleuze, we can see that the limitations of pictorial images are not interpretative or figurative in nature; rather, the limitations appear in the actualisation of movement in the material form. Additionally, the automatic nature of film is important not because it is inherently more authentic or real; it is because of the instantaneous and autonomous transmission of affect and thought to the viewer, as Deleuze explains:

⁵⁴⁷ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 161.

It is only when movement becomes automatic that the artistic essence of the image is realized: *producing a shock to thought, communicating vibrations to the cortex, touching the nervous and cerebral system directly*. Because of cinematographic image itself “makes” movement, because it makes what the other arts are restricted to demanding (or to saying), it brings together what is essential in the other arts; it inherits it, it is as it were the directions for use of the other images, it converts into potential what was only possibility.⁵⁴⁸

Even the most mobile and frenetic illustrations from *Berserk* or *Vinland Saga* are restricted by the spatial demarcations of frames and page layouts, and the transitions of action or aspect mediate meaning interpreted by the readers. Even the most shocking sound-images are mediated through language and text, and the placement and ornamentation of these kana within the frames determine the intensity and comprehension of onomatopoeias. It is because of this differentiation that the most cinematic manga cannot be called *automatic*, either as an abstract or technological machine that can articulate its own engagement with temporality. When we differentiate the manga machine to the cinema machine, we must assess how the mental force of automatic movement illuminates the physical limitations of manga and explores what Deleuze calls ‘the spiritual’, or crystalline, potentialities of cinema: ‘*Automatic movement* gives rise to a *spiritual automaton* in us, which reacts in turn on movement’.⁵⁴⁹

It is in this philosophical context that this section moves beyond the cinematographic elements of manga and its material limitations to assess how anime should be understood as a radicalised version of Deleuze’s vision of the spiritual automaton. Anime then, in the words of Deleuze,

no longer designates – as it does in classical philosophy – the logical or abstract possibility of formally deducing thoughts from each other, but the circuit into which they enter with the movement-image, the shared power of what the forces thinking and what thinks under the shock: a *nooshock*.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 161.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

A nooshock, for Deleuze, is a brain shock, an epistemological and ontological jolt that alters consciousness, perception, and expressive articulations, triggering mental transformations at a rapid speed and intense force. The limited nature of manga, no matter how experimental, cannot provide a nooshock in real-time that anticipates the crisis of the action-image entirely in an automated fashion. Anime, however, can do so. As we will see, anime technologically optimises the crisis of the action-image to produce nooshocks at the frequency of the gaps between each illustrated cel – what Lamarre calls ‘the animetic interval’ – which viewers experience through three distinct mechanisms unique to the anime machine.⁵⁵¹ The first articulates the dynamic spatiality of anime, primarily experienced through the movement of animation cels across a flattened surface, or what Lamarre designates as *the distributive field*, as described in Part I. The second enunciates the frenetic temporality of anime, experienced through furiously fast cuts that reveal the crystalline nature of optical and sound situations synchronised together. The mode simulates intense affective responses across the entire topographical landscape of what Lamarre calls the ‘soulful bodies’ of anime, which is experienced through a specific type of character design that optimises cel swapping and quick edits to therefore brings still-images of fictional characters into our lifeworld as automatons that think and feel on their own.⁵⁵²

A Media History of Japanese Animation and the Rise of the Anime-Image

To understand how the anime machine can morph into a time machine or a data machine, let us first start with Thomas Lamarre’s extensive media theory of Japanese animation from *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* to address the history and characteristics of anime. Unlike most histories of anime – from late twentieth-century Anglophone cultural

⁵⁵¹ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 18.

⁵⁵² Lamarre defines soulful bodies as a character design philosophy (similar to Azuma’s discourse on *moe* semiotics in *Otaku: Database Animals*) that optimises the affective and cognitive potency of the anime icon as a face, body, or fully formed character with personality and seeming autonomy: ‘Limited animation tends toward the production of “soulful bodies,” that is, bodies where spiritual, emotional, or psychological qualities appear inscribed on the surface. Limited animation encourages the leaping of bodies into and out of images, but only certain kinds of bodies are effective leapers’, p. 201.

anthropologist like Frederik Schodt,⁵⁵³ Susan Napier,⁵⁵⁴ and Ian Condry⁵⁵⁵ to Japanese postmodern pop artist Murakami Takashi,⁵⁵⁶ art historian Sawaragi Noi,⁵⁵⁷ Studio Ghibli co-founders Takahata Isao and Miyazaki Hayao⁵⁵⁸ and the otaku-turned-auteur Oshii Mamoru⁵⁵⁹ – Lamarre is not strictly informed by a cultural history of animation in Japan. It is not that Lamarre undermines cultural historical readings of anime, but that he prefers to complicate these readings through a media theory of anime, preferring to assess the ways in which ‘technological determination’ functions differently in comparison to ‘social, cultural, historical, and economic determination’.⁵⁶⁰ This is not to say that Lamarre avoids social, cultural, historical, or economic determinants. If we remember from Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic histories of the stirrup or metallurgy in nomadic cultures, to focalise on the aesthetic, material, and philosophical potency of machines allows us to produce new ontological topographies and epistemological archaeologies that interrogate how different forms of media technologies (from the plow to the Playstation) alter human perception and consciousness, à la Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Giedion, and Gilbert Simondon. Lamarre pointedly clarifies his position by writing that he is primarily

interested in what animation is, how it works, how it thinks – how it brings value into the world. Pragmatically speaking, this means an emphasis on technical determination, both material and immaterial, in order to broach questions about how the “spacing” of animation matters.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵³ Frederik Schodt, *Inside the Robot Kingdom: Japan, Mechatronics and the Coming Robotopia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990).

⁵⁵⁴ Susan J. Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl’s Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁵⁵⁵ Ian Condry, *The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan’s Media Success Story* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

⁵⁵⁶ Murakami Takashi, *The Octopus Eats Its Own Leg*, ed. and trans. by Madeleine Grynsztejn (New York: Rizzoli International, 2017).

⁵⁵⁷ Thomas Looser, ‘Superflat and the Layers of Image and History in 1990s Japan’, in *Mechademia: Emerging Worlds of Anime and Manga (Vol. 1)*, ed. by Frenchy Lunning (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 95.

⁵⁵⁸ Shiro Yoshioka, ‘Heart of Japaneseness: History and Nostalgia in Hayao Miyazaki’s *Spirited Away*’, in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, ed. by Mark W. MacWilliams (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 256-273.

⁵⁵⁹ Brian Ruh, *Stray Dog of Anime: The Films of Mamoru Oshii* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁵⁶⁰ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. xxvii.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

Similar approaches to tech, art, and perception have been articulated, ranging from Okada Toshio's examination of the VCR with the rise of otaku fan activities (and philosophies),⁵⁶² Samuel Edgerton's reading of Yamaha motorcycle assembly diagrams and its aesthetic relationship to an 'exploded' geometric perspectives in postwar art,⁵⁶³ Azuma Hiroki's investigation into database infrastructures and otaku fan activities,⁵⁶⁴ to Yuriko Furuhashi's analysis of avant-garde cinema in relation to the advent of television⁵⁶⁵ as well as the Xerox machine,⁵⁶⁶ and Daisuke Miyao's Marxian reading of Tokyo night life and lighting technologies in early Japanese cinema.⁵⁶⁷

The best place to start for any material history of anime is the introduction and innovation of the animation stand. The animation stand was a device with four flat layers of illustration cels stacked on top of each other, invented by a former Disney founder Ub Iwerks in 1933. As the animator sat over the planes, a stationary camera would rest horizontally next to the cels; as each motion would be traced or drawn, the camera would photograph each to produce a frame-by-frame composition. Each one of the planes had pegs on the left and right side so the animator could slide the illustrations from left to right. In quick succession, the horizontal play between each layer produced the illusion of a moving character in a foreground and across a background. Simultaneously in Japan, as Lamarre reminds us, animator Kimura Hakusan was 'working with the same basic machine, which channels the force of the moving image into an animetic interval, thus encouraging animators to think of animation (drawing, coloring, layering) in terms of the movement that would arise between layers'.⁵⁶⁸ Furthermore, in the 1930s, the internationally acclaimed animator Ōfuji Noburō moved away from traditional cut-paper animations that drew similarities to *kamishibai* ('paper theatre'),⁵⁶⁹ and 'gradually started to play with the movement between different layers of the

⁵⁶² Lamarre, p. 144.

⁵⁶³ Samuel Edgerton, *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry: Art and Science on the Eve of the Scientific Revolution*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁵⁶⁴ Azuma, *Otaku*, p. 76.

⁵⁶⁵ Yuriko Furuhashi, 'Hijacking Television: News and Militant Cinema' in *Cinema of Actuality: Japanese Avant-Garde Filmmaking in the Season of Image Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013). pp. 149-182.

⁵⁶⁶ Yuriko Furuhashi, 'Animating Copies: Japanese Graphic Design, the Xerox Machine, and Walter Benjamin' in *Animating Film Theory*, ed. by Karen Beckman. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). pp. 181-200.

⁵⁶⁷ Miyao, *Aesthetics of Shadow*, p. 14.

⁵⁶⁸ Lamarre, p. 23

⁵⁶⁹ For more on *kamishibai* and its history, see Eric P. Nash's *Manga Kamishibai: The Art of Japanese Paper Theatre*. (New York: Abrams Comicarts, 2009). p. 57.

film, sometimes using semi-transparent paper elements that raised the play of movement between layers to a new level of intensity'.⁵⁷⁰ Lamarre concludes that

by the 1930s, Japanese animators, like those in other countries, had begun to use celluloid sheets and to experiment with stacking and layering them in stands, and thus to work with something akin to multiplane photography. This explains why the multiplane camera quickly proved amenable to Japanese animators after its introduction to Japan.⁵⁷¹

The multiplane camera was an innovation of the animation stand made by William Garity from Walt Disney Studios, transforming the compact individual animation stand into a massive industrial animation machine. Patented in 1937, the multiplane camera added three more planes (to accommodate seven total planes), and each plane was a window-sized glass slab decorated with oil artwork.⁵⁷² The machine was considerably larger with four to five technicians working the machine at once including the camera operator, and the camera itself was set vertically and was moveable. Because of these innovations, Disney sought to produce a more realistic sense of three-dimensional depth in between foregrounds and backgrounds, as illustrated in 'The Old Mill' and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* both released in 1937. The first time the multiplane camera was used in Japanese animation was in Seo Mitsuyo's 1941 release of *Ari-chan*, which emphasised 'photographic depth of field rather than on movement into depth'.⁵⁷³

Nevertheless, early Japanese animation stands provided the means for postwar animators to play with the gaps between layers rather than merely mimic Walt Disney's desire to transform two-dimensional animation into three-dimensional cinema. While postwar animators like Ōtsuka Yasuo, Takahata Isao, and Miyazaki Hayao were clearly influenced by Disney's serialised animations, all three found alternative ways of working through movement differently at Tōei Dōga ('Toei Animation') between 1961 and 1971. Lamarre recounts how

⁵⁷⁰ Lamarre, p. 23.

⁵⁷¹ Lamarre, p. 24.

⁵⁷² To understand its application in more specific and visual terms, see 'Walt Disney's MultiPlane Camera (Film: Feb. 13, 1957)', a Disney industry-only commercial that explains the technological innovations at Disney Studios: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdHTIUGN1zw> [Accessed 4 June 2015].

⁵⁷³ Lamarre, p. 30.

the three contributed to producing the first proto-Ghibli film *Prince of the Sun: Hols's Great Adventure* mentioned earlier in Part I. In the film, the three founders of Ghibli put their expertise to work. Miyazaki oversaw character and planar movement, Takahata directed camera movement and edited scenes, and Ōtsuka designed scenes and characters.⁵⁷⁴ The three distinguished this film from the rest of their work at Tōei as *manga-eiga* (manga film), which as Lamarre writes,

signal[ed] something like *telebi anime* or television animation. Miyazaki himself worked on animated series for television, but even in that work he now claims that he strove to produce something like manga films [...] Miyazaki poses as a contrast between the manga film versus the action film/anime. In effect, Miyazaki sees in both anime and action films a ballistic optics of cinematism, and his manga-film techniques of animetism are designed to challenge and to offer alternatives to that cinematism.⁵⁷⁵

This is an important moment in Japanese animation, primarily because Miyazaki's attempt to distinguish the difference between manga film and anime is not merely an aesthetic split, but rather, a philosophical rupture. Miyazaki's *manga eiga* stood in opposition to *anime* not only because he viewed limited animation an inferior art form, but specifically because anime challenged the vision of cinema. In this way, Miyazaki and other animation auteurs (not unlike Disney's opposition to Hanna-Barbera in the U.S.) divided Japanese animation into two formulistic categories: full animation (manga film) and limited animation (anime). This aesthetic split established Studio Ghibli's own cold war against anime and otaku culture, which in turn signalled the rise of avant-gardist anime studios like Gainax in the 1980s.

To clarify, full animation primarily refers to an animation style that mimics cinematic projection rates between eighteen and twenty-four frames per second, allowing twelve drawings per frame.⁵⁷⁶ As Lamarre explains,

[t]his is called "on twos" because you use a drawing for two frames. Faster movements may require "on ones", or a drawing for each of the 24 frames per second. The Disney

⁵⁷⁴ Lamarre, p. 56.

⁵⁷⁵ Lamarre, p. 43.

⁵⁷⁶ Lamarre, p. 187

average was eighteen drawings per second. The full animations of Tōei are generally described as “on twos.”⁵⁷⁷

Importantly, when we think of fully animated shorts or features, working on twos allowed animators to copy film footage of moving actors, trace their drawings on key movement frames to establish the moving sequence (i.e. a boy swinging a baseball bat from stance, load, stride, swing, and follow through), which then produces seamlessly fluid movements of characters. Limited animation, rather, relies ‘on threes’, which means there are either drawings per frame, literally limiting the animation movements of characters.⁵⁷⁸ While Miyazaki was an intern at Tōei, Tezuka Osamu – the father of Japanese manga and limited animation – founded Mushi Pro in 1961 to adapt his manga series *Tetsuwan Atomu* (‘Astro Boy’) into television anime. However, unlike the Ghibli founders, Tezuka did not have the resources to produce a fully animated Disneyesque series:

To sell the project to Fuji Television, he presented such a low budget that no one really thought he could pull it off. He proposed to make thirty-minute programs at roughly one third the expected budget (at approximately ¥500,000 each).⁵⁷⁹

Just like the rise of cheap and quickly produced gekiga manga, Tezuka’s approach to limited animation links together technological and economic limitations to aesthetic innovation. Tezuka’s experimentation with limited animation allowed Japanese animation to move beyond the naturalistic details of background drawings or photographic-realistic characters. Instead, Tezuka and others spent more time designing iconic characters that could leap from frame to frame, from medium to medium – manga to anime to game. As Lamarre asserts,

Limited animation is not seen as a different way of animating, of generating movement, but as an absence of movement, a lack of animation, as a series of static images. Legendary animator Ōtsuka Yasuo captures this bias succinctly when he characterizes full animation in terms of *ugoki-e* – ‘dynamic image,’ ‘moving drawing,’

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

or ‘movement-image.’ In contrast, he suggests, limited animation entails *tome-e* – ‘static image,’ ‘stopped drawing,’ or ‘still-image.’ This way of parsing animation carries the implication that, because limited animation does not strive to produce movement in the manner of full animation, it may not be animation at all. Limited animation might be closer to graphic design or manga than to animation (defined as full animation).⁵⁸⁰

The aesthetic distinctions between manga and anime – of still and moving images – were complicated in the development of limited animation. While anime is limited by eight drawings per second, early animators like Tezuka Osamu and Ōtsuka Yasuo had to find ways to experiment with movement in technical and aesthetic means that flattened depth to therefore distribute movement across transversal coordinates, sped up editing processes through quick cuts, and expressed emotional, psychological, and philosophical concepts on the surface of the iconic faces and bodies of the characters. Instead of relying on organic, cinematic character movement, anime artists sought to push the movement-image to its material limit.

The Cinematic and Animetic Systems of Closed and Open Composites

At the heart of this experimentation is the dynamism of ‘compositing’, or the process of sliding or stacking layers and planes which produces sensations of movement, speed, and depth.⁵⁸¹ According to Lamarre, there are two types of compositing techniques in modern animation: closed and open. Closed compositing is a cinematic technique adopted by animators like Walt Disney who sought to produce a sense of continuity and compositional seamlessness by eliminating the animetic interval between planes. This limits movement of the planes and focalises movement on the camera position and the fluid motions of character movement. Specifically, as Lamarre writes, the idea of closed compositing ‘is to close the gaps within the image and between images even as the viewing position changes, which

⁵⁸⁰ Lamarre, pp. 184-5

⁵⁸¹ Lamarre, p. xxiv.

produces an apparently consistent world (consistent geometrically and volumetrically)'.⁵⁸² Closed compositing is a technique that strives for cinematicism.

Open compositing, indicative of the work of Studio Ghibli, 'plays with the layering of elements within the image and with the movement between layers' which reveals a gap and interval between each plane.⁵⁸³ This alters our perception of movement, by which viewers become aware of the differential speeds between still and moving images as if sitting on an immobile train next to a moving train. As Lamarre writes, when watching open compositing at work, we awaken to

a sense of the sliding of layers of the image [...] Everything potentially floats and slides away, ungrounded. [The] goal, however, is not weightlessness or complete openness. Rather the goal is to articulate a new relation between body (character animation) and world (open multiplanarity), which is grounded and rooted, related to earthly and earthy existence.⁵⁸⁴

It is no wonder that Miyazaki's greatest filmic triumphs are films explore themes and experiences of flight like *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (Studio Ghibli, 1984) and *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (Studio Ghibli, 1986). The openness of character movement and the lifeworld itself resists the rigid hierarchised planar machine of Disney as much as it challenges 'the technical optimization of perception, namely, the ballistic logistics inherent in cinematism', whisking us away in between the sliding layers, between the lushly painted backgrounds of his natural worlds and his elegantly articulated character bodies in movement.⁵⁸⁵

It is important to note that Lamarre's reading of closed and open compositing resembles Deleuze's taxonomy of frames that he introduces at the beginning of *Cinema I*, which is yet another departure point for investigating the transformations of the organic regime of movement and the crystalline regime of time in animation. Specifically, Deleuze argues that framing (like compositing) concerns the 'information' that appears in a geometric

⁵⁸² Lamarre, p. 32.

⁵⁸³ Lamarre, p. 36.

⁵⁸⁴ Lamarre, p. 74

⁵⁸⁵ Lamarre, p. 138.

world and volumetric space, and can be determined by a ‘saturation’ or ‘rarefaction’ of visual or auditory objects,⁵⁸⁶ by the very limits of the geometrical space in question,⁵⁸⁷ or through the angle of the frame.⁵⁸⁸ In limited animation, there is information that is often missing in a frame, and for Deleuze, this absence of ontological objects is not the same as a ‘negation’ of information, but rather a strategic art of playing with the gaps of information within frames, which he refers to as an ‘out-of-field’ experience.⁵⁸⁹ Deleuze explains: ‘The out-of-field refers to what is neither seen nor understood, but is nevertheless perfectly present’.⁵⁹⁰ Deleuze argues that the framing of sensory-motor information constitutes the first mode of communication and composition for the cinema machine. Therefore, to experience the persistently unseeable or incomprehensible presence of a sensation is to then negotiate with the hidden or found gaps and intervals of the framed or unframed fields of perception. To strive for continuity, framing in cinema produces what Deleuze calls a ‘closed system’, which like closed composition, is more like ‘a thread to link the glass of sugared water to the solar system, and any set whatever to a larger set’,⁵⁹¹ which attempts to produce ‘a larger homogenous set with which it communicates’.⁵⁹² The other side of this out-of-field framing (or composition) ‘does not exist outside the frame, but rather [...] “insists” or “subsists” within the frame’, as David Deamer writes.⁵⁹³ Like open compositing that internally edits and moves through the disparate parts and the gaps between layers, Deleuze’s secondary ‘aspect of the out-of-field opens up not to what is to the right, left, above, below, behind and out of view in front of the camera’, but rather to ‘the virtual’ components of the totalised whole that bubble up beneath the surface.⁵⁹⁴ Deleuze concludes on the open system of the out-of-field here, writing: ‘Thus the whole is the open, and relates back to time and even spirit rather than to content and to space’.⁵⁹⁵ Closed compositing (and closed systems of cinematic continuity) urges toward the organic regime of the movement-image, and vice-versa, open compositing

⁵⁸⁶ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 16.

⁵⁸⁷ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 17.

⁵⁸⁸ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 18.

⁵⁸⁹ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 19.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 20.

⁵⁹² Deleuze, *CI*, p. 19.

⁵⁹³ Deamer, *Deleuze’s Cinema Books*, p. 164.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 20.

gives rise to the crystalline regime of the time-image. However, Deleuze reminds us as with all things, there is no such thing as a pure or fully actualised system, closed or open:

A closed system is never absolutely closed; but on the one hand it is connected in space to other systems by a more or less ‘fine’ thread, and on the other hand it is integrated or reintegrated into a whole which transmits a duration to it along this thread.⁵⁹⁶

Along these vectors and threads of disparate parts, the conflict between the movement-image and time-image is ever present and always persistent, where images oscillate between philosophising spatialisation and temporalisation, between actualisation and virtualisation.

Unlike the cinematically composed full animation that relies on opening and closing the gaps between multiple planes, limited animation relies on a ‘flat compositing’ technique that brings the intervals to the surface of the image.⁵⁹⁷ This is Lamarre’s primary example of how anime produces ‘movement in a very different way [from full animation], one whose dynamism opens the image in very different directions’.⁵⁹⁸ The flattening properties of limited animation was first introduced in Part I, whereby I briefly discussed the superflat in relation to the Deleuzian fold and transversal nature of gekiga manga. This introduction of superflat theory resulted in a synthesis of Deborah Shamoon, Thomas Lamarre, and Mark Donoghue’s transversal aesthetic histories of manga, anime, and Edo period prints/woodcuts. This synthesis established the precedent for thinking through manga and anime as superflat aesthetic projects that are in and outside of Edo/baroque transitional aesthetic experiences as well as exemplars for postmodern Japanese contemporary art, as witnessed in Murakami Takashi’s *Superflat* exhibit (2000, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles)⁵⁹⁹ and Tabaimo’s *Japanese Commuter Train* installation (2001, Yokohama Triennale).⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁷ Lamarre, p. 126.

⁵⁹⁸ Lamarre, p. 191.

⁵⁹⁹ Lamarre, p. 111.

⁶⁰⁰ Lamarre, p. 105.



Figure 13

Returning to this theoretical framework, works of art like Murakami's *Superflat* (as illustrated above) highlights the dynamism of anime aesthetics, which seemingly generates movement of still images that exploding across planes of multiplicity. Lamarre articulates the onto-aesthetics of limited animation and superflat:

this world of relative movement without any interest in absolute depth – can imply a yearning to experience and recover a sense of integration; such yearning courses through the distributive field associated with technologies of information and communication that are commonly characterized as ‘flat.’ As a structure, the exploded view can impart a material limit to the in-folding of expressive machines and the out-folding of divergent series. The question of technical optimization of flatness or planarity in anime thus becomes one of whether structures of exploded projection completely capture or harness this other potentiality of the moving image, or whether there can be truly divergent series within anime and zones of autonomy in animation production.⁶⁰¹

⁶⁰¹ Lamarre, p. 143.

In a Deleuzian register, we might say that limited animation exposes the crisis of action in animation, primarily because it mobilises still-images at an insurmountably fast and frenetic pace, pushing the boundaries of what a movement-image is when character animation or camera movement is shunted in between the gaps of the anime (or superplanar) machine, revealing images out of actions but constantly in flux.

Flat compositing is a highly-optimised version of open compositing on a flattened surface. In producing what Lamarre refers to as a *distributive field* across which the force of the movement-image is dispersed, one-point perspective is disabled, and the three-dimensional urge of the cinematic camera obscura is enfeebled. Lamarre elaborates, writing that

there is a tendency for the viewing position of the “camera” to slide over the image (even if this is produced by sliding the image instead of moving the camera), and its speed and direction impart a sense of movement.⁶⁰²

Instead of organising and hierarchising panels for hiding gaps to produce an illusion of cinematic depth into between foreground and background, flat compositing becomes panoramic, in which the viewing position of the camera slides across the entire image, dispersing the force of the moving image across multiple lines of flight.

Superflat Transformations: The Animetic Immanence of Sliding, Cutting, and Leaping

The onto-aesthetics of immanence in anime can be examined formally as a rhizomatic stacking and weaving of limited animation techniques. The combination of flat composition, rapid edits, and soulful character design highlights how anime functions as a wildly different machine from traditional cel animation, making films like *Pokémon: The First Movie* (OLM, 1999), for example, seem more like a superflat substitute to *Princess Mononoke* (Studio Ghibli, 1999). These combinations of stacking animetic elements produce what I call *the Daicon Effect*, named after the fan-made anime films *Daicon III* and *Daicon IV*, which we will analyse soon as the philosophical progenitors of anime philosophy.

⁶⁰² Lamarre, p. 191.

Let us start with the first expression of animetic immanence: the panoramic flattening of depth and the sliding of cels. Following superflat theories of enfoldment, Lamarre describes an iconic moment in Gainax's *Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water* (1989-1990), in which a little girl named Marie and her pet lion cub named King are wandering across a train track:

As they walk happily down the tracks, we see their movement laterally [...] Pulling the foreground layer of grass backward creates the sense that the characters are moving forward. The background layer of clouds moves backward too, but only slightly. Yet the little girl's layer does not move, and for the most part, her body does not move.⁶⁰³

This panoramic effect is effectively used in more recent series like *Blue Exorcist* (A-1 Pictures, 2011), where the protagonist Okumura Rin appears in the first opening video of the series running late to exorcist school. On his way, he races down hallways and alleyways, up and over street railings and bridges, and between other planes of the urban surface. As his character movement slows down, a shot of Rin appears, depicting him sauntering slowly in the foreground against the background of a pulled illustrated cel of an elevated railway and stations, his towering magic school, and a blue sky, all of which is flattened together in this medium shot. The next scene fades into to a close-up of Rin's forlorn face against the backdrop of the blue sky, which becomes interrupted by an inclusion of shadowy images walking slowly between the foreground and background. As the shades of everyday people – mothers, children, students, and salarymen – walk through and behind Rin, we experience the multiplanar pulling of foreground and background cels at once, simulating relative movement across a plane of faceless hustling and bustling city-dwellers.

A similar effect is used in the video game *Persona 5* (Atlus, 2017) when our protagonists travel across Tokyo by train. Instead of using a standard fade, cut, or wipe between travel destinations (Shibuya to Shinjuku, for example), we see numerous individually illustrated images of mute, faceless, and grey commuters flow and slide between each other from one edge of the frame to the other, hustling into the crowded train that your characters traverse. Drawing from a complex lineage from the floating world of Edo scroll paintings⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰³ Lamarre, p. 193.

⁶⁰⁴ For more on *ukiyo-e* and *kiboyoshi* in relation to manga, see Adam J. Kern's *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006). p. 33.

and the paper theatres of *kamishibai* to the speeding realm of 2-D side-scrolling video games like *Super Mario Bros* (Nintendo, 1985) or *Sonic the Hedgehog* (Sega, 1991),⁶⁰⁵ the implementation of limited animation's flattened perspective in *Persona 5* 'is closer to an art of describing, unfolding, or scanning the world' rather than the theatrical-cinematic art of maneuvering, mobilising, or manipulating bodies like mere marionettes on display.⁶⁰⁶ This flattening is a poignant aesthetic articulation of automatic acceleration and what Lamarre refers to as *otaku movement*, which was mentioned in the Introduction. *Persona 5*'s deployment of otaku movement deftly illustrates the way in which otaku-artists use the anime machine and its assemblages as a conduit in violently pushing movement into spatial, temporal, and ontological crisis through the rhythmic, machinic flow of cel-swaps. This exchange exposes its link to rising technological and informatics culture in the 1980s.⁶⁰⁷

Within the flat compositing of anime, various editing techniques are used too, subsequently overloading viewers with euphoric and bewildering cuts, which in turn, exposes the automated nature of accelerated temporalities. This is the second element of animetic immanence: quick cuts. While watching anime, it is clear to any viewer that instead of interjecting action with montage, we often witness a flurry of rapid cuts synchronise with any auditory cues, like a voice-over or beats of a techno track.⁶⁰⁸ In most magical girl series – like *Sailor Moon* (Tōei, 1992-1997), *Cardcaptor Sakura* (Madhouse, 1998-2000), *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* (Shaft, 2011), and *Kill la Kill* (Trigger, 2013-2014) – this synchronistic form of cutting most expressively used during sequences that Anne Allison refers to as the “money shot.”⁶⁰⁹ Allison defines this as the moment when all action is halted, and narrative is interrupted for the sake of displaying an elaborately ornate sequence where the camera tracks each piece of attire that is lost and gained, depicting a whirlwind of close-up shots of each body part that is either enhanced or replaced. As each heroine transforms and upgrades into a more powerful form with the help of spiritual or technological commodities (magical vestments, cards, or gems), we are bombarded by these sensual yet supersonic quick cuts alongside a rapidly speeding pop theme song that only kicks in during these transformation

⁶⁰⁵ See Henry Jenkins on scrolling art and video games in his essay ‘Game Design as Narrative Architecture’ in *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, ed. by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004). p. 122.

⁶⁰⁶ Lamarre, p. 193.

⁶⁰⁷ Lamarre, p. 191.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, p. 107.

sequences. The result is an explosion of vectoralised lines of vibrant colours and astral or floral patterns that interrupt, suspend, and displace the movement of the previous scenes onto the bodies in transformation.

The art of quick cutting techniques takes precedent over montage not only because it is cheaper, quicker, or more efficient, but because it reveals the fits and starts of the anime-image's play with the temporalisation of space and the emergence of the crystalline. Lamarre similarly argues that this dynamic spatio-temporal experience of cutting can reveal the slippage of planes to the viewer in playful ways: 'Hyperlimited animation results in rhythms that are as exhilarating and hilarious as anything in full animation, precisely because we become aware of skips and jumps internal to character movement'.⁶¹⁰ Moreover, these rapid cutting techniques redirect the character movements away from a fluid moving body, and redistributes the force of the movement-image back into the animation stand or the digital software that simulates an animation stand. Here then, we feel the cybernetic pull of the anime machine as it upends the movement-image with optimised editing techniques, stringing together a flurry of individual shot-reverse-shots or close-ups into a visually stunning tableau of speeding temporalities. This become ever so exhilarating when quick cutting internalises the force of the movement-image by reframing panels on top or inside of each other, in what might be referred to as split-screen reaction shots. In popular shōnen anime series like *Dragonball Z* (1989-1996), *Pokémon* (OLM, 1997 –), and *One Piece* (Tōei, 1999 –) often within the confines of intense arena duels and cosmic battles, split-screen reactions take place to visually guide the chaos of affection-images that

pop abruptly on and off the screen, or heads poke into a scene, or screens suddenly split into two, three, four, or more planes. Usually the planes are articulated diagonally to emphasize a field of multiple actions, and there occurs angular slipping of planes of actions with sudden and sometimes incongruous apparitions.⁶¹¹

The movements of the actors in play – whether it be a leaping pugilist, a speeding electric mouse, or a flying pirate ship – are not the focal point in anime; rather, these popular shōnen series accelerate the tempo and intensity of movement-images through rapid cuts, rendering

⁶¹⁰ Lamarre, p. 194.

⁶¹¹ Lamarre, pp. 194-5.

the realistically choreographed battles as mere backdrops to the automated and instantaneous force of the cut.

Furthermore, as these quick cuts sever movement from an anchored sense of linear continuity or camera focalisation (and thus solid perception), character design displaces the force of the movement-image across vibrantly illustrated bodies and faces, as it works hand in hand with editing in *Daicon IV*'s opening. Lamarre explains:

As limited animation produces the crisis of the coordinating action-image of classic animation, the resulting emphasis on character design generates soulful bodies, bodies designed to embody the potentiality of the moving image and thus to make the leap from field to field. These are time images that stick very close to the negative conditions for their production. Thus they show an affinity for the new soulful corporation (such as Gainax) that incorporates the hearts and souls of fans into its productions.⁶¹²

In this context, the anime-image combines the cinematic aura of stardom⁶¹³ with the industrial design rule of memorability over all else⁶¹⁴ to pull the image out of the screen into our lifeworld as a persona that can at once emblematised everything and nothing, perhaps like a cybernetic homunculus. Lamarre affirms this by noting that 'as limited animation deemphasized full animation of characters, it increasingly stressed character design, and the degree of detail and the density of information became as important as line, implied depth, and implied mass'.⁶¹⁵ Therefore, anime figures flood our memories by nature of drawing their desires and intensities out on the surface, signified by their large eyes, colourful hair colours, and emblematic attire, as Lamarre writes: 'The movement of the soul or brain or psyche – feeling, thinking, discerning – is written on the surface of the character. This is how character design in limited animation captures and directs the force of the moving image surfacing as potentiality'.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹² Lamarre, p. 202.

⁶¹³ Christine Gledhill, *Stardom: Industry of Desire* (London: Routledge, 2005). p. 1.

⁶¹⁴ Steven Heller, *Design Literacy: Understanding Graphic Design* (New York: Allworth Press, 2004). p. 345.

⁶¹⁵ Lamarre, p. 204.

⁶¹⁶ Lamarre, p. 203.

This crystalline potentiality of movement can be seen specifically in the iconic vibrating eyes of anime characters, as Philip Brophy argues:

Frame analysis reveals that in these intense moments the white of the character's eyes (and sometimes the pupil shine) minutely vibrates between two almost identical positions, generating the effect in real-time of the eyes becoming slightly moist and reflecting light as facial muscular contractions hold back an emotional outpouring."⁶¹⁷

In a Deleuzian context, we could simply assign the vibrating eyes to the movement-image's potent affection-image, by which faciality and ocularity strike at the viewer's viscera, unearthing wandering desires and terrors, as we covered in Chapter One and Two. However, through a mixture of traditional cel animation and CGI, the vibration reveals the rushing temporal flow and crystalline ruptures that the animetic interval ushers forth on the screen. In these examples, limited animation can be read as a machinic circuit for superflat transformations, not surprisingly like the mecha powered suit from *Mobile Suit Gundam* (Nippon Sunrise, 1979), *Macross* (Studio Nue, 1982), and the transforming robot toys of the *Transformers* (1984) franchise as Lamarre writes:

the powered suit is truly an embodiment of the multiplanar image within a character form. The design of powered suits, tactical armor, mecha, and transformers follows from their use within the multiplanar world. The angular elements of powered suits lock into place, unlock, and relock like so many planes of an image, open to kaleidoscopic reconfigurations.⁶¹⁸

Like these cybernetic mobile suits, the anime machine is a technological exemplar of vectoral enfoldment, articulating change, metamorphosis, difference, mutation, flux, and transformation through the mechanical and aesthetic optimisation of moving parts (still-images) along flattened surfaces, ushering forth an automated flow of the crystalline.

⁶¹⁷ Philip Brophy, 'Ocular Excess: A Semiotic Morphology of Cartoon Eyes', in *Art and Design* 12 (March 1997): 32.

⁶¹⁸ Lamarre, p. 129

‘The Daicon Effect’ and the Rise of the Crystalline Otaku World-Image

At the heart of this discourse of technological enfoldment and the optimisation of flattening is the anti-Ghibli otaku renegade studio, Gainax. The early founders of Gainax – Hideaki Anno, Yamaga Hiroyuki, Okada Toshio, Sadamoto Yoshiyuki, Takeda Yasuhiro, Akai Takami, and Higuchi Shinji – produced two fan-made films, *Daicon III* and *Daicon IV*, for the Nihon SF Taikai (‘Japan Sci-Fi Convention’) in 1981 and 1983. Both films were entered in a short film contest, first animating *Daicon III* in 1981, which depicted a young anime girl named Bunny traversing a world of mecha robots and cyborgs at high speeds, equipped with a rocket launcher and dressed in a traditional Japanese school girl outfit. In 1983, Anno and his team made a sequel to their short film – *Daicon IV: The Opening* – which shows Bunny all grown up, dressed in a revealing red Playboy bunny outfit, ready to fight more sci-fi characters from films like *Godzilla*, *Alien*, *Star Wars: The Return of the Jedi*, as well as traverse the entire universes of American superhero comics and Japanese manga series.⁶¹⁹

At the opening of *Daicon IV*, we are introduced to the iconic prologue to the English progressive rock band Electric Light Orchestra’s 1981 sci-fi concept album called *Time*. The ambient space-age sounds of ‘Prologue’ match with the unique animation background that makes us feel like we are cruising through the stars of a galaxy in a three-dimensional space. As this pure optical and sound situation unfolds, a prophetic cyborg voice speaks in English:

Just on the border of your waking mind / There lies... Another time / Where darkness
and light are one / And as you tread the halls of sanity / You feel so glad to be / Unable
to go beyond / I have a message / From another time...⁶²⁰

As the lyrics scrawl across the screen, a translucent giant daikon radish spaceship accompanies the words, stretching across the horizontal axis of the screen from right to left, clearly playing on an homage to the opening of *Star Wars: A New Hope*. As the song quickens its pace, the 3D space travel speeds up, indicated by the longer star trails. As it speeds up, a superimposed cel illustration of the *Daicon III* anime girl (child-Bunny) appears falling into the centre of space. From here another plane of galaxies is drawn closer through the black to the viewer. As

⁶¹⁹ Lamarre, p. 134.

⁶²⁰ Jeff Lynne and Electric Light Orchestra, ‘Prologue’ on *Time*. (Jet/Columbia Records, 1981).

this image gets closer and closer to us, we experience a projectile sense of motion as if we are shot through the galaxy through the screen. The image of child-Bunny is spun and blurred into a bursting red plane populated by a vortex of white streaks and dots, which appear at the same frequency of the high-pitched laughter at the end of the ‘Prologue’ track. The moment the track ends, the screen fades to black, and within a millisecond, we hear the iconic synth opening of ELO’s next track ‘Twilight’. The first image that appears is a horizontal shot of a computer-generated colour gradient spectrum from indigo on the top to vermillion on the bottom, seemingly mimicking a sunrise. As quickly as the last synth note is played, the sunrise becomes overexposed to white, and we hear a burst of drums. At the frequency and rhythm of the drums, close-up shots appear, tracking each new accessory on adult-Bunny, quick cutting from a cute black bowtie to the base of her red velvet leotard and a fluffy bunny tail to a close-up of her face and bunny ears. These close-ups are intermediately dispersed with two full shots of Bunny displayed in front of a rainbow gradient that is designed in a pattern of blue, yellow, and red squares and spheres. From these medium-shots appears another flurry of close-ups (one shot for each beat) cut in this order: high-heel shoes to breasts to cufflinks to face. After these shots of affection-images and attraction-images, Bunny is shown seductively showing off her sexy outfit amidst a light blue background of bubbles. Bunny then turns to the viewer, and as her gaze matches ours, subsequent cuts ensue, resulting in a disjointed sequence of zooms in and out of Bunny’s soulful face and body. Once this zooming sequence ends, we are left with a pin-up style shot of Bunny set against a vibrant starry eyed chiffon background. As the introductory synth and drums transition into the opening lyrics – ‘The visions dancing in my mind / The early dawn, the shades of time / Twilight crawling through my windowpane’ – the quick cuts are expedited even further in combat, returning us back to the force of the movement-image dispersed across a flattened plane that describes Bunny tossing, punching, and dropkicking dozens of robots, monsters, and baddies in mere seconds after her cosmic transformation.⁶²¹

Note that the animation details two distinct experiences of anime which takes place after Bunny’s physical transformation throughout *Daicon IV*: frenetic fights and frenzied flights. Lamarre and Murakami both focus on the phantasmagoric fight scenes within *Daicon IV* in order to explore the crisis of action-image and to examine how the hundreds of science-

⁶²¹ Ibid.

fiction, fantasy, and horror references produce an overloaded otaku amalgam, heavily reliant on postmodern narrative and aesthetic forms that Frederic Jameson lambasts as depthless and superficial practices of pastiche and bricolage.⁶²² Against Jameson's Adornian snobbery, it is important to argue that the depthlessness of the flattened animetic machine produces what Lamarre refers to as 'ballistic sequences' that again, urge 'toward information retrieval':

in *Daicon IV Opening Animation*, action sequences are readily followed by a series of rapid pans over crowds composed of iconic characters pulled from a dizzying number of animated television series, special effects films, and Hollywood science fiction films. There are far too many citations to even begin to enumerate them [...] what interests me here is how the dizzying pans and rapid cuts across fields composed of iconic characters echo the logic of the projectiles. Flattened ballistic perception meshes with information explosion. There are no hierarchies among characters drawn from such radically different sources as *Doraemon*, Fritz Lang's silent film *Metropolis*, *Godzilla*, and *Star Trek* (to scratch the surface).⁶²³

While Bunny flies through the screen punching, kicking, and blasting away dozens of sci-fi characters, viewers feel the force of the rapid cut furiously target multiple information nodes of difference, overloading our sensorium, eventually melting our perception of movement into time. Lamarre attributes this hyper-acceleration of the action-image to the replication and optimization of what he refers to as the 'multiple frames of reference', which is the result of 'the flattening of the multiplanar image into a superplanar image [which] tends to dispense with a single fixed frame of reference. It tends toward mobile, contingent, multiple frames of reference'.⁶²⁴ These frames can be multiplied at a supersonic pace, expanding its multiplication out to narrative and character design referents, making each character in this dense otaku perceptive field perhaps less like individuated subjects (Batman → Mothra → Yoda), and more akin to hyperlinks in an index of the otaku compendium, slices of the otaku world-image.

⁶²² Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992). See Jameson on p. 6 for *depthlessness*, p. 17 for *pastiche*, and p. 83 for *bricolage*.

⁶²³ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 136.

⁶²⁴ Lamarre, p. 162.

It is not until the multiple frames of reference escape the bounds of mere action that we make our ascent into crystalline flight. As the intergalactic duels end, Bunny hops on Stormbringer, the black sword of Elric of Melniboné from Michael Moorcock's famous fantasy novel *The Dreaming City*, and she surfs across the flattened surface of otaku ontologies. The most important scene, in my estimation, is Bunny's flight through diagonal and horizontal tunnels of diaphanous and crystalline visions of dozens of other heroes, machines, and monsters, ranging from Tolkien's Smaug to Lucas' Millennium Falcon. This montage, aligned with the lyrics from 'Twilight', a song about time travel, impels us to think through Bunny's time and memory surfing: 'Across the night I saw your face / You disappeared without a trace / You brought me here, but can you take me back'. In this overwhelming wash of images is an animetic experience of time; the crystalline explodes as the action-image melts against a depthless surface, and what appears are tides and waves of forceful memory-images.

Bunny's surfing through time and space – as much as across histories of otaku art and tech – continues as she hops from the annals of pulp history onto another plane to hang ten on Hokusai's crashing wave, which smashes against another planar image of deep space. Here, Bunny cruises at high speeds in the same field of depth that the film opens with, but this time with dozens of other sci-fi robots and spaceships. As she returns to a high-tech Tokyo of the seemingly near future, she leaps off the sword and as Lamarre recounts,

it splits into seven sword-missiles with contrails in the seven colors of the rainbow [...] The sword-missiles generate a sense of depth as they speed along their determined trajectories like so many smart bombs. The movement of each missile appears at once erratically realized and precisely directed, as if each missile had its own intelligence, a way of figuring out how to target.⁶²⁵

Bunny then witnesses the sword-missiles locate their target: downtown Tokyo. In a quick shot-reverse-shot of Bunny's stunned face, we see a nuclear mushroom cloud erupt, and we feel a massive force of the blast as it destroys the entire urban sprawl of a reconstructed Japan. In between the destruction of civilisation, the flattening of spacetime and the art of superplanarity through the anime machine reveals itself, as if recounting the deep time of our

⁶²⁵ Lamarre, pp. 134-5

planet in the operational time of the animetic interval: within each gap of the superflattened surface, mountains rise, rivers rush, and the earth freezes over. Time stands still for a brief millisecond as another affection-image of Bunny's gossamer face appears. In this shot, Bunny's face is pressed against another pulled plane of floating cherry blossom pedals. This synchronises with the downtempo rhythm of the song. As the final chorus soars, Bunny's spaceship blasts a white beam across the planet which results in an instantaneous regrowth: trees explode out of the nuclear earth, rivers and lakes unfreeze, and the world is reborn. The animation ends on a shot of the rising sun in the distance behind the planet Earth, as Lamarre concludes:

In light of the exploded view, the transition in *Daicon IV Opening Animation* from military destruction to eco-rejuvenation comes as less of a surprise. Recall the final images in which the sun coming over the horizon of the earth first recalls an atomic bomb and then transforms into the orb of the sun. Destruction has expanded the scope of integration to the planet and maybe to the sun and thus the solar system.⁶²⁶

As Bunny traverses the time-image in all of its forms, she also must face the deep time that is in direct conflict with accelerated machinic time. And yet, this scene bombards the viewers with data, transforming all perceptions of human, technological, aesthetic, and even natural history into sparsed-out strands of informatics. Within a total of four minutes, we witness the present, the past, and the future at high speeds. As it ends, we arrive at the destruction and rebirth of the world, all of which sees the rise and fall of the movement and time images, as Deamer writes: 'This is the zeroness of opsigns and sonsigns – Destruction: the stymieing of the perception-image; the crisis of the action-image; the collapse of the movement-image. Creation: opsigns and sonsigns, actual de-differenciaded images opening up onto the virtual'.⁶²⁷ This is the *Daicon* effect, an onto-aesthetic phenomenon that can only mediate otaku philosophies of time and immanence through the superplanar anime machine.

In this reading of *Daicon IV*, it is perhaps no surprise that the Osaka Art School graduates turned otaku artists founded their small studio in 1985, inherently altering the media

⁶²⁶ Lamarre, pp. 142-3.

⁶²⁷ Deamer, *Deleuze's Cinema Books*, p. 139.

landscape in Japan forever. Just as Studio Ghibli was founded by gekiga artists, Gainax was founded for and by otaku. The Gainax animators saw the world through the exploded lens of otaku life, especially Okada Toshio, who viewed himself as the king of otaku.⁶²⁸ While I have explained the philosophical relationship between otaku culture and critical theory in the Introduction, it is important now to highlight the connection between anime and philosophy, specifically starting with what Lamarre calls *otaku movement*. As a brief reminder from the Introduction, Lamarre describes otaku movement as fan activities (pirating, fan subtitling, redistributing manga, anime, and video games internationally, and rewriting/redrawing specific scenes from series in transgressive manners) that

seem both expedite and to slow corporate-controlled movement of anime around the world. They provide the (dimensionless) point at which global markets coalesce and disperse, where they accelerate, gaining or losing speed. Otaku *movement* comes before official networks, yet the official networks do not subsume it. Even if the official networks leave otaku activities behind them, the latter persist in their own particular ways. The relation between otaku *movement* and corporate markets is not one of mutual reciprocity.⁶²⁹

As Lamarre introduces this brief social history of fan culture in Japanese new media ecosystems, he also argues that this concept of *movement* should not only be concerned with what Henry Jenkins refers to as participatory culture, which was explained in the Introduction as the aesthetic and technical labour of fans to rewrite, recreate, and repurpose media commodities for their own communitarian or individual purposes.

As I argued in the Introduction, it is helpful to think about otaku movement not only in terms of media spreadability or transmedial storytelling, but also as a radical practice of ‘pure immanence’, as Lamarre writes, whereby ‘anime and otaku had broken with all prior formations and organization (of vision, knowledge, and community), bringing viewers closer to a pure experience of the postmodern era’.⁶³⁰ While Lamarre rethinks the transmedial and convergent relations between otaku activities and labour with new media forms and

⁶²⁸ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 145.

⁶²⁹ Lamarre, ‘Otaku Movement’, p. 358.

⁶³⁰ Lamarre, p. 361.

technologies, he effectively rewrites a cultural anthropology of the otaku, as a critically engaged *vernacular philosophy* of movement, which contrasts to many cultural readings that view otaku culture as ‘more a symptom of the postmodern or the information age than a critical intervention’.⁶³¹

To experience the anime (or manga) image is to experience immanence, for its wildly affective and mobile form produces images that move along a smooth grid, distributing said images across one plane of difference. We might apply this word *plane* to the very aesthetic spaces of the media machines that produce them, i.e. a manga page, an animation plane, or a video game interface as much as the philosophical territories they occupy. Between these differing planes, manga, anime, and video games share a characteristic that which Lamarre refers to as ‘distributive fields without center, or periphery’.⁶³² Thus, ‘[a]s a connoisseur of distributive fields without center, or periphery, the *otaku* commands specific, highly refined visual skills’ that allows the otaku to experiment with the anime image as both an aesthetic and ontological object.⁶³³ This philosophical experimentation signals ‘the collapse of visual and social hierarchies’,⁶³⁴ which further paves the way for

a movement (and then an experience) of pure immanence, [by which] the distributive field promises to break prior hierarchies, identities, and organizations, and to open new possibilities. At this level, the distributive is but a promise of movement – a material capture of something that opens into the future (an experience without a subject).⁶³⁵

Within this immanent schema, Lamarre explains that the anime image sprawled across distributive fields is not only subject to the ‘field of action’ of panels, pages, planes, and platforms; rather, the anime image is ‘free to leap across media fields [...] disassemble and reassemble from one media platform to another’,⁶³⁶ exploding and coalescing into ‘a culture industry that generates crossover, spin-off, or tie-in productions in the form of manga, light

⁶³¹ Ibid.

⁶³² Lamarre, ‘Otaku Movement’, p. 369.

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Lamarre, p. 386.

⁶³⁶ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 203.

novels, character franchises, toys, music, video games, and other merchandise'.⁶³⁷ Otaku movement is therefore not only an aesthetic projection of immanence, but it is a practical actualisation of immanence, which manifests itself as a participatory movement of transmedial properties as much as 'some truly new form of (historical) movement'.⁶³⁸

While *Daicon IV* expressed immanence in anime form, the broader anime ecology exhibits a rhizomatic temporalism in a transmedial form, equally reinscribing and replicating the paradoxical world of Japanese postmodernity and post-historicity as 'a world moving at once forward and backward, at once avant-garde and regressive, a world full of activities and cultural movement, but effectively at a standstill'.⁶³⁹ However, Lamarre is sceptical about the existing otaku discourses on History, especially those of Anno, Azuma, and Okada. Drawing on Azuma's *Database Animals*, Lamarre writes that this postmodern 'genealogy studiously avoids historical questions. While it establishes a historical lineage for anime, the problem of how one organizes a history receives no attention'.⁶⁴⁰ As the last section illustrated, otaku discourses associate 'anime with the postmodern and the post-historical. Anime is beyond, outside, or after history' because of its aversion toward grand narratives: 'along with the end of history, there is a sense of the end of narrative'.⁶⁴¹ But this

discourse feels it necessary to eschew history and narrative because it conflates history with grand teleological narratives of modernity. Ironically, however, when these commentators make historical statements, they refer largely to the progressive emergence of new technologies—from television to VCR to computer. History returns as media history, but in its grandest form: linear evolution.⁶⁴²

It is for this reason that Lamarre seeks to philosophise otaku movement as a way to think historically outside of a teleological framework, resituating otaku postmodern, of post-historical logic into an immanent philosophy of movement and memory. It is here that we must return to the question: how can this otaku (or media) discourse approach History differently, beyond the limits of technological determinism and the post-historical condition?

⁶³⁷ Lamarre, p. 185.

⁶³⁸ Lamarre, 'Otaku Movement', p. 361.

⁶³⁹ Lamarre, p. 374.

⁶⁴⁰ Lamarre, p. 365.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² Ibid.

Otaku Movement as Post-Historical Immanence

An effective way of answering this philosophical question is to turn to Jay Lampert and D.N. Rodowick for some clarification on thinking through Deleuzian temporalities. This in turn illustrates that Gainax's *Daicon IV* is an animetic template for assessing how to view History beyond the scope of linear, localised, or essentialised historiographies, actualising the production of a truly immanent and phantasmagoric display of transtemporal time-images. According to Lampert, Deleuze and Guattari separate their theories of History into two temporal distinctions:

(a) the neo-Bergsonian theory that time is not divisible into past, present, and future, but involves a circulation of events in a co-existing "cone" of the pure past; and (b) the concept of virtual events on a plane of consistency that is prior to the rigid, state-regulated historiographies of successive states of affairs.⁶⁴³

Although the two often are best known for eschewing History for nomadology and thinking through Bergson and Nietzsche in order to halt the production of grand narratives of History, we do see that Deleuze and Guattari write extensively about cultural anthropology, political and religious history. Both are effectively 'interested in both major and minor events of what we normally call world history, and their writings are filled with analyses of such phenomena as dates and chronologies, causes and quasi-causes, and events and event-assemblages'.⁶⁴⁴ The most important theory in understanding Deleuze and Guattarian philosophies of History is the concepts of co-existence and becoming, and the effervescent and resurgent forces of what they call 'names of history'.⁶⁴⁵ According to Lampert, '[t]he names of history are not figures who were once present and became past, but exist as a subject's passage back through historical personae. A historical subject identifies not with a person but with a name', by which we associate a historical subject with an affective trait or quality that transcends spacetime to

⁶⁴³ Jay Lampert, *Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy of History* (New York: Continuum, 2006). pp. 1-2.

⁶⁴⁴ Lampert, p. 2.

⁶⁴⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: Continuum, 2004). p. 23. Hereafter AO.

produce a vibrant zone of transformation for any dividual enunciating these names.⁶⁴⁶ Lampert continues, reminding us that

To identify with a figure from the past is not to identify with an identity, but with a zone. For that matter, the historical personage could not have been entirely self-identical in the first place, since she in turn will have circulated through the names of history on the periphery of her own zones of intensity. In any case, one's own body is hardly one's own, since the zones on that body are liable to become somebody else; the body without a self is the body on which all subjects circulate. The name of history is activated when I name it, and when I name it as me, but it does not so much replace me as fold in with me, and make me "homo historia".⁶⁴⁷

This philosophical flattening of historical personages is central to many anime series and Japanese role-playing games, whereby the protagonists transform through their historical becomings. For example, in Atlus' Jungian inspired *Persona* series, high school students learn the names of their historical personages (known as personas) after a traumatic, life-affirming event shocks it into them, transforming them into champions of a mythic, legendary, and historical figures. Each persona reflects – in character design and in powers – the personalities, convictions, and desires of each human character, as is indicated by the historical names of Kirijō Mitsuru's Penthesilea in *Persona 3* (2007), Satonaka Chie's Tomoe Gozen in *Persona 4* (2008), and Sakamoto Ryūji's Captain William Kidd in *Persona 5* (2017). To initiate transformation, each character must shout the name of their persona, and with the help of using a magical object (i.e. shooting a gun in *P3*, flipping a tarot card in *P4*, or tearing off a mask in *P5*), a ritual gesture of uncovering their historical persona to the surface of their soulful bodies.

Similarly, as we will see in more detail in the next chapter, the *Fate* series describes a world in which select people with magical sensitivity or those who are from a bloodline of magical users across the world are drawn into wars for the Holy Grail every few centuries. These mages must summon what are called Heroic Spirits to fight for them, but only after locating artefacts and most importantly, when they unveil the 'True Name' of their spirits, as

⁶⁴⁶ Lampert, p. 3.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid.

Kiritsugu Emiya proclaims in the first episode: ‘Come forth, bearer of Excalibur, the once and future king, to fight for me and aid me in the Fourth Holy Grail War...come to me, King Arthur!’⁶⁴⁸ As dozens of different incarnations of heroes from many different places and pasts are brought into a twenty-first century Japan, the *Fate* series unveils a whole host of historical personages that have long lasting effects on the present as much as they did in the past, as Lampert reminds us: ‘history treats the past as a mode of intensifying certain patterns of present activity. History is about what becomes of the present when the past catches up with it’.⁶⁴⁹

D.N. Rodowick similarly draws from Deleuze’s neo-Bergsonianism but qualifies the historical impulse that Deleuze and Guattari’s nomadology presents. Rodowick complicates the problem of History by introducing memory as an alternative force:

Memory and history are like the incommensurability of time and space, or the virtual and the actual. History is the sense of commemoration, an affirmative and institutional history, cannot express becoming. Commemorative history is always the history of the victors, as Walter Benjamin so forcefully argues, and a power that inhibits the becoming of subjected peoples. Whatever the forces and resources of history might be, it works to preserve the values, the will to power, and modes of existence of the victors and to inhibit and derail any immanent mode of existence that runs counter to or challenges its powers. Alternatively, memory is not what is recalled; it is rather what returns.⁶⁵⁰

Against History always, Rodowick indicates that Deleuze and Guattari look toward creating and destroying images, ideas, and names for the sake of the eternal return, therefore, undermining the grand pillars of History with an intense influx of the names, voices, and screams of the transhistorical. This is the Daicon effect mobilised against History, whereby the otaku world-image is created under the crystal-forming conditions of the anime ecology and its multiple abstract and mechanic media machines.

⁶⁴⁸ ‘Summoning Ancient Heroes’, *Fate/Zero* (Season One, Episode One), dir. by Aoki Ei and Ufotable, Inc, prod. by Aniplex (Crunchyroll, 2011). [Accessed 14 January 2015].

⁶⁴⁹ Lampert, p. 3.

⁶⁵⁰ Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine*, p. 205.

Therefore, just as the distribution field of *Daicon IV* intermingled dozens of incongruent images in Bunny's ballistic transversal across time, it too melted together popular artefacts into one otaku world-image of speculation and fabulation. Binding together Lampert and Rodowick's articulation of Deleuze and Guattari's transtemporal theories of History with the Daicon effect, otaku read History as a flattened panorama, a database, like in Murakami's *Superflat* exhibit. As each name of history is flattened, its specificity and locality blends together in an anachronistic tableau for the sake of producing a global and universal memory of nomads, as Deleuze and Guattari write:

Kenneth White recently stressed this dissymmetrical complementarity between a race-tribe (the Celts, those who feel they are Celts) and a milieu-space (the Orient, the Gobi desert...). White demonstrates that this strange composite, the marriage of the Celt and the Orient, inspires a properly nomad thought that sweeps up English literature and constitutes American literature.⁶⁵¹

Like Deleuze and Guattari's association of the Celt in the Orient – like the images of Cú Chulainn or Arthur teleporting to twenty-first century Tokyo in *Fate/Zero* and *Fate/Grand Order* – the purpose in this global memory forces otaku to ask: what is the manga manifestation of becoming-nomad (the Band of the Hawks, the Vikings), what is the anime deployment of becoming-woman (Bunny's transformations, Joan of Arc), what is the digital eternal return (messianic, mechanic redemption), etc., and what do these zones of intensities, these homo-historia assemblages, and time machines enunciate about our lifeworlds and perceptions of a world history? As the next chapter will answer, it is through otaku imaginings – informed by speculative fiction, science fiction, fantasy, pulp culture, and informatic culture – that we see alternative temporal dimensions rise beyond the ruins of History, where counter-memories are created and destroyed at lightning fast speeds, in a multitude of different bodies, hues, shades, angles, frames, and most importantly, images of the all-times.

⁶⁵¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 418.

The Anime-Image as Movement-Time-Data Transformer

It is here then that I think we can experience new modes of ontological capture in *Daicon IV*. By speeding through the multiple frames of reference, we experience the crystalline, even if we think we are experiencing an accelerated action-image. This pushes the action-image to its end, and because of its superflattening properties, the accelerated and optimised action-image (as was allegorised in Yukimura's *Vinland Saga*) produces a new nexus of crystalline images all along the surface. As we briefly glimpse the many Deleuzian images of time (opsigns and sonsigns, hyalosigns, chronosigns, noosigns, and lectosigns), we can also see that these images work against or with the animetic interval and anime's optimisation properties. The anime-image is an nooshock, an optimised glitch of the movement-image as much as it is an autonomous corporate logo, a sexist commodity fetish, and a possible fascistic code of control. The separation is impossible. It is for this reason that we must be wary of how the anime-image is and is not a circuit for matter or memory; what we should rather be asking is how new thoughts and new images can possibly erupt from the optimisation memory in an informatic machine that is so ubiquitous in the twenty-first century. In this context, it is no wonder that Lamarre sees the flattening regime of images as a digital and virtual succession of matter and memory, writing that *Daicon IV*

succeeds in bringing references, as potential depth of information, to the surface, inviting us to skim and to retrieve and recompose fields Rather than discrete objects, we have distributive fields of information. Each iconic reference operates as a field of potential depth, inviting us to "click" on it, to retrieve and pursue its connections.⁶⁵²

When the multiple frames of reference transform the cinematic perceptive field into an encoded, grid of information and data, there is no possible way to anchor ourselves in just one piece of data, as I explained earlier in this chapter when discussing framing and compositing. Each collection of images and sounds are like DNA strands; as we extend each layer and stack in and out of perceptive fields, we find ourselves unravelling even more fractals and strands.

⁶⁵² Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 137.

The result is that our comprehension of movement is scrambled, which in turn opens us up to the existential and noological realm of the virtual. Moreover, against Jameson's position about depthlessness, I argue that skirting and surfing across the otaku database is neither an inferior or superior form of communicative or aesthetic expression; in the Deleuzian sense, there is no value judgment placed on the movement of thought in relation to a prescriptive reality. Rather, like Robin van den Akker, this chapter goes beyond Jameson by arguing for a 'new depthiness'⁶⁵³ inspired by the postmodern Italian novelist Alessandro Baricco who differentiates the ontological surfer from the modernist diver, the nomadic barbarian from the civilised reader:

If you believe that meaning comes in sequences and takes the form of a trajectory through a number of different points, then what you really care about is movement: the real possibility to move from one point to another fast enough to prevent the overall shape from vanishing. Now what is the source of this movement, and what keeps it going? Your curiosity, of course, and your desire for experience. But these aren't enough, believe me. This movement is also propelled by the points through which it passes ... [The surfer] has a chance to build real sequences of experience only if at each stop along his journey he gets another push. Still, they're not really stops, but systems of passage that generate acceleration.⁶⁵⁴

Baricco's metaphor is helpful for any media theory of anime; like his surfers, anime audiences surf across the anime machine's flattened surface and distributive field in order to catch swaths of information and becomings like swelling waves, further accelerating beyond forgotten and nomadic ontological or perceptive anchors residing well beneath the surface. Anime propels us toward philosophies of universal history and transtemporality by accelerating perception and thought beyond mere movement, sequence, or dialectic.

Like riding Hokusai's waves, otaku viewers ride the movement-image at an incredible pace, perception of time slows down as we reach the crest of the wave. Moments flash before

⁶⁵³ Robin van den Akker, 'The New 'Depthiness'', p. 4.

⁶⁵⁴ Alessandro Baricco, *The Barbarians: An Essay on the Mutation of Culture*, trans. Stephen Sartarelli (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2014). p. 118.

our eyes, and within seconds, we become aware of the incredible ebbing flow of temporality as it disperses across the sea of eternity. Even when the crystalline disappears and the organic takes reign in the rest of *Daicon IV*, it is still flattened and mobilised to an optimal level that then gives us a glimpse of the next regime of images: Deleuze's electronic image. It is in this new regime that we experience both the instantaneous and latent explosion of information over all else, which as Deleuze bemoans, has led to the end of the modernist experiment of cinema. As the action-image dissolves at high speeds amidst superplanar distribution, enfoldment, and replication, a glimpse of what the automatic nature of anime appears, harkening back to Deleuze's closing statements in *Cinema 2*:

new automata did not invade content without a new automatism bringing about a mutation of form. The modern configuration of the automaton is the correlate of an electronic automatism. The electronic image, that is, the tele and video image, the numerical [digital] image coming into being, had either to transform cinema or to replace it, to mark its death.⁶⁵⁵

As we move from movement to time to data, we experience tremendous shifts in ontological spacing and comprehension in moving images. The data image here – which can be characterised as the clickable, google-able nature of surfing through images, references, indices, and databases – further exposes the ontologically flattened nature of our new regime, as Deleuze continues:

The new images no longer have any outside (out-of-field), any more than they are internalized in a whole; rather, they have a right side and a reverse, reversible and non-superimposable, like a power to turn back on themselves. They are the object of a perpetual reorganization, in which a new image can arise from any point whatever of the preceding image. The organization of space here loses its privileged directions, and first of all the privilege of the vertical which the position of the screen still displays, in favour of an omni-directional space which constantly varies its angles and coordinates, to exchange the vertical and the horizontal. And the screen itself, even if it keeps a

⁶⁵⁵ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 272.

vertical position by convention, no longer seems to the human posture, like a window or a painting, but rather constitutes a table of information, an opaque surface on which are inscribed 'data', information replacing nature, and the brain-city, the third eye, replacing the eyes of nature.⁶⁵⁶

In response to Deleuze's exceptional technological foresight, we must say that once the anime machine becomes technologically and philosophically optimised beyond its machine capabilities, does it not transform from a multidimensional time machine into an information machine, from an immanent regime of memories into a stack of data? Under these philosophical conditions, it is perhaps why Lamarre is unable to separate the technological histories of cinema, animation, and computers from otaku movement. The Daicon effect is perhaps Lamarre's best example of the rise of informatics in an immanent machine, which certainly echoes Deleuze's passing thoughts at the end of *C2*, as he explains:

Daicon IV Opening Animation is information-surfing before the Net. The flattening of multiplanar images produces an effect akin to multiple windows on a computer screen. And the depth of those stacked computer windows is like that of exploded projection, with no window hierarchically deeper than any other, and each implying transversal links to others. It is interesting to note, in light of these analogies between anime layers and computer windows, that limited cel animation emerged and became dominant in Japan roughly at the same time as discourses on information society (mid-1960s to mid-1970s), and anime came to global attention with the rise of information networks in the 1990s.⁶⁵⁷

In line with the Deleuzian concerns of computation, of digital capture, and of the rising possibilities of the virtual, Lamarre notes that the informatic rise supplants the crystalline, and this is what we might consider is at the heart of otaku philosophies of time and History: the overlapping interplays, cuts, and transformations of action, movement, and informatics. Thus, it is impossible to take away the flattening process of animation from the flattening process of stacking data and programmatic commands.

⁶⁵⁶ Deleuze, *C2*, pp. 272-3.

⁶⁵⁷ Lamarre, p. 137.

The reason I highlight this move from the immanent to the informatic is because it traces the remaining two chapters of this section, by which I argue that first, (1) the anime machine engages with thinking about memory and History through the *accelerated* animetic interval in *Fate/Zero* (Ufotable, 2011-12) and *Fate/stay/night: Unlimited Blade Works* (Ufotable, 2014-15); and second, (2) the anime machine forces us to think about memory and History through and against the logic of the Digital in *Fate/Grand Order* (Aniplex, 2017) and *Fate/Extra Last Encore* (Shaft, 2018), as Alexander Galloway argues in his recent works. In this process of examining the immanence of the Daicon effect, the anime machine produces a mutated regime of images that are thinking and feeling through the tempo of automation, as Deleuze anticipated in his later works. This in turn forces the viewers to think beyond mere representation and movement, shocking us into thinking about the nature of time in its infinite varieties. This is the purpose of this section: to illustrate how the anime machine, the anime image, and otaku philosophy contribute to producing radical philosophies of time and immanence. Furthermore, this otaku formulation of immanence produces two specific questions on History as experienced in the anime machine. The first theoretical question asks if it is possible to harness the forces of the transhistorical through the anime machine, so that we may be able to think beyond History, as the *Fate-* series (Type-Moon, 2006 –) seems to suggest. Against historical time then, the anime machine produces images of a ‘virtual co-existence of all times’ as Lampert writes.⁶⁵⁸ Through these images of all-times, regardless of cultural memory or representational thought, the *Fate-* series beckons us to experience becomings of dozens of historical bodies and names from Joan of Arc to Attila the Hun to Gilgamesh to Miyamoto Musashi at any moment. Viewers of the anime *Fate/Zero* and *Fate/stay/night: Unlimited Blade Works* engage with temporalities and personas like the roving Deleuzo-Guattarian schizoid who ‘consumes all of universal history at once’,⁶⁵⁹ constantly proclaiming: ‘(*I feel that*) I am becoming God, I am becoming woman, I was Joan of Arc and I am Heliogabalus and the Great Mongol, a Chinaman, a redskin, a Templar, I was my father and I was my son’.⁶⁶⁰

Through a reading of the digital arcs of *Fate/Extra Last Encore* (Shaft, 2018) and *Fate/Grand Order* (Aniplex, 2017), the second inquiry of History can then be posed, which

⁶⁵⁸ Lampert, p. 12.

⁶⁵⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *AO*, p. 23.

⁶⁶⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *AO*, p. 93.

asks specifically what the limits of the time-image in the anime machine are, and how can we think about History through Deleuze's late musings on the nature of computers and the logic of the Digital? Is it possible to push the time-image into crisis in order to reveal Deleuze's anticipation of the next regime of images in the digital, or 'the electronic image'?⁶⁶¹ In this reconsideration of the anime machine as a philosophical time machine,⁶⁶² we must consider how it flattens not only spacetime in its aesthetic and media transformations, but how flattens ontology to the irreducible Digital, which clearly enunciates a new regime of thought.

⁶⁶¹ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 272. I will refer to the Deleuzian electronic image as 'the data-image' hereafter.

⁶⁶² Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time-Machines*, p. 2.

Chapter Five: Images of the All-Times at the End Times in Type-Moon's Nasuverse

On 30 January of 2004, Type-Moon, a small video game development team lead by illustrator and art director Takeuchi Takashi and writer Nasu Kinoko, released an adult visual novel called *Fate/stay/night* for Microsoft Windows. To Type-Moon's surprise, *Fate/stay/night* became the highest selling visual novel of 2004, and became one of the most popular visual novel in Japanese history.⁶⁶³ Video game scholars Chris Klug and Josiah Lebowitz have described *Fate/stay/night* as an interactive multibranching novel quite similar to the Anglophone children's gamebook series *Choose Your Own Adventure* published by Bantam Books between 1979-1998.⁶⁶⁴ However, unlike these gamebooks, Klug and Lebowitz write that due to the branching systems that engage gamers (and readers) with multiple choices for plot and character development, Type-Moon's *Fate/stay/night* is a refreshingly complex, sophisticated, and mature text. With its many different branches of stories (three primary plots with many other divergent plots and subplots), Klug and Lebowitz claim that *Fate* is an impressive literary endeavour, for not only does it have three branches of the primary plot, but it places the total word count of the series well beyond 'that of the entire *Lord of the Rings* trilogy', which includes the prose, poetry, and dialogue of the entire game.⁶⁶⁵ Unlike the epic fantasy novels of Tolkien, however, Type-Moon's visual novel can only be fully completed if gamers play through the game three times over, a common trope in dating simulators and *bishōjo* ('pretty girl') games like *Fate*. As they write,

this significant increase in length allows visual novel games to tell stories as long and complex as those found in any good novel while still using a branching path structure. The focus on deep stories with mature themes and consistent plots throughout all the branches further sets them apart from *Choose Your Own Adventure* books.⁶⁶⁶

In addition to the expansive and rhizomatic nature of the game, we also experience a powerfully affective use of sound in an original soundtrack and professional voiceovers, as

⁶⁶³ See Getchu's sales numbers here: <http://www.getchu.com/pc/salesranking2004.html> [Accessed 15 June 2017].

⁶⁶⁴ Chris Klug and Josiah Lebowitz, *Interactive Storytelling for Video Games: A Player-Centered Approach to Creating Memorable Characters and Stories* (Boston: Focal Press, 2011).

⁶⁶⁵ Klug and Lebowitz, p. 194.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

well as an ornately rich compilation of mangaesque illustrations of iconic characters and environments. Due to the series' initial success, Type-Moon has produced more than thirty adaptations and spin-offs in the past decade, transforming the tiny fan-based game company into a transmedia empire that has entered into the transcultural and international media markets of the United States and Europe at a quick pace.

Before releasing *Fate*, Takeuchi and Nasu both wrote short illustrated novellas ('light novels') and fan fiction visual novels specialising in producing *dōjinshi* ('amateur') games that were made in their garages, basements, and work offices. Between 1998 and 2004, Type-Moon accumulated a massively diverse and enthusiastic otaku fan base by distributing their games at the world's largest *dōjinshi* convention called Comiket (Comic Market) in Tokyo. As members of many different otaku *dōjin* soft circles ('media producing fan communities'), Takeuchi and Nasu's list of freeware works include the instantly popular supernatural visual novels *Kara no Kyoukai* (1998), *Tsukihime* (2000), and its sequel *Kagetsu Tohya* (2001). After developing extremely rich worlds in both series, Type-Moon sought to produce a fighting game with the help of the Tokyo-based fighting game studio French-Bread. This collaboration led to the production of one of the best 2-D *dōjin* fighting game *Melty Blood* (2002).

Melty Blood is a multidimensional love letter to Type-Moon fans. The fighting game brought together all of Type-Moon's characters into one phantasmagoric arena of sumptuous visuals, adorned with a bubbly soundtrack and a humorously parodic and self-reflexive style of writing. *Melty Blood*'s incredible success provided Type-Moon with a template for making action and fighting games which further influenced games including *Fate/unlimited codes* (2008), *Fate/tiger coliseum* (2008), and even their most recent action game, *Fate/Extella: The Umbral Star* (2016). In this context, the popularity of Type-Moon's franchises can be attributed to their adherence to the rule of otaku movement discussed in the previous chapter, by which characters, stories, and worlds transcend their sourced media machines, and leap into different media forms and realities to produce fantastically ethereal conflicts between transtemporal pieces of their extensive magical realist universes. Learning from the incredible success of *Kara no Kyoukai*, *Tsukihime*, and *Melty Blood*, Type-Moon moved away from producing free *dōjinshi* and sought out to produce their first commercial success in *Fate/stay/night* (2004).

The Soulful Shojification of Type-Moon

As self-identifying otaku themselves, both Takeuchi and Nasu – like Gainax Studios – make stories, characters, and worlds for otaku consumers, specifically channelling otaku desires, fascinations, and sensibilities into each aspect of their work. To understand their otaku sensibility and the philosophies that accompany it, we must understand the potency and materiality of desire production through character design and narrative. To begin, I would describe Type-Moon's character design as a successful balance between manga realism (with *gekiga* undertones) and traditional anime fantasy aesthetics. Under the direction of Takeuchi, Type-Moon's characters are depicted as eccentric but not excessive, exuberant but not extravagant, and emblematic but not essentialist in their character design. Since most characters are historical figures, the art design is highly soulful and iconic, inscribing each heroic personage's personality onto their physical, outfit, and weapon design. Directed by Takeuchi and his illustration team (including famed manga and light novel artists like Wada Arco, BunBun, Hiroe Rei, and Morii Shizuki), Type-Moon's style is more identifiable than most its other otaku media counterparts because it blurs traditionally split demographics between male and female gamers, readers, or viewers through its eclectic and soulful character design. Takeuchi's early work effectively leaned toward a more sumptuously elegant and ornamental *shōjo* style rather than the more angular, spartan, and intimidating *shōnen* style, which I will return to with more detail in the next chapter.

This preference in *shōjo* style establishes a more memorable, subjective, and intimate link between character and reader. Throughout these narratives, the reader engages with time and memory not only through cues that spark curiosity about each strand of story. I would argue that Type-Moon's graphic design choices enable players to engage more thoroughly with the text by mobilising intense affects through these images, which transforms the consummative pleasure of completing a story (which Azuma Hiroki ascribes to the capitalist impulses of 'narrative consumption' as mentioned in the Introduction) into a potent conjunctive desire for becoming. Following in the footsteps of Gainax lead character designer, Sadamoto Yoshiyuki, Takeuchi's characters (in the words of Lamarre) 'tend to be spindly and peaked rather than roundly cute, and partly because he is renowned for his personalization of characters'.⁶⁶⁷ Additionally, we can even say his illustrations of iconic female characters from

⁶⁶⁷ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 204.

Tsukihime like Arcueid Brunestud or *Fate/stay/night*'s Tōsaka Rin are far more realistic portrayals of strong and independent young women that are not merely designed for the desiring male gaze. The same could be said for the male protagonists as well; Tōno Shiki from *Tsukihime* and Emiya Shirō from *Fate* are both rather average in all aspects of description, from their hair styles, body types, and attire. Neither look particularly unique or iconic. This assessment is quite unlike many series that depict the male teen hero (usually between the ages of 15-18) as a tall, lean, muscular, distinguished man well beyond his adolescent years. To avoid these design clichés, Takeuchi and his team developed a character design philosophy that is delicate, airy, and graceful as much as it is colourful, grounded, and simple. This design philosophy results in the production of a subtle, diaphanous, and intricate nexus of graphic indicators of each character's desires, memories, and personalities,⁶⁶⁸ from Arcueid's sullen red eyes and Shiki's large glasses in *Tsukihime* to Rin's pitch-black pigtails and Shirō's spikey auburn hair in *Fate*.⁶⁶⁹ In the words of Thomas Lamarre, just as the works of Gainax Studios brought forth the "'shojo-ification" of the boy-mecha interface' in series like *Evangelion*, so too did it inform the onto-aesthetics of Type-Moon's contemporary Nasuverse.⁶⁷⁰

Type-Moon's character design philosophy begs players and viewers to become more intimately intertwined in the soulful bodies of these characters. This brings the bodies of Type-Moon to life in our own ontological realm, so to speak, and transcends the bounds of art and time, as Lamarre writes:

⁶⁶⁸ Azuma on *moe*-elements in *Otaku*: 'note that each element, with its own origins and background, constitutes a category that has been developed in order to stimulate the interest of the consumers. It is not a simple fetish object, but a sign that emerged through market principles. For example, it is well known that the "maid costume" originated in the X-rated anime series *Cream Lemon: Black Cat Mansion* in the 1980s and gained popularity in the "visual novels" of the 1990s [...] From this point on, let us call these elements, developed to effectively stimulate the *moe* of the consumers, "*moe*-elements" (*moe yōso*). Most of the *moe*-elements are visual, but there are other kinds of *moe*-elements, such as a particular way of speaking, settings, stereotypical narrative development, and the specific curves of a figurine,' p. 43. Azuma continues that '[s]ome of the "categories" [...] are *moe*-elements, such as "cat-ears", "animal", "angels", "maid costume" and "glasses"', p. 44. Describing the rise of the Internet in otaku culture, Azuma concludes that media 'producers, like it or not, must have been conscious of their position relative to the whole of otaku culture. As soon as the characters are created, they are broken up into elements, categorized, and registered to a database', pp. 44-7.

⁶⁶⁹ *Shōjo* ('girls comics') is a subgenre, demographic, and style that explores 'visual images of beautiful girls with big eyes and slender bodies with narrow arms and legs' and examines 'themes of [...] simply love, but 'Love' in all its complexity', in Masami Toku's *International Perspectives on Shōjo and Shōjo Manga: The Influence of Girl Culture* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 12.

⁶⁷⁰ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 216.

The result is a soulful body, in which movements of heart, soul, and mind are inscribed onto the surface of the character, flickering over its contours or winding restlessly through its interstices. The soulful body is analogous to Deleuze's concept of the time-image, which emerges from the crisis in the movement-image, from the impossibility of producing a movement-image capable of an overall coordination of movement-images (affection-image, perception-image, action-image, for instance) based on the action-image.⁶⁷¹

Furthermore, as Dani Cavallaro continues, the visual novel favours '[p]ictorial sumptuousness, vibrant palettes, meticulous devotion in plot depth and character design and development' over the force of the action-image, which therefore alters the design philosophy for the medium and its adaptive forms, including manga and anime.⁶⁷² This emphasis on soulful bodies over bodies in movement elicits an appeal for different audiences who are seeking more intimate and introspective aesthetics over traditional *shōnen* or superhero aesthetics. Due to this commitment to the visual novel as a dominant form of interactive fiction, Type-Moon garnered a large female fan base early on, which only expanded even further as they featured dozens of unique and extraordinary heroic female heroes and protagonists. With visual worlds that sit firmly in between existential J-horror, mystery novella, and *shōjo* romance, Type-Moon established a specific style that matched the psychological undertones of each of their series, which results in the production of a much less masculinist or action-centric character design style.

Nasu's Transtemporal Narrative Nexus

Because of Type-Moon's commitment to innovating and expanding the visual novel medium, these series

ask the spectator to focus on the narrative weave and its collision with images rather than breakneck action. In both visual novels and the anime based upon them, reflection

⁶⁷¹ Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 312.

⁶⁷² Dani Cavallaro, *Anime and the Visual Novel: Narrative Structure, Design and Play at the Crossroads of Animation and Computer Games* (London: McFarland & Company, 2010). p. 8.

and speculation are the activities invoked by the experience over and above passive absorption.⁶⁷³

Type-Moon's style fits ideally with the simple, elegant form of the visual novel, an interactive text-image adventure played on CD-ROM. Cavallaro elaborates on the nature of visual novels, writing that the convergent form of literature, manga, and game,

designates a multibranching and interactive ludic experience that enlists the player's creativity alongside the production studio's own artistry and thus transcends the boundaries of other types of more controlling videogaming. The visual novel typically articulates its narrative by means of extensive text conversations complemented by lovingly depicted and mainly stationary generic backgrounds and dialogue boxes with character sprites determining the speaker superimposed upon them.⁶⁷⁴

Cavallaro notes that most visual novels are high school romances that contain sophisticated literary and philosophical material that is often exposed referentially or textually, either through dialogue, class quizzes or exams, or character interaction. These narratives are similar in tone and fashion to the *moe* ('slice of life') anime genre as well as the 'bourgeois, neurotic or marginal' domestic dramas of Ozu Yasujiro.⁶⁷⁵ Like Ozu's films, visual novels do not emphasise descriptive action sequences as much as they explore the sumptuousness of vision and the philosophies of the quotidian, as Deleuze writes:

In everyday banality, the action-image and even the movement-image tend to disappear in favour of pure optical situations, but these reveal connections of a new type, which are no longer sensory-motor and which bring the emancipatory senses into direct relation with time and thought.⁶⁷⁶

While the multibranching narrative systems of visual novels draws players into numerous situations to explore psychological, philosophical, or social questions about reality,

⁶⁷³ Cavallaro, p. 11.

⁶⁷⁴ Cavallaro, p. 8.

⁶⁷⁵ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 19.

⁶⁷⁶ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 17.

perception, and desire, the spatiotemporal focus of storytelling often oscillates between the development of an environment, an ambiance, an atmosphere, an empty space whereby we can feel time slip away at a slower pace – as in Japanese manga series that rely on McCloud’s aspect-to-aspect transitions discussed in Chapter Three – as well as the shifting flows of time that ebb and flow within the confines of the everyday, as Deleuze writes of Ozu: ‘The still life is time, for everything that changes is in time, but time does not itself change, it could itself change only in another time, indefinitely’.⁶⁷⁷ Even in the most erotic (*eroge*) or action-packed visual novels that often include graphic textual exposition and still images of sex, violence, or death as rewards or punishments for completing (or not completing) sections of the narrative, the very medium mobilises desiring-images or action-images by retaining the players’ attention through a certain type of self-mediated pacing. Each player takes as much time as they want to within these games to read text, gaze at images, physically interact with visual environments on the screen, and uncover mysteries by completing gamic puzzles. This establishes a contemplative rhythm which, as Deleuze writes, ‘gives rise to a seeing function, at once fantasy and report, criticism and compassion’ that importantly transforms ‘the character or the viewer, and the two together’ into temporal ‘visionaries’.⁶⁷⁸

The more we play with visual novels, the more we experiencing a becoming-visionary, a becoming-seer, which allows for players to engage and participate with mythic time and thought in a more intimate and involving fashion, as Deleuze continues

at the same time the eye takes up a clairvoyant function [...the] visual elements of the image enter into internal relations which means the whole thing has to be ‘read,’ no less than seen, readable as well as visible. For the eye of the seer as of the soothsayer, it is the ‘literalness’ of the perceptible world which constitutes it like a book.⁶⁷⁹

Nasu’s world of *Fate* is clearly ‘an exercise in interactive fiction (IF) revolving around puzzle-laden treasure hunts and eager to experiment with storytelling techniques capable of maximizing audience engagement’,⁶⁸⁰ where ‘textuality is frequently foregrounded through

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 19.

⁶⁷⁹ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 22.

⁶⁸⁰ Cavallaro, p. 9.

dialogues that address the nature of storytelling and dramatic performance and on the very practice of writing, reading, and watching'.⁶⁸¹ Nasu's worlds are built upon the tenets of what Lamarre referred to as the multiple frames of reference through his visual novel style of storytelling. Cavallaro describes the visual novel similarly, noting its 'branching and crisscrossing yarns', 'deliberately inconclusive resolutions', 'unconventional blend of the mundane and the supernatural', and 'interweaving of domestic and mythological milieux'.⁶⁸²

Type-Moon's success is indicative of its intense commitment to a mind-bending vision of any-worlds-whatever, through dozens of quantum possibilities. In Nasu's philosophically sophisticated narratives, *Fate* is not simply a familiar and generic high school romantic drama that is set amidst a supernatural crisis in a fictional Japanese locale. The fictional Fuyuki City (which resembles the layout of Kobe) is the site of a multi-century battle for the Holy Grail which is sponsored by and mediated out by the Holy Church, the thinly veiled *nom de plume* for the Roman Catholic Church. Accordingly, the Holy Grail emerges around 1791, and subsequently every two centuries until after the twentieth century when the frequency of the Holy Grail Wars increased massively, from every 200 years (First and Second Holy Grail Wars) to every 60 years (Third Holy Grail War) to every 10 years (Fourth Holy Grail War) to every 2 years (Fifth and Sixth Holy Grail Wars). Nasu describes this acceleration of divine wars as an historical mirror that reflects the frequency of international military conflicts and global social unrest throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This is often explicitly depicted in the series, especially in *Fate/Zero*, when a protagonist Emiya Kiritsugu is revealed to be a special forces mercenary whose missions led him to in destabilised regions of the Middle East, Latin America, and Central Africa during the 1990s. Additionally, magic, alchemy, and thaumaturgy are ruling forces in the *Fate* universe, but their existence to the public is kept secret and contained by a league of wealthy and esteemed families across the globe that were founded by mages of yore (the Einzberns in Germany, the Tōsakas in Japan) called the Mage's Association. Each house is committed to fighting in a worldwide clandestine tournament against each other for the chance of winning the famed prize of Arthurian legend, the redemptive Holy Grail, which as such, grants the victor any wish their heart desires.

⁶⁸¹ Cavallaro, p. 11.

⁶⁸² Cavallaro, p. 12.

Adhering to the visual novel logic of the *Fate* universe, each battle for the Holy Grail throws generations of mages into a bloody, heinous, and earthshattering war that is concealed in the terrors of natural disasters and world wars of each century. The *Fate* universe dictates that mages cannot simply use elemental or psychic powers against each other in these wars, because each mage that is chosen has resistance against most forms of magic. Each mage must summon a Heroic Spirit to fight for them in the Holy Grail Wars. Like in any tournament-based shōnen series, seven mages (Masters) must command their Heroic Spirits (Servants) in a battle royale to the death. Each servant belongs to one of seven classes, or specialised categories of fighters that is inspired by chess pieces, tarot cards, and traditional role-playing archetypes: Archer, Lancer, Saber, Caster, Rider, Assassin, and Berserker. Each one has a strength and weakness against a different class and can embody any legendary hero or historical personage that fits each fighting style. For example, Saber comes-into-being as King Arthur (*Fate/stay/night*) and Nero (*Fate/Extra*) at different times. Through a ludic combination of chance and skill, each mage gambles for a shot at the Holy Grail. After all but one of the master-servant assemblages surrender or dies, the remaining victor is granted the Holy Grail. The world of *Fate* is often quite vague on what happens after a wish is granted, but for each war to continue fresh and clandestine, the collective memory of the wars is erased immediately across the globe. Fans of the series also learn that most of the wishes granted alter world history in incomprehensibly dramatic ways. These wishes are often explained by world-altering events that manifest as social movements, technological innovations, political revolutions, ecological shifts, or economic disasters.

Otaku-centric series like *Fate* utilises the multiple frames of reference of the anime machine as an explosion of information in narrative networks and aesthetic milieu. Writing of the Gainax classic, *Nadia: Secrets of the Blue Water*, Lamarre writes:

Nadia brings multiple frames to the surface: nineteenth-century science, 1960s and 1970s design, postwar nuclear politics, the Bible and ancient myths, human evolution, space travel, interplanetary and interracial conflict, to name a few. Anno Hideaki would intensify this multiplication of frames of reference in his next anime series, *Evangelion*, combining Kabbalistic thought with biotechnology and mecha combat in a postapocalyptic future world under attack by mysterious Angels (to name just a few of the salient frames, many of which are anticipated in *Nadia*) [...] In effect, the

superplanar image—which brings multiple planes to the surface—unfolds as a superplanar narrative structure with multiple frames of reference, each one equally salient, each promising a key to unravel the strands of narrative strewn across the series.⁶⁸³

Like *Nadia* and *Evangelion*, we can see how the multiple frames of reference effects the entire fabric of Type-Moon's *Fate* universe, which is referred to by fans and Type-Moon employees as the 'Nasuverse,' named after Nasu Kinoko for his quantum worldbuilding techniques. Nasu produces a world with multiple frames of reference through its rhizomatic connectivity of the story and design, which overloads the series with densely packed informatic referents including the history of the Crusades and the Roman Catholic Church; late twentieth century global geopolitics; Greco-Roman, Celtic, Germanic, Shinto, Zoroastrian, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian folklore, mythology, and theosophy; occult practices; medieval Jewish and Christian eschatology; and science fiction tropes like time travel and cyberneticism.⁶⁸⁴

Nasu lists dozens of multidirectional referents that are equally disparate and relational to overwhelm our comprehension of representational and teleological narratives, of History. The quantum nature of the Nasuverse envelops all information in a dark ethereal lacuna, further demanding its readers to participate and interact with its multiple frames of reference against the backdrop of their own ontological shadows and traces. In *Fate*, player-viewers must quickly learn about the identities, the motivations, and the strategies of all the characters in an instant to comprehend the main arc. Player-viewers – like mages – must identify which

⁶⁸³ Lamarre, p. 204.

⁶⁸⁴ Nasu even incorporates fractals and shades of Arthurian literature in his own Grail legend, from its origins of the Welsh mythological cycle *Mabinogion* and its attending Irish mythological cycle, the Anglo-Norman pseudo-histories of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain*, Wace's *Roman de Brut*, and Layamon's *Brut*, the Old French poetic adaptations from Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram von Eschenbach's Middle High German poem *Parzival* to the subsequent British rewritings from Sir Thomas Mallory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* to Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. These myths, legends, and romances also collide with other figures that interact with this chivalric literary tradition and other *chansons de geste*, including Alexander the Great from the Old French twelfth century prose poems like *Li romans d'Alixandre* (The Romance of Alexander) or the Middle English romance *Kyng Alisaunder*. Like histories, annals, and other medieval literary objects, the participatory visual novel is a powerful aesthetic machine because of its ability to draw together these strands of time and space in a rhizomatic net of text and image. For more information on Arthurian literatures as both vernacular texts and transhistorical nomadologies, see Sarah Kay's *Courtly Contradictions: The Emergence of the Literary Object in the Twelfth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), and Seth Lerer's *Children's Literature: A Reader's History from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Heroic Spirit is which, primarily to counter their strengths on the battlefield. And yet, as the new assemblage of the player-mage unlocks each puzzling assemblage, their answers lead them back to into darkness. Even with a wealth of information and data on each target, player-mage are deceived. The multiple frames of reference bring the philosophical schema of the series to the surface.

On this flattened plane, the nature of knowledge, perception, and time is interrogated by presenting more questions about the overdetermined nature of the chaotic universe, which may at times be viewed as the predetermined hand of *fate*. Cavallaro writes that visual novels like *Fate* often blend ‘the prosaic and the extraordinary, the earthbound and the transcendental’ in order to establish a cosmic scope of the narrative.⁶⁸⁵ This establishes a magical realist worldview, an otaku imaginary trope that interrogates reality and representations. Cavallaro continues,

two linchpins of Japanese aesthetics: the bittersweet contemplation of the evanescence of worldly pleasures encapsulated by the concept associated with the concept of *mono no aware* [the sorrow of time passed] and the striving for the infinite and the eternal associated with the principle of *yugen* [the deeply mysterious and unknown].⁶⁸⁶

In accordance to these Japanese onto-aesthetic principles of temporal affectivity and ambiguity, Nasu’s multi-referents (unlike those from *Daicon IV*) are broken hyperlinks that take us to a parallel (or inverse) index, making the unknown, convoluted, and bizarre relations that we are exposed to early on in the series appear as false referents.⁶⁸⁷

In my estimation, it is difficult to avoid Type-Moon’s philosophies of History and nomadic temporality in their works. Type-Moon released a trailer for the July 2017 release of *Fate/Grand Order* in the U.S. market which details the game as an exploration of historical discourses, marketing the game as ‘a story about taking back our future’, which compels

⁶⁸⁵ Cavallaro, p. 12.

⁶⁸⁶ Cavallaro, p. 13.

⁶⁸⁷ Cavallaro acknowledges this fascination with epistemological and ontological inversions of *Fate*, noting that the ‘pivotal significance [given] to accidental and indeterminable factors’ in a series like *Fate* ‘calls to mind two further categories central to Japanese aesthetics: *sabi*, a passion for imperfection, and the related notions of *wabi*, a predilection for the frayed and lacunary. Given its openness to multiple and discordant interpretive trajectories, the anime under scrutiny place emphasis on notions of chance, contingency, and randomness’, p. 13.

players to ‘shape the future of this planet, and inscribe its history on the surface’. A recent preview of the game by Josh Tolentino at *Destructoid.com* entitled ‘Remake history this summer with the next *Fate* game’ continues Type-Moon’s marketing salvo, asking his readers: ‘Have you ever wished your free-to-play mobile diversions committed more historical heresies in pursuit of the almighty cute? Well, too bad, because now *Fate/Grand Order* is coming to English-language phones and pads near you’.⁶⁸⁸ Tolentino, a fan of the series, anticipated the game’s release for fans and newcomers alike, briefly detailing the world of *Fate* as one that is quite unique in the mobile gaming and anime markets, concluding: ‘where else can you participate in a brawl between King Arthur, Emperor Nero, or Sir Francis Drake, all redrawn as cute anime girls?’⁶⁸⁹ Nowhere else but in the Nasuverse.

Because of Type-Moon’s commitment to producing what Tolentino playfully refers to as ‘historical heresies in pursuit of the almighty cute’, I argue in this chapter that Type-Moon’s mass multiplication of historical, legendary, and futuristic referents adheres to Cavallaro’s claim that visual novel series like *Fate* urge toward producing worlds that reflect ‘the interpenetration of the legendary past and the contingent present’, which in turn shatters any stable spatiotemporal or historical anchoring in the Nasuverse.⁶⁹⁰ By blending the otaku philosophies of media transversal and mediated movement with Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophies of History, we will be able to further understand how Type-Moon’s anime adaptations enunciate a radically new theory of transhistorical becomings *against History*. Type-Moon’s otaku theory resembles that of Miura and Yukimura in manga; similarly, their narrative and representative fascinations with History beckons us to imagine the speculative and rhizomatic nature of nonlinear time. However, unlike Miura and Yukimura, Type-Moon reassesses an animetic exploration of the Deleuzian concept of *the virtual* through the hybridised and intermedial otaku media assemblage.

⁶⁸⁸ Josh Tolentino, ‘Remake history this summer with the next *Fate* game’, *Destructoid.com*. <https://www.destructoid.com/remake-history-this-summer-with-the-next-fate-game-431445.phtml> [Accessed 10 June 2016].

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁰ Cavallaro, p.14.

The Weapons of Time: Noble Phantasms as Allegories of the All-Times in *Fate/Zero*

Before we can analyse Type-Moon's anime adaptations of the virtual, we must address Deleuze's theory of co-existential time as a new philosophy of anti-History. As we have assessed throughout the thesis, Deleuze and Guattari's primary assertions against History is that '[a]ll history does is to translate a co-existence of becomings into succession'.⁶⁹¹ The institutional and imperial nature of History is, for Deleuze and Guattari, the greatest illusory force set against revolutionary thought and non-fascistic modes of social existence. Deleuze and Guattari look to indigenous and nomadic cultures that resisted, escaped, or violently challenged the hegemony of imperial powers, from Rome and China to Babylon and Egypt. In doing so, they also examined how nomadic cultures altered and mutated imperial thinking machines, from mathematics and astronomy to written language and visual arts. If History then is a succession of codified individuations and calculated determinations rather than a web of varied becomings and aleatory overdeterminations, then Deleuze and Guattari find an alternative in nomadology, an anti-History that I have examined extensively throughout Part I. While the liberating qualities of nomadology are made clear in Chapter One and Two, the temporal nature of nomadology has yet to be examined. Deleuze and Guattari move us further beyond the mere representations of History, traversing the philosophical and physical process of making new histories rather than merely affirming old ones.

In this context, Type-Moon's series asks: how does one implement nomadology into thought well beyond the academic process of adjusting historiographical scopes? For Deleuze and Guattari (and Nietzsche), we must seek to destroy imperial histories and the philosophies that are encoded into centralised social, cultural, and political circuits; we should adopt an anti-institutional Nietzschean nihilism when we dismantle and deny the sovereignty of History. By denying History, it is very important to note that Deleuze and Guattari do not seek for us to create an ahistorical reality where historical processes are made false by the impulses of late capitalism, as Frederic Jameson argues.⁶⁹² Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari are not simply arguing against Lyotard's grand narratives of a monolithic History either. Nomadology goes much further beyond the scope of these philosophical considerations for the institutional and intellectual reforms of History. The central radical feature of nomadology is its temporal

⁶⁹¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 573.

⁶⁹² Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 56.

iconoclasm; Deleuze and Guattari challenge not only our writings of the past, but of the separations of past, present, and future as discrete temporal units. Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* sets a philosophical precedent that does not differentiate past, present, and future from each other; by combining philosophies of time via Nietzsche, Spinoza, and Bergson, Deleuze produces a three-part taxonomy of time as a synthesis of all times (past-present-future), which further creates a model for comprehending time as a cosmic force that is utterly imperceptible because of how violently multidirectional and heterogenetic it truly is.⁶⁹³

To reiterate Jay Lampert's position explained in the previous chapter, note that Type-Moon's universe asks how it is possible to discuss the plurality of time alongside the paradoxical construction of History, which as we have seen, is nothing more than a study in organising becomings into succession, chains of causality, and ideological formulations. To answer this, note how Deleuze and Guattari strive to expand Nietzsche's critique of History in this Bergsonian temporal template, which can be distilled down to 'one important variant on the theory of co-existential history, namely Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the "names of history"' as Lampert writes.⁶⁹⁴ The names of history are briefly introduced in *Anti-Oedipus*, but they are charged with 'the logic of time' in the three syntheses mentioned earlier in *Difference and Repetition*: 'the present Chronos of habit, the past Aion of pure memory, and the future of the eternal return'.⁶⁹⁵ According to Deleuze and Guattari, the names of history are referents to an index of becomings attached to the universal history of humanity and its nonhuman assemblages. Names of history, or Nietzsche's *homo historia*, are not subjects or individuals, but rather, specific assemblages that process differing modes of becomings and unbecomings at any moment. In other words, when speaking of Nietzsche-as-*homo historia*, Deleuze and Guattari claim that Nietzsche is not an unmovable historical subject whose historical sovereignty is affirmed by nature of his great works or words. Rather, Deleuze and Guattari argue that Nietzsche has become a name of history: 'the Nietzschean-subject who passes through a series of states, and who identifies the names of history with these states: "all the names of history, it's me"'.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹³ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). Hereafter *DR*.

⁶⁹⁴ Lampert, p. 2.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁶ Deleuze, *AO*, p. 28.

Nomadology begins by reducing the aura of History (and the sanctity it retains through the State) to a mere integer and referent. As Lampert clarifies, ‘[t]he names of history are not figures who were once present and became past, but exist as a subject’s passage back through historical personae’.⁶⁹⁷ The names of history form a pluralistic schematic for understanding the coexistence of nomadic becomings, which reveal themselves as temporally enfolded monads:

We are also of a mind to believe that everything commingles in these intense becomings, passages, and migrations – all this drift that ascends and descends the flows of time: countries, races, families, parental appellations, geographical and historical designations, and even miscellaneous news items.⁶⁹⁸

This theory is poetically proclaimed by the Zarathustran schizoid who – like a maddened oracle of Nietzsche’s design – speaks through the dual tongues of Deleuze and Guattari who, as quoted earlier, profoundly claim that becoming-woman, becoming-God, and feeling the historical resonances of Joan of Arc or Heliogabalus, or the Mongol Horde is an imaginative fabulation as much as it is an affective vision of time.

From Deleuze and Guattari’s development of Nietzsche’s anti-institutional histories (or Foucault’s counter-memories, Braidotti’s nomadic memories), the *Fate* franchise and the Nasuverse are clearly built upon the logic of co-existential history. Furthermore, these temporal theories are exposed in *Fate* beyond the mere narrative alibi of summoning Servants. Type-Moon explores the time-image through the anime machine by revealing the diagrammatic and animated designs of the most powerful spells and weapons called ‘Noble Phantasms’ of the Servants summoned. As I have mentioned previously, we are introduced to numerous heroes throughout the *Fate* series, including Gilgamesh, Alexander the Great, and King Arthur. More like the fighting game *Melty Blood* than their visual novel counterparts, the anime series *Fate/Zero* and *Fate/stay/night: Unlimited Blade Works* – animated by Ufotable Studios, an animation studio that specialises in blending together the latest CGI software with limited cel animation – elaborately expose and illustrate the crystalline in these Noble Phantasms.

⁶⁹⁷ Lampert, p. 2.

⁶⁹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *AO*, p. 93.

Gilgamesh, the first of all the heroes in human history, also known as the King of Kings, wields two Noble Phantasms that are temporally empowered and exposed as such in the anime machine. The first Noble Phantasm, called the Gates of Babylon, is a treasure trove of every historical weapon ever used in legendary, mythic, or ancient combat. Since Gilgamesh specialises in projectiles as an Archer class, these weapons act as missiles. In ‘False Start,’ the second episode of *Fate/Zero*, we are introduced to the Gates of Babylon.⁶⁹⁹ In this short scene, Kotomine Kirei (the primary antagonist of the prequel) conspires with the Tōsaka family. In order to make sure that other Masters do not suspect any shadow allegiances, the first battle between Servants takes place outside of the Tōsaka manor. Kirei recklessly sends his Assassin Servant, Hassin-i-Sabbah, into harm’s way; as Hassin sneaks through the security system of the mansion, Gilgamesh appears, opening the Gates of Babylon. In this scene, we see a medium shot of Gilgamesh as he levitates over Hassin; set in the background to Gilgamesh, golden portals open behind his back. When Gilgamesh targets his enemies, dozens of lost weapons from time erupt from the portals and impale his enemies. Like the exploded view of Bunny’s exploding sword in *Daicon IV*, Ufotable animates the Gates of Babylon as an explosion of perspective. The camera becomes disorienting, unable to situate any focalised perception upon one figure. Like the exploded view of *Daicon*, the flattening of planes makes each sword or spear look more like laser-targeted missile, flying at insurmountable speeds, breaking through the animetic interval and the distributive field, destroying Hassin instantly.

Hidden within the Gates of Babylon is the first primordial blade of man, simply called ‘Ea: Sword of Rupture.’ This blade is importantly the name for the Babylonian god of creation, whose name is also interchangeable with Enki, Gilgamesh’s close ancestor (great-great grandfather).⁷⁰⁰ Gilgamesh’s second Noble Phantasm is called ‘Enuma Elish: The Star of Creation that Split Heaven and Earth,’ which engulfs the world in a massive vortex that becomes ‘a virtual (擬似的な [giji-tekina] or ‘quasi-, pseudo-, virtual’) dislocation of space-time, annihilating any who would stand in opposition’, according to the visual novel.⁷⁰¹ In this vacuum, all vectors of time and space are shredded into long strands, separating them from

⁶⁹⁹ ‘False Start’, *Fate/Zero* (Season One, Episode Two), dir. by Aoki Ei and Ufotable, Inc, prod. by Aniplex (Crunchyroll, 2011). [Accessed 14 January 2015].

⁷⁰⁰ Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). p. 167.

⁷⁰¹ *Type-Moon Wiki*: <http://typemoon.wikia.com/wiki/Ea> [Accessed 1 July 2017].

their cohesive properties, and finally destroys all matter within this dimension. Gilgamesh uses this Noble Phantasm against his dearest friend Enkidu in the light novel *Fate/strange fake* (2015), and both Gilgamesh and Enkidu (who shares Gilgamesh's ties to Ea) are stuck in an endless loop of creating and destroying the known universe repeatedly.

Gilgamesh's primordial weapons are characteristically cosmic becomings of steel. The Gates of Babylon and Ea create and destroy world-images of memory. In all its media manifestations, either in visual novel, video game, or anime form, the Gate of Babylon manifest all becomings-steel as weapons of the Deleuzo-Guattarian looping lord of time, Aion, and Nietzsche's ouroboric serpentine companion. After using one of the weapons of the past against an enemy, the treasure of Gilgamesh is restored. The infinite nature of the Gate of Babylon is made clear in all of Gilgamesh's encounters. However, while the creation of memory-images of the Bronze and Iron Age initially transports viewers back to the nomadic-imperial wars of antiquity and legend, it is impossible to hide the fact that they are used as destructive projectiles by Gilgamesh. Henceforth, these world-images of becoming-steel are not liberating tools against imperial means; rather, they are co-opted objects of nomadic origins militarised against time itself. By flattening History to one treasure chest, Gilgamesh becomes an actively nihilistic imperial demagogue who believes in the Malthusian logic of purifying the world of humanity and its weaknesses. By becoming-god, Gilgamesh does not find any value in mere mortal life or empty time. Once again, this is reflected in Ea's Enuma Elish, which as we have seen, is a cosmic simulation of the naturalistic law of the conservation of energy: matter can neither be created nor destroyed, but it can indeed transform in spectacular forms. As the vortex embraces all forms of time and life, the loop of genesis and annihilation is inescapable. As worlds are created, destroyed, and reborn anew, Gilgamesh becomes the avatar for Aion; his position in the Nasuverse illustrates that while the image of an unbounded, extended, and infinite time seems liberating, it is horrifyingly indifferent and violently opposed to human existence. To ignore the limited human conceptualisation of time, Gilgamesh celebrates a deep (and nonhuman) conception of time. Because of this, Nasu's Gilgamesh is depicted as a Nietzschean overman who lives through the naturalistic impulses of a cold, chaotic, bloody, and uncontrollable prehistorical world to retain his position as god-king of antiquity.⁷⁰²

⁷⁰² Deleuze, *NP*, p. 127.

Alexander the Great reveals his own Noble Phantasm called ‘Ionioi Hetairoi: Army of the King,’ as he is engulfed in Gilgamesh’s Enuma Elish. In the twenty-third episode, Alexander summons all the lost souls of his campaigns to fight against the most powerful weapon of time: Ea. His heroes, or as he calls, ‘Companions,’ include all heroes that have pledged their allegiance to Alexander across time and space, even during the time-disrupting worlds of the Holy Grail Wars.⁷⁰³ Riding his prized horse Bucephalus, Alexander charges with his legions of historical companions like the famed Persian commander Mithrenes, and his Macedonian imperial successors including Antipater, Ptolemy I, and Seleucus into the fray. In this dimension, all his enemies are transported to a massive desert where his armies of hundreds and thousands ride and march against their new enemies of time. Unlike Gilgamesh’s doubly cosmic and naturalist philosophies of human civilisation, Alexander’s weapon of time serves as a humanistic response to the dire realities of Gilgamesh’s conceptualisation of finitude. Far less cosmic and much more classical, Ionioi Hetairoi is not only a transversal capture and mutation of antiquarian History like the Gates of Babylon; it is, however, a weapon of Hellenistic, idealised time, what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as Chronos, the pre-Socratic embodiment of empirical, successive, and habitualised time.⁷⁰⁴ Alexander and his Noble Phantasm function as Type-Moon’s avatar for the suprahistorical, imperial, and humanistic conceptualisation of time.

For Alexander, History is made by actions of the now, even as they are projected in the imaginary of anime. Alexander’s ontological commitment to a world made for capture, conquest, and cultivation is what makes his Noble Phantasm so powerful in this universe. As Alexander traverses time to collect and recruit powerful enemies to his ranks like in any Japanese strategy or role-playing video game, his Noble Phantasm exposes the limits of human expressions of time, namely in the manifestation of glory and fame. Glory – a celebrated cultural memory – is all that Alexander sees in the sea of time. In this way, unlike Gilgamesh’s commitment to finitude, Alexander fights for immortality within the confines of the most mortal of all realms: war. By capturing and deploying the greatest warriors of time, Ufotable’s anime adaptation of Ionioi Hetairoi function as an animation of spatial and ontological capture. In Episode Seven of *Fate/Zero*, Alexander’s weapon of time manifests

⁷⁰³ ‘The Sea at the End of the World’, *Fate/Zero* (Season Two, Episode Twenty-Three), dir. by Aoki Ei and Ufotable, Inc, prod. by Aniplex (Crunchyroll, 2012). [Accessed 14 January 2015].

⁷⁰⁴ Deleuze, *LS*, p. 74.

itself as a projected three-dimensional Euclidean dome of multiple frames of reference and flat composited layers: think the Daicon effect here.⁷⁰⁵ In this contained CGI and cel animated space, action-images (milieu or binomial as examined in Chapter Three) are synthesised and compiled into its own crystallised ideal of Alexandrian History, where time is but a motor for imperial war machines. Additionally, it is significant that Alexander's army of time appears in what Type-Moon calls a 'Reality Marble', or a projected memory imprinted on the human lifeworld, rather than a naturally occurring phenomenon appearing in our world. As Alexander re-remembers his final battles across Persia and northern India, the visible modern milieu becomes an expansive desert. This philosophical metaphor should not be missed. Ionioni Hetairioi reveals the actuality of Alexander's virtual desires of transforming the horrors of conquest (and the preservation of History) into the action-image, which inherently champions the representational forces of struggle, strategy, and subjective affirmation.

Unlike the previous two, however, when King Arthur (a gender-queered version named Artoria) reveals her Noble Phantasm, 'Avalon: The Everdistant Utopia,' viewers are introduced to a messianic manifestation of the crystalline, one that transposes the nomadological flattening of time and space onto a temporal loop. This messianic return leaves Artoria stuck in between the tragic end of her mortal life and the pan-Celtic afterlife that is projected into the future. Avalon is the sheath to Excalibur, and it is a defensive power, one that shields the world in a shroud of fairies from the unobtainable utopia of Avalon, where Morgan le Fay sends a dying Arthur after the Battle of Camlann.⁷⁰⁶ Unlike the other Noble Phantasms, Artoria's weapon of time heals and defends her targets from the onslaughts of History, including the Gates of Babylon and Ionioi Hetairioi. While Avalon has an innate temporal power of controlling time, it is perhaps the most complicated weapon of time, primarily because it explores virtual theories of salvation rather than actual performances of historical violence. Avalon urges towards a utopia that is impossible to reach yet provides a salve to the horrors of History for a brief reprieve. It is depicted in the anime as an unrepresentable weapon of time, unable to project itself as a Reality Marble. While Gilgamesh and Alexander introduce weapons of time that reflect the cosmic and human violence of time, Avalon conversely introduces a messianic component to Artoria's weapon that allows her to

⁷⁰⁵ 'The Evil Forest', *Fate/Zero* (Season One, Episode Seven), dir. by Aoki Ei and Ufotable, Inc, prod. by Aniplex (Crunchyroll, 2011). [Accessed 14 January 2015].

⁷⁰⁶ Sir Thomas Malory, 'The Death of Arthur', in *Le Morte Darthur: The Winchester Manuscript*, ed. by Helen Cooper. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). pp. 468-527.

preserve expiring lifeworlds rather than imprint and impose other objects and milieu of History upon the present or future. Further note how unlike Gilgamesh's prehistorical rage and Alexander's historical idealism, Artoria's weapon of time explores a transcendental nature of time that is neither cosmically indifferent or humanistically inspired. Type-Moon describes Avalon as an 'unattainable ideal, one that is worth seeking even as its actualisation is impossible'.⁷⁰⁷ Avalon's powers are situated between the philosophies of Gilgamesh and Alexander, between the unforgiving cosmos and the hubris of humanity. We may describe Avalon as a messianic response to the horrors of finitude and the banal pursuits of human action-as-History. To understand Avalon's temporal dimension, we need to think beyond the cataclysmic pasts of Aion and the regimented march of Chronos. In the exposure of Avalon, Type-Moon compels us to think about a crystalline world of possibilities and virtualities that connect to the actual, just as Deleuze writes: 'As opposed to history as apocalypse, there is a sense of history as possibility, the multiplicity of what is possible, the profusion of multiple possibilities at every moment'.⁷⁰⁸

'Idealisms End': Unearthing the Crystals of Time in *Unlimited Blade Works*

While Type-Moon's allegorical or figural weapons of time are essential starting points for examining the *Fate* series transhistorical tendencies, it is important to also return to Deleuze's cinematic semiotics in the series, to formally depict how the anime machine can formally intensify Nasu's narratological reliance on self-referential frames of reference and a rhizomatic network of nomadic images. Specifically, there are three episodes at the end of *Fate/stay/night: Unlimited Blade Works* that I will focus on to examine how Type-Moon translates action into a wealth of time-images, well beyond the overt themes of the series. In these episodes, action-images mutate into time-images due to the nature of the flattened layers and optimised speed of the anime machine. While it is difficult to not think about the abundant *content* of the nomadological apparatus and the thematic representations it produces, I want to illustrate how these scenes – regardless of content – capture the transversal temporal flows and philosophies in between images, composites, and layers. It is in this Deleuzo-Bergsonian

⁷⁰⁷ Type-Moon Wiki: <http://typemoon.wikia.com/wiki/Avalon> [Accessed 7 July 2017].

⁷⁰⁸ Gilles Deleuze, 'The Indians of Palestine', in *Two Regimes of Madness, Texts and Interviews (1975-1995)*, trans. by Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina, ed. by David Lapoujade. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). pp. 199-200.

context that this section will examine how the rise of the crystalline set against the structures of a hyper-optimised action form is integral in understanding how the anime machine mobilises the logic of nomadology.

Let us first begin with contextualising *Unlimited Blade Works* within the Nasuverse. In the original visual novel, there are three routes that players can choose from as they make narrative actions and character decisions based on the romantic interests of Shirō: (1) Fate (Saber / Artoria route), (2) Unlimited Blade Works (Tōsaka Rin route), or (3) Heaven's Feel (Matou Sakura route). Nasu claims in a 2006 interview from *Dengeki Online* that beyond merely choosing romantic interests, *Fate*'s 'main theme is 'conquering oneself.' There are three story lines in *Fate*, each has a different themes [sic]. The first one is the 'oneself as an ideal.' The second one is 'struggling with oneself as an ideal.' The third one is 'the friction with real and ideal'".⁷⁰⁹ While the first anime adaptation from Studio Deen in 2006 drew extensively from the first route, Yamaguchi Yuji's feature film adaptation *Fate/stay night the Movie: Unlimited Blade Works* (2010) expanded out to examine the second route in anime form. After this feature, Ufotable released the prequel *Fate/Zero* in 2011 and prepared to animate a serialised version of *Unlimited Blade Works* for a 2014-15 release, which surrounds the second narrative route. Finally, the anime film trilogy *Fate/Heaven's Feel* (2017-18), produced by Ufotable, directed by Sudō Tomonori, and written by Hiyama Akira, explores the events of the third route. *Unlimited Blade Works*, however, focuses less on the romance between Shirō and Rin, and more on the mirrored relationship between young Shirō and his future self, Archer (EMIYA). EMIYA is a powerful Heroic Servant called a 'Guardian' at the end of the Fate route by binding himself to the corrupted Grail. Guardians, as EMIYA explains, are "essentially automatic-defence mechanisms [...] that safeguard human history" unlike regular Heroic Spirits that cycle in and out of the present.⁷¹⁰ In this series, Archer-EMIYA is summoned by Rin, Shirō's love interest. As they learn throughout the series, Archer's truest intention in the Holy Grail War is to kill Shirō; the purpose of EMIYA's time-travelling suicide mission is to secure a future (or a non-future) that allows him to escape his doomed existence as a time-warping hero of justice and guardian of humanity.

⁷⁰⁹ *Dengeki Online*: <http://dengekionline.com/soft/interview/fate/>. [Accessed 4 April 2017]. Fans on the *Comipress* blog translated the article in English here: <http://comipress.com/article/2006/06/30/386.html> [Accessed 4 April 2017].

⁷¹⁰ 'Where Justice is Found', *Fate/Zero* (Season Two, Episode Nineteen), dir. by Aoki Ei and Ufotable, Inc, prod. by Aniplex (Crunchyroll, 2012). [Accessed 14 January 2015].

In Episode Nineteen, aptly called ‘Idealism End,’ Archer-EMIYA reveals his identity to Artoria and Shirō.⁷¹¹ The episode exposes the most important mystery of the entire series through a series of crystalline narrative and descriptive signs, unsettling the impulses and urges of the action-image. Turning back to Deleuzian cineosis, I argue that this episode introduces cracks in the foundation of the regime of the action-image; from this point on, time, memory, and perception alters significantly, and the logic of movement is overwhelmed by a highly optimised, networked, and integrated swarm of opsigns, hyalosigns, chronosigns, noosigns, and lectosigns. The first scene of this episode urges toward producing an iconic lectosign of the Holy Grail. According to Deleuze, a lectosign is the ‘final aspect of the direct time-image, the common limit’, whereby ‘[s]peech reaches its own limit which separates it from the visual [and] the visual reaches its own limit which separates it from sound’.⁷¹² The lectosign not only reflects the limit of representational language used in cinema, but more accurately, it beckons the viewers to read the speech-acts of cinema beyond language as abstract schematics. Throughout the series, the Holy Grail is not described as a vessel object, like a crucible or cast-iron pot in Welsh or Irish myths or a golden chalice in Christian rewritings. It appears, rather, as an anomalous globe of displaced space, a vacuum, a vortex. In this abstract visualisation, the Grail becomes a visual object of autonomous coalescence and metamorphosis, unsettling the representational tradition of the said object of power. The imperceptibility of the Holy Grail alters our reading and interpretation models of an often-traversed fantasy alibi and trope: we cannot see it, but viewers are forced to begin to make new signs in the absence of representational ones. The Holy Grail becomes a worm hole. It is not only an ideal narrative device to explain time-travel, but it is a perfect cinematic object then for exploring transtemporality, introducing us to the primary and most potent of time-images: the lectosign. Deamer writes that

Lectosigns indicate the way in which time-images (as a complex nexus of hyalosigns, chronosigns and noosigns) need to be interpreted by the spectator. Reading, in this sense, is a trip, or journey, in to the domain of unthought, that which the film does not think.⁷¹³

⁷¹¹ ‘Idealisms End,’ *Fate/stay/night: Unlimited Blade Works* (Season Two, Episode Nineteen), dir. by Miura Takahiro, Notes and Ufotable, Inc, prod. by Aniplex (Crunchyroll, 2015). [Accessed 20 May 2017].

⁷¹² Deleuze, *C2*, p. 286.

⁷¹³ Deamer, *Deleuze’s Cinema Books*, p. 163.

As a newly readable image assemblage, we learn that the Grail-as-lectosign is infinitely coalescent, producing ‘the purest virtual appearing on the brain screen as an event capturing up actual matter-images as opsigns and sonsigns (the image – frame, shot, montage, colour and sound – and its virtual)’.⁷¹⁴

The episode opens with a medium shot of Shirō hunched over in agony against a railing in what seems to be a technological facility. This image is framed at a sharp angle, distorting our senses and thoughts, which not only produces an exaggerated visual effect, but it reveals either ‘the psychological state of the character, or the disturbed social state infecting the very framing’, as Deamer will remind us.⁷¹⁵ With each on-screen grunt and huff emanating from Shirō’s exhausted body, overlays of red and blue oversaturate the scene, transposing the auditory information into the background. As the technicolour, neon CGI gradients overwhelm the audio-visual sensorium, an irrational cut interrupts this ominous, luminous, and phantasmagoric light show. The next quick cut reveals the illusion of continuity as much as with the ‘reintroduction of Technicolour’ as Deamer writes; the introduction of the irrational cut and overexposure of pure colour gradients which Deamer may call ‘the uniformity of colour’ is responsible for forming ‘time-images of immense power’ in this very moment.⁷¹⁶

Another image appears after the previous scene effortlessly disperses into a haze of vibrant blue. In this next shot, a powerfully reoccurring opsign of the Holy Grail as a black hole or a hollowed-out moon is depicted. In the centre of the frame, a swirling vortex of blue lights, specks, and clouds warp and blend together in a centripetal fashion, until finally manifesting itself into a perfectly rounded azure globe adorned with two asymmetrical parabolic rings floating around in orbit, like the ring systems of Saturn. In conjunction with this opsign, sonsigns appear. As these images coalesce into the virtual, metallic screeches, cosmic swishes, and airy swoops work for and against the frenetic opsign. Each sound oscillates unevenly between asynchronistic dissonance and synchronistic harmony, overthrowing any impression of coherent and comprehensible audio-visual relations. This lectosign must reveal not only the conjunction of optical components (framing, shot, montage, colour), but that each image ‘is a composite of visual and auditory information’, bound tensely

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

⁷¹⁵ Deamer, p. 164.

⁷¹⁶ Deamer, p. 167.

by disjunctive and conjunctive urges of sound and image.⁷¹⁷ Instead of blending audio-visual elements together, the cinematic assemblage of autonomously moving images and articulated sounds is an unnatural cybernetic anomaly. Due to this process of denaturalising audio-visual relations in the anime machine, this lectosign exposes the ‘the audiovisual contract’, which as Deamer claims, does not ‘destroy any supposed unity between sound and vision’, but rather ‘creates the time-image’ as a multisensational and intermedial experience that is always in flux.⁷¹⁸ Moreover, the denaturalising effects of this opsign and sonsign results in the ‘stymieing of the emergence of composition in the perception-image (which in turn effects each type of movement-image)’ as Deamer reminds writes, exposing the ‘weakening of the linkages between different types of movement-image (disrupting the coalescence of the entire regime)’.⁷¹⁹

Immediately, as the regime of action is enfeebled, the next cut attempts to relink the actual with the virtual, resituating the camera to a close-up of Shirō’s trousers, which slowly pans up to his head. As the camera pans up, strands of light from the floating orb connect and root onto the surface of Shirō’s body. After another quick cut, Shirō’s face is framed in a medium shot; his head is bloodied, his eyes and face are sullen. In this shot, more strands of light move toward his face. In this illusion of the action-image, Shirō finally speaks: ‘If doing this means no one will cry, then...’ The speech-act continues until the medium shot cuts into a close-up of Shirō’s auburn eye which trembles at the speed of nanoseconds, simulating the velocity of the animetic interval and the affective nature of soulful character design. His left eye is artfully framed between two small streams of blood on his forehead. As he continues his sentence, the incandescent filaments reach up his face toward his eye. Just before reaching his vibrating eye, the scene dramatically ends with a quick cut to the opening sequence, interrupting Shirō’s theatrical speech-act and any relinkage efforts of the perception-image and its regime of action.

This scene lasts no longer than twenty-four seconds. It is narratively out of conjunction with the previous episode’s ending, yet for fans of the series, it is a key moment that binds together the entirety of the Nasuverse. While watching it for the first time, viewers may mistake this opening with a different episode primarily because it sits outside of chronological

⁷¹⁷ Deamer, p. 168.

⁷¹⁸ Deamer, p. 164.

⁷¹⁹ Deamer, p. 138.

order, even though there is a vaguely familiar and ominous sense of relationality between the images of mystical tech and a boy hero as otaku metaphors. It may seem like a dream-image, or a recollection-image in flashback or foreshadowing form. But because of its transtemporal unlinkages and linkages across the metanarratively enriched Nasuverse, this lectosign is unveiled as an infinite coalescence of disparate temporal signs of description and narrative that mutate the dominant logic of the action-image throughout the series. In this sequence, we are tasked to read this episode differently. This episode challenges the traditional large action-form of the shōnen tournament anime (which relies on the milieu and binomial conflict to produce resolution and situations) as much as the ‘plastic representations’ and tropes of generic shōjo romance with a crystalline composition that reveals the identity of Archer as future-Shirō.⁷²⁰

It is important to highlight how this revelation of identity and the unveiling of a mystery occurs in a crystalline sequence that is described and exposed as if in a hallucinatory dream. First, as we have covered, we are introduced to the lectosign of Shirō and the Grail. The next scene depicts an introductory shot of Shirō, Artoria, and Cú Chulainn set in the foreground facing the red carpeted stairs of a destroyed ballroom in a mansion where a previous fight took place. The three are on a mission: Rin has been captured by her enemies and they have come to save her. However, they are accosted by her former Servant who betrays her: Archer-EMIYA. After Cú Chulainn departs to find Rin, Archer-EMIYA (covered in shadows, becoming-imperceptible in the shot) is questioned by both Artoria and Shirō. As mentioned before, the true identity of Heroic Spirits is key to defeating them. But here, the identity of Archer-EMIYA is far more important for Shirō. In a previous episode, Shirō witnesses Archer-EMIYA use Rin’s crimson magical pendant. This very same item was used to save Shirō’s life at the beginning of the series. At this point, the young hero confronts Archer-EMIYA, and his suspicions are confirmed: Archer is a future version of Shirō. With this time-travelling trope in play, the episode reintroduces viewers to the convoluted sci-fi logic of the Nasuverse’s transversal nomadologies. By the third minute of the episode, narrative exposition takes over, and Artoria thinks aloud: ‘The concept of time does not exist where the Heroic Spirits are recorded. Heroic Spirits from the past are treated identically to those of the future’. At this point, Artoria realises that Heroic Spirits are not relegated by the

⁷²⁰ Deleuze, *CI*, p. 182. Deleuze describes plastic representations as figural ‘images which represent another image, and have a value one by one even when they are taken in series’.

past. They can indeed be figures from the future. At this point of narrative revelation (and subpar exposition) a powerful opsign is introduced, taking up the entirety of the shot for seven seconds. This opsign stands completely out of context of the scene: it is an expansive image of an ocean, a blue sky, and moving white clouds. This opsign of what I call the sea of time is very similar to *Vinland Saga*'s opsigns of sea and sky at the end of the Farmland arc as described in Chapter Three. In general, these opsigns function the same. However, unlike the still-images of the manga machine, the CGI sea of time is not a representational close-up of the sea or a gaze into the sky organised by symmetrical frames. Rather, this opsign takes up the entirety of the screen, and in all resolutions and ratios, the image curves against the contours of the superflattened layers of sky and sea.



Figure 14

As Artoria muses off-screen, clouds dart quickly across the sky toward the foreground and the waves slowly meander into the background. There is a mirroring of waves and clouds here; the inverted movements toward (clouds) and away (waves) from the viewer on a flattened surface is not only an interesting optical illusion, or a confusion of focalisation. It is, rather, an introduction to the philosophical interrogations of doubling, of mirroring, and of Deleuze's concept of enfoldment through the animetic interval exposed here.

After the sea of time opsign appears, we are given five minutes of more traditional exposition with a sequence of shot-reverse-shot and close-ups. However, quickly the gamick exposition of the Nasuverse subsides, and it transforms into a philosophical debate about idealism in the traditional sense: acting and living for heroic (ethical) ideals for the good of humanity. While I would like to argue that there is a Hegelian undercurrent to this discourse, it does not manifest itself here in this exchange. There is, however, a robust discourse on the

nature of ethics in the face of war and violence, one that I think traverses a long lineage of post-war Japanese pacifist and anti-interventionalist debates and sentiments. Since the debate is a trope in most Japanese shōnen series, I will not spend that much time on it. However, all that is necessary to know is that Archer-EMIYA argues against the messianic ideals of Kiritsugu from *Fate/Zero* and the superhero desires of a young Shirō to save the lives of as many humans as possible. Archer's argument deftly balances a nihilistic and pacifist tone. For him, it is impossible to save humanity from themselves because they (and we) are inherently violent and selfish. The violent intervention Archer-EMIYA engages in as a Guardian to 'balance' the lifeworld (i.e. the unenviable task of killing baddies and saving the innocent) leads to an unending cycle of bloodshed, a recursive temporal loop of violence that as Benjamin remind us, never ends with by means of History, dialectics, or action.

Archer-EMIYA's plan to go back in time to kill a young idealistic Shirō is a desperate gambit to stop him from becoming a killing machine for an already abhorrent human race that has betrayed their gods, heroes, and saviours repeatedly. In this debate, Shirō disagrees vehemently, but Artoria seems to centre herself between the pessimism and idealism of both parties. We learn here through a stylised recollection-image (flashback) around the eighth minute of the episode that Artoria – like Archer-EMIYA – seeks to win the Holy Grail War to go back in time to undo her historical existence, because according to her, she failed in her mission to save a dying Romano-Celtic Britain from invasion and civil war. For her, pulling Caliburn from the stone, becoming the king of Britain, marrying Guinevere, founding Camelot, discovering Excalibur, fighting with Lancelot and Mordred, and living to see all of Britain burn in apocalyptic and tragic fashion – like Fuyuki City in *Fate/Zero* – is an unbearable weight that she bears throughout time.

In this sequence of recollection-images, all the affective markers of her past which importantly establishes the tone of the episode and establishes a crystalline roadmap for EMIYA and Shirō. At the beginning of the scene, a close-up of present-Artoria dissolve into white, transitioning to a long shot of Artoria standing in between a foreground of a fertile field littered with boulders and a background of a golden sky. She is clearly not depicted as a king nor a warrior: the milieu is proletarian and earthy, reflecting a peasant's history of Britain rather than one of a cursed king. Importantly, the camera lingers on the layers of naturalistic images (rocks, grass, trees, clouds), seemingly excavating Artoria's memories to unearth an alternative history of the once and future king as a non-institutional historical entity: a peasant.

Deleuze articulates a similar sentiment when writing about a scene from Jean-Marie Straub's *Moses and Aaron*:

History is inseparable from the earth, struggle is underground, and if we want to grasp an event, we must not show it, we must not pass along the event, but plunge into it, go through all the geographical layers that are its internal history (and not simply a more or less distant past) [...] To grasp an event is to connect it to the silent layers of earth which make up its true continuity, or which inscribe it in the class struggle. There is something peasant in history. It is therefore now a visual image, the stratigraphic landscape.⁷²¹

This stratigraphic landscape unearths a new image of King Arthur as a peasant girl, marked by not only the multi-layered milieu of the sixth century, but in all visual registers, including her character design and dress, her position in relation to the sword-stone in the frame, and her own blurred focalisation in relation to the highly detailed foreground and backgrounds. The establishing shot merely reveals her as a visual object with as much sovereignty as the other objects that flutter around her. The dehierarchised layers flatten objects and their ontologies, inherently alter the way we approach excavating thought and memory through the animetic interval, as Lamarre reminds us:

The animetic interval unfolds into divergent series, in an ongoing exfoliation or explication that is powered (so to speak) by the mechanical succession of images. At the same time, the animetic interval folds into it, in an ongoing process of implication, various modes of expression and other operative functions.⁷²²

As this interval enfolds the layers together, we witness the shifting sands of time rise to the surface. Before becoming-sovereign, the image of Artoria is no more important than the peasant history milieu and *mise-en-scène* – a carnival tent, a hardened boulder, a fist full of grass, a meandering cloud, a city of trees, a sword in a stone – that coalesce around her. In this opening shot, Artoria does not retain a sovereign, ontological positioning in the frame by

⁷²¹ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 261.

⁷²² Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 301.

which a centralised perception-image may form through focalisation; rather, she blends in seamlessly with a generic commonality of everyday peasant life.

From this idealised past, we are now confronted with another past: the fated destiny of an eternally doomed Artoria. From the establishing shot of Artoria facing her destiny as a peasant girl, a slightly slanted over-the-shoulder shot of Artoria reaching for the intricately designed sword in the stone, Caliburn. The next shot is a powerfully affective close-up of Artoria's hand slowly clutching the hilt; a quick cut leads us to another slanted close-up of a vibrating blade encased in stone, which is swiftly freed. As sparks fly, the camera quickly follows the ascending blade into the backdrop of the golden sky of twilight. The next cut establishes a low-angle shot of Artoria's back; the camera follows up toward the tip of Caliburn as it pierces the heavens. It is here we feel the memory-matter of Artoria's idealism, by which the historical, legendary, and fated rise to Camelot transformed the role of the anarchic warband into an organised economy of honour. Through this recollection-image, we can sense Artoria's utopian impulses (to defend her realm and protect the meek) rise into the virtual.

The next shot depicts the camera panning up a blackened heap of figures to reveal to an apocalyptic hellscape with an image of two knights fighting on top of a mound of dead bodies marked by their sword-graves in front of a blood red sky. The shot ends with one knight leaning against the other dead and limp. This embrace dissolves into a close-up of Artoria holding the dead enemy (Mordred, her daughter, the protagonist of *Fate/Apocrypha*) against her shoulder, staring deeply into the blood-soaked battlefield. The cut coincides with a trembling Mordred, who drops quickly to the ground. The high-angle shot sits ominously over both warriors, zooming into the face of a mortified Artoria. Quick cut to an affection-image of Artoria lifting her head to the camera; here she opens her right eye, but her left eye is closed and covered in blood, reminding us of a similar shot of Shirō in the opening. As an off-screen narration explains Artoria's failure to save Britain, the affection-image of Artoria's sorrowful face is blurred as she raises her hand into the foreground, as if grasping something slipping between her fingers. We feel the affective immensity in this temporal (and even spiritual) slippage; right before our very eyes, we too witness the loss of an ideal, the disappearance of a utopia, and the end of a graspable image of any-future-whatever. As we stare into Artoria's jade eye and armoured fist, we feel the cruelty of fate strike at our viscera; we cannot help but feel the transtemporal pain and trauma that Artoria is unable to escape. Finally, the tragic

flashback ends with a dissolving match cut, transporting us back into the present with a close-up of Artoria staring at her outstretched palm, muttering sadly: ‘I did not live up to my ideals’.

It is important to note that this string of recollection-images philosophises the relationship between fatalism and idealism for one purpose: to weave together a temporal precedent for the mirrored battles of EMIYA and Shirō. We must remember that the recollection-image is a mental-image that is situated between perception, affect, and action, and is not a pure time-image. The purpose of recollection-images is to give a mental impetus for action or resolution, as Deleuze reminds us: ‘the recollection-image comes to fill the gap and really does fulfil it, in such a way that it leads us back individually to perception, instead of extending this into generic movement. It makes full use of the gap, it assumes it, because it lodges itself there’.⁷²³ Unsurprisingly, recollection-images (flashbacks) are

generally indicated by a dissolve-link, and the images it introduces are often superimposed or meshed. It is like a sign with words: ‘watch out! recollection’. It can, therefore, indicate, by convention, a causality which is psychological, but still analogous to a sensory-motor determinism, and, despite its circuits, only confirms the progression of a linear narration.⁷²⁴

Because of the sensory-motor links of traditional flashbacks, Deleuze has asserted that recollection-images are not direct time images because ‘[r]ecollection is only a former present’, and therefore any flashback ‘is only a signpost’ for the present-past separation.⁷²⁵ However, as I have hinted, what is interesting in this scene is how Artoria’s past and memories slowly form a framework for EMIYA and Shirō’s mirrored recognitions of memory, virtuality, and transtemporality, presenting forking paths for seemingly fated outcomes. Contextually, remember that EMIYA’s presumed villainy arises from his furious attempts at resisting fate and overturning destiny (History).

In congress with EMIYA’s philosophical conclusions, note that Artoria’s recollection-images similarly measure and gauge the horrors of fate, affirming EMIYA’s ideological mission. In the words of Deleuze, we learn through Artoria’s memories that ‘it is destiny

⁷²³ Deleuze, C2, p. 49.

⁷²⁴ Ibid.

⁷²⁵ Deleuze, C2, p. xi.

which goes beyond determinism and causality; it is destiny that sketches out super-linearity; it is destiny that both justifies flashback and provides recollection-images with a mark of the past'.⁷²⁶ Because of the narrative and animated logic of what Deleuze calls 'strong destiny', Artoria and EMIYA similarly align with transforming the actual through the virtual, to overthrow destiny and the ideals that constrained them to their dire fates.⁷²⁷ Deamer further writes that strong destiny is the first aspect of the recollection-image, a compositional sign that 'explicates the inescapable past, the power of a recollection to haunt the present, to replace the perception-image and permeate feelings of an act that will explicate or resolve the situation of the memory'.⁷²⁸

As the episode continues, we return to the present with Artoria, having witnessed the sorrows of determinism and linearity, of History and fate. The transcendental beauty of fate disappears with Artoria, the most messianic of kings. It is here that the episode moves toward the crystalline more overtly with EMIYA's memories. After Artoria's flashback, we are presented with the reoccurring opsign of the Holy Grail. Three to four animation cels are reused from the opening, and this time they devolve into mere recollection-images of Shirō becoming-Guardian. It is after this that we are exposed the crystalline nature of EMIYA as Guardian, which as Deleuze anticipates:

is not a psychological memory, made up of recollection-images, as the flashback and conventionally represent it. It is not a case of a succession of presents passing according to chronological time. It is a case [...] of the exploration of a sheet of past from which these recollection-images will later arise.⁷²⁹

The scene is presented as such: we see a white haired EMIYA transporting between a dozen of differing milieu: (1) classical Rome or Greece, (2) contemporary central Asia, (3) an undisclosed medieval dungeon, (4) a bombed-out twentieth century city square, (5) a tunnel of modern-day dead rebels carrying automatic rifles, (5) a crowd of angry peasants, (6) a bridge with military trucks passing across, (7) and a desert landscape littered with dead jihadists, where the teleporting ends. With each teleportation, EMIYA's off-screen voice utters one

⁷²⁶ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 50.

⁷²⁷ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 51.

⁷²⁸ Deamer, p. 129.

⁷²⁹ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 114.

repeating mantra: ‘again’. The recursive nature gets faster and faster in this montage, and we feel the force of each time-jump. In the final shot, the frenetic jump-cuts end, and the camera centres on a seemingly haggard EMIYA leaning up against a gnarled, dead tree. The camera pans up to the sky as EMIYA looks below, staring at the dead. While the scene may seem to be a montage of recollection-images, I argue that the scene constructs its narrative around chronosigns, specifically what Deleuze calls *sheets of the past*. Deleuze explains:

The past appears [...] as the coexistence of circles which are more or less dilated or contracted, each one of which contains everything at the same time and the present of which the extreme limit (the smallest circuit that contains all the past). Between the past as pre-existence in general and the present as infinitely contracted past there are, therefore, all the circles of the past constituting so many stretched or shrunk *regions*, *strata*, and *sheets*: each region with its own characteristics, its ‘tones’, its ‘aspects’, its ‘singularities’, its ‘shining points’ and its ‘dominant’ themes.⁷³⁰

Each teleportation is a sheet of the past. Each milieu is vague enough to resemble many different or possible pasts or presents, and each one retains its own theme, characteristic, and tone: ancient empires and classical despotism, modern terrorism and violent jihadists, and dozens of other conceptualised horrors, including ecological disasters, world wars, refugee migrations, and mass genocide. Knowing that his life was not his own anymore, EMIYA committed to creating a world where those who would ‘cry in the world [he] knew’ would be saved. EMIYA traverses the sea of time, automatically summoned at key moments of human suffering and civil strife, trapped in his own cycle of violence. With each shot from his bow, he saves more lives than he takes, but he eventually concludes: ‘Guardians don’t save humans. Guardians simply clean up the messes. They’re beings that use their power to negate events that have already transpired: disasters of humanity’s own making’.

From this point onward, crystal-images bombard us. The sheets of the past are introduced with each Heroic Spirit, with each mysterious opsign, and with each Holy Grail War, but they are revealed through specific descriptors, or hyalosigns, as Deleuze writes:

⁷³⁰ Deleuze, *C2*, p.104.

We are in the situation of an actual image *and* its own virtual image, to the extent that there is no longer any linkage of the real with the imaginary, but *indiscernibility of the two*, a perceptual exchange [...] (the hyalosign) ensures the dividing in two of description, and brings about the exchange in the image which has become mutual, the exchange of the actual and the virtual, of the limpid and the opaque, of the seed and the surroundings.⁷³¹

Descriptions of the new time-travelling paradigm alters our understanding of the Nasuverse's transtemporality, where the coexistence of all times and all historical names can be seen at any turn. Like in a hall of mirrors, our perception of the real and imaginary, the actual and the virtual, the material and the remembered, is all displaced across the enfolded visions of the mirror-image, the most prevalent of hyalosigns.

The mirror-image appear as EMIYA reveals his true identity and Shirō braces himself for the revelation. In between a succession of shot-reverse-shot close-ups characteristic of a classic shōnen stare down – a binomial design trope used often in arena fighters and martial arts dramas like the *Dragonball* series – an image of a dying Shirō engulfed in flames is intercut between EMIYA and Shirō. This frame of reference links to another image from *Fate/Zero*, returning us back to end of the Fourth Holy Grail War (the Fuyuki City Fire) which left thousands of dead except for Shirō, the lone survivor saved by Kiritsugu and Artoria's Avalon. Here we are left with a transtemporal existential crisis whereby each image of Shirō is pitted against present-Shirō's very existence; in the past, he was not supposed to live, and his future-self seeks to destroy his present-self. A circuit of actual-virtual relations is established in this coupling, as Deleuze writes:

we can say that the actual image itself has a virtual image which corresponds to it like a double or a reflection. In Bergsonian terms, the real object is reflected in a mirror-image as in the virtual object which, from its side and simultaneously, envelops or reflects the real: there is 'coalescence' between the two. There is a formation of an image with two sides, actual *and* virtual. It is as if an image in a mirror, a photo or a postcard came to life, assumed independence and passed into the actual, even if this

⁷³¹ Deleuze, C2, p. 281.

meant that the actual image returned into the mirror and resumed its place in the postcard or photo, following a double movement of liberation and capture.⁷³²

We now directly face a collection of mirror-images of Shirō; their flickering emergence follows an asymmetrical succession, compelling us to feel the visual forces of past, present, and future at every angle, as if we are trapped in a palace of mirrors. We are disoriented and lost, attempting to figure out the great time-travelling paradoxes of the actual and the virtual. The primary conflict of the series is not a war for the Holy Grail, but rather, a war between the actual and the virtual, which Nasu described earlier. The mirror-image is the most potent temporal structure of *Unlimited Blade Works*, for it transforms the binomial conflicts of traditional fighting shōnen (representational opposites fighting as narrative and dialectical obstacles) into a metaphysical envisioning of ‘a perfect crystal-image where the multiple mirrors have assumed the actuality of the two characters who will only be able to win it back by smashing them all, finding themselves side by side and each killing each other’.⁷³³

This crystalline conflict establishes precedence for the remainder of the series in the final scene of the episode. In this scene, EMIYA throws Shirō a blade for combat. As the blade hits the ground, we hear the faint piano opening of Hideyuki Fukasawa’s theme ‘Emiya UBW Extended - エミヤ [Emiya UBW Epic Theme 2015].’ This song is used exclusively in the *Fate* franchise when EMIYA uses his Noble Phantasm aptly entitled ‘Unlimited Blade Works,’ foreshadowing the exposure of EMIYA’s Reality Marble (like Alexander’s Ionioi Hetairoi) that transforming the lifeworld into a desert littered with hundreds of thousands of blades in the ground and large gears hanging in the horizon.⁷³⁴ In this world, EMIYA can copy

⁷³² Deleuze, *C2*, p. 71.

⁷³³ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 73.

⁷³⁴ The iconic image of the field of blades defines the entire *Fate* series is grounded by transtemporal linkages of nomadological pasts and becoming-steel. This symbolic image of the fields of blades has two diverging histories which are tensely bound by disparate warrior cultures. The first describes a field of blades as weapon tombstones, a central Asian nomadic tradition of the Cimmerians, Scythians, Sarmatians, Huns, and Mongolians by which burying the dead, which was then introduced to more Indo-European cultures including the Germanics and Celts, as Scott Littleton and Linda Malcor argue in *From Scythia to Camelot: A Radical Reassessment of the Legends of King Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table, and the Holy Grail* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 181-194. It is also, importantly, a trope shōnen anime, including *Berserk*, *Claymore*, *Gurren Lagann*, *Hellsing*, *Inuyasha*, *Naruto*, *One Piece*, and *Samurai 7*. The other origin for this visual trope might be rooted in samurai burial rituals, but might also be linked to the legendary assassination of the sixteenth century shogunate Ashikaga Yoshiteru (1536-1565 C.E.) who was well known in the Sengoku period for his swordsmanship. Yoshiteru died in his own home, but not after plunging all his swords into the floor for easy access as he defended himself against his assailants who attacked in the night, as is recounted in Stephen Turnbull’s *The Samurai: A Military History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 134-5.

any and all weapons used in battle, projecting them into the present just like Gilgamesh's Gates of Babylon. Yet, before EMIYA unleashes Unlimited Blade Works, the two are locked into a duel of fates, framed by a series of mirror-images. The first shot is over-the-shoulder, depicting Shirō in the foreground walking toward a blurry EMIYA in the background who too is walking down the staircase toward him; the animetic movement is synchronised between the two figures, whereby the movement of the characters along the CGI backdrop of the manor simulates movement without actual depth into the plane. The next shot depicts a close-up of Shirō's face framed to the right, which is accompanied by an on-screen speech act, in which he says the first word of his magical incantation: 'trace.' Cut to his right hand, which manifests the image of an ambiguous blade hilt formed out of blue energy. The next shot depicts EMIYA's close-up, which is framed to the left, also accompanied by the speech act 'on,' which completes the incantation ('Trace on'). In his left hand, a close-up shot of a blade manifesting out of blue energy, this time producing an ornately adorned hilt that is decorated with a yin-yang symbol. Cut to a wide shot that introduces both figures from the left (EMIYA) and the right (Shirō) walking slowly to the centre of the frame; as they meet, a series of close-ups left-to-right, right-to-left of EMIYA and Shirō floods the screen. Immediately, Shirō leaves the frame swiftly, darting headlong into battle, and EMIYA joins him. In this sequence, 'the mirror-image is virtual in relation to the actual character that the mirror catches, but it is actual in the mirror which now leaves the character with only a virtuality and pushes him back out-of-field'.⁷³⁵

Each image and sound mirrors and speeds up wildly, designed to clash. The free camera shakes as it cuts to two more mirror-images of a close-up Shirō and EMIYA running towards the camera. The episode ends with a medium shot of the two clashing their yin-yang swords together, erupting into a sun flare explosion that blasts away all colour, leaving nothing but a white plane that fades into a close-up of Artoria's face by swirling vectors of air. In the jade, crystalline eyes of the messianic Artoria, the fate (possibilities and virtualities) of time is reflected to the viewers. As the clashing image of the two Shirōs forms within the eyes of Artoria, it becomes a sliver of a crystal, an opsign, a mirror-image. The crystalline transformation of a traditional affection-image traces the path of a circuit between the virtual

⁷³⁵ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 73.

and the actual. Here, the series, through the tradition of Nasu and Takeuchi's otaku philosophies, reminds us, as Deleuze notes, that

[w]hen the virtual image becomes actual, it is then visible and limpid, as in the mirror or the solidity of a finished crystal. But the actual image becomes virtual in its turn, referred elsewhere, invisible, opaque and shadowy, like a crystal barely dislodged from the earth.⁷³⁶

In this intensive ending, this episode unearths the temporal power of the crystalline, actualising the nomadological themes and contexts of the series in this crystal-image of Shirō, which further destroys any coherent, contiguous, or comprehensible representations of time or History within the Nasuverse.

Sowing the Seeds of the Virtual in the Animetic Interval

In philosophical terms, the flattened, intensified, affect, and embodied logic of the Nasuverse mirrors that of the Deleuzoverse, and in this way, the canonical *Fate* series (which is located in Fuyuki City, taking place between the 1990s and the mid-2000s) addresses the ends of History, the over-acceleration of it as a more expansive allegory for the way in which we now experience cinema in the anime machine. As we experience the possible ends of History in the speeding anime machine, the animetic interval shunts the force of the movement-image into the gaps of each cel. This force erupts onto the surface of each loop of intense movement, breaking the penultimate apparatus for the action-image.

Throughout *Unlimited Blade Works*, such scenes of acceleration and immanence transform mere action-images into crystal-images. While the narrative, characters, and Noble Phantasms function as representational markers of temporal philosophies in previous series like *Fate/Zero*, they do not entirely resolve the time-travelling conundrums or clichés embedded within the Nasuverse. The speculative fictions of the Nasuverse (in its entire media ecology) of otaku rhizomatism, are effectively communicating these philosophies through representational and metaphorical means. But, as I have attempted to illustrate, the materiality

⁷³⁶ Ibid.

of the anime machine empowers and actualises the virtual, speculative, conceptual, and jargon-ridden (perhaps even half-baked and paradoxical) philosophies of the *Fate* franchise. The transtemporal philosophies of the *Fate* series accelerate well beyond the crystalline descriptive and narrative devices that are employed in a traditional fighting/romance anime series. Through the mediation of the anime machine, the characters in motion are pushed to the forefront, further stymieing the logic of action. This transports the action-image across the distributive field into the floating world. It is here we locate the slippage of the animetic interval, in which time slows down and speeds up across the field of vision in the animetic floating world, and our perceptions of past-present-future are thrown into the fluctuating sea of temporal crisis.

Episodes Twenty-One and Twenty-Four of *UBW* expose the ways in which the acceleration of the action-image marks the temporal and spatial transformations of the superflat layers of moving images, as introduced through the Daicon effect in Chapter Four. Episode Twenty-One, entitled ‘The Answer’, introduces the long-awaited duel between Shirō and EMIYA within a projected virtual reality called ‘Unlimited Blade Works’.⁷³⁷ The duel ensnares a whole host of signs of the large action-image and mutates them into hyalosigns. First, unlike the previous scene in the mansion, the milieu of ‘Unlimited Blade Works’ cannot be described as a determined space with comprehensible geographical or historical markers. It is not, as Deamer writes, an environment that would be situated in ‘specific contexts: national, quasi-national, sub-national, international and transnational history, specific locations of longitude and latitude, cultural coordinates’.⁷³⁸ ‘Unlimited Blade Works’ is depicted as a desert littered with blades standing tall in the blood red sands and crags of time. The foregrounded earth is encased by a background horizon painted in rusted hues, as if simulating a timeless twilight that desperately hopes for a coming night or the atmospheric fallout from a nuclear explosion. Gigantic silver and grey gears are deeply embedded within the background of an apocalyptic sky, slowly churning in a counter-clockwise fashion. The markers are abstractions of nomadic science and thought that are not exclusively Japanese nor Western, premodern nor modern.

⁷³⁷ ‘The Answer,’ *Fate/stay/night: Unlimited Blade Works* (Season Two, Episode Twenty-One), dir. by Miura Takahiro, Type-Moon, and Ufotable, Inc, prod. by Aniplex (Crunchyroll, 2015). [Accessed 23 May 2017].

⁷³⁸ Deamer, p. 99.

As a transtemporal projection, Unlimited Blade Works is exposed as a cosmic workshop for becoming-steel, just like Gilgamesh's Gates of Babylon. Unlike Gates of Babylon – ostensibly a treasure trove of antiquity's most legendary weapons captured to affirm Gilgamesh's historical aura and obsession with authenticity – 'Unlimited Blade Works' is more akin to a cheap knock-off sword shop. Shirō is exposed as a faker, a copy-cat, a doppelgänger, and a counterfeiting thief of the authenticity and aura of History. As Gilgamesh bemoans in Episode Twenty-Four,⁷³⁹ the power of 'Unlimited Blade Works' is in its counterfeiting properties, by which Shirō mass produces copies of all the weapons of time (including Artoria's Caliburn, one of a few blades Gilgamesh could never obtain). Like an avatar for the otaku, Shirō flattens the historical codes to the heterogenetic principles of production and reengineering, eventually creating and destroying images so to align his engineering prowess alongside the nomadic tradition of metallurgy.

Spatially, since Unlimited Blade Works is a Reality Marble, it transforms the sprawling 2-D superflat milieu of the mansion into an enclosed, spherical, panoptic 3-D Euclidean space. Ufotable's framing and shooting of Unlimited Blade Works urges against imposing a 'fully realised history' upon the world of the present by limiting 'the predominance of establishing shots and extreme wide shots', as Deamer writes.⁷⁴⁰ Since this world is the imagined mindscape of Shirō – a world-slice of Shirō as the Deleuzo-Guattarian itinerant smith – we are introduced to the otaku world-image through many close-ups of his face and his broken sword in quick succession. Here we note that this image assemblage of face-sword linkages reveals the exterior fragments of this intense expression of interiorisation. As these appeals to the movement-image (affection-image) explore the flux of Shirō's becoming-steel, our sense of spatial (an anchored milieu) becomes less solidified, less centralised, less real as an exterior entity.

Instead, milieu mutates into a powerfully affective internalised vision of EMIYA's existential prison, not unlike the dynamic backgrounds, blocking, and framing of any expressive Kurosawa flick. Like the interior milieu of Kurosawan cinema, this expression of the interior world is cramped, claustrophobic, and cloistered. The sky and the ground are both framed as imposing foregrounds and backgrounds, violently shunted up against each other

⁷³⁹ 'Unlimited Blade Works,' *Fate/stay/night: Unlimited Blade Works* (Season Two, Episode Twenty-Four), dir. by Miura Takahiro, Notes and Ufotable, Inc, prod. by Aniplex (Crunchyroll, 2015). [Accessed 23 May 2017].

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.

under superflat circumstances, producing an asymmetrical depiction of Shirō and EMIYA in relation to the environment. Moreover, the flurry of low-angle and high-angle shots obscures the perceived power relations between the characters and the environment in this scene; neither figure can liberate themselves from the scene spatially, and thus, both are trapped along with the viewer-accomplice in the imaginary of the schizoid Shirō and his future-self EMIYA. To viewers, it is impossible to separate or hierarchise both figures from this superflattened expression of psychological or metaphysical interiorities, and this expression of flat time enfeebles the historicising potency of the action-image's anchor to the world of actualised realities: the milieu.

As we pass through the milieu of the mansion and into Unlimited Blade Works, some might read the projected realm as an imaginary mental-image, either as a relation-image (metaphorical or symbolic images), recollection-image, (flashbacks), or dream-image (rich, restrained, or movement of the world). However, unlike the mental-image, the animated manifestation of Unlimited Blade Works does not constitute a cinematographic marker for this shift from the real to the imaginary as the lingering or reoccurrence of a shot does for symbolic relation-images, a fading edit does for flashbacks, or other narrative signposts do for dream sequences in cinema. The distinction between the imagined and the experienced is blurred, and all that matters is the one characteristic of Type-Moon's powers of magical projection: polymorphous becomings. It should be no surprise that while we are transported to the world of Unlimited Blade Works, we view the mirror-images of Shirō and EMIYA face each other for a final showdown in a world that reflects the Deleuzian principles of indeterminacy and indiscernibility, of infinite possibilities and outcomes.⁷⁴¹ We view this showdown as a cosmically enfolding event that like a domino effect, begins to collide with everything in this world. This is why we experience a different kind of temporality in this space; like the anime machine itself, Unlimited Blade Works projects the images of the past and the future onto two flattened planes simultaneously, which are then synthesised and reforged onto one plane of immanence so that the parallelism of Shirō-EMIYA reveals the crystalline crisis of thought. Similarly, the flattened nature of Unlimited Blade Works echoes Deleuze:

⁷⁴¹ Deleuze, *C2*, p 74.

The previous depth itself seems to be flattened out, and becomes a surface alongside the other surface. The two surfaces thus coexist, and two contiguous stories are written on them, the one major and the other minor; the one in a major key, the other in a minor key.⁷⁴²

This episode reveals time flowing alongside the edges of the surface and exposes the animetic interval, much like ‘a scroll book in the manner of Japanese scroll paintings’, which Deleuze reminds us, was thought up by Sergei Eisenstein as ‘the true precursor of cinematographic montage’.⁷⁴³ The spatiotemporal compositional signs formulate a synthesis of possibilities that is far more attuned to express the will of the virtual rather than the actual, producing an encompassing virtual reality of the nomadological.

Deleuze refers to this mutation of the milieu into an amorphous temporal rift of virtualities and possibilities as *the seed-image*. Deleuze notes that the seed-image and the crystal-image are similar in their relations to the virtual, but they designate different stages of temporalising images and thought, as he writes: ‘The seed and mirror are taken up yet again, the one in the work in the process of being made, the other reflected in the work’.⁷⁴⁴ It is important to note that the crystal-image must be unearthed through the mirroring of cinematographic images to be seen as a reflection within the work, rather than witness a mere recollection or a dream. The seed-image, on the other hand, must not be unearthed; it must remain lodged deep within the stratigraphic layers of the cinematographic image until it releases its fecund virtual potentialities in a fallow, enfeebled environment, not unlike the desolate, cramped space of *Unlimited Blade Works*. This cinematographic exchange of potentiality and expressibility genetically alters the milieu, transforming it into an abstraction of itself. The result is that the mutated milieu exposes a seed-image that reacts to the contexts of its environment, manifesting the extra-internalised and schizophrenic imaginary of Shirō into a transversally projected temporal phenomenon. This is the purest nomadological experience of an existential and schizophrenic crisis that Shirō faces.

Furthermore, the seed-image of *Unlimited Blade Works* is entirely metallurgic, producing pure images of the nomadological amidst a mirroring duel of memories and

⁷⁴² Deleuze, *Essays*, p. 22.

⁷⁴³ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁴ Deleuze, *C2*, p. 79.

projections. In this fight, Shirō and EMIYA clash swords. Shirō is not as strong as EMIYA. He is, however, goaded into fighting harder and quicker by his future-self with an insurmountable determination. He is told to *go faster*. Action accelerates madly. Swords fly across the screen at different rhythms; they erupt like missiles, flooding the animetic interval with explosions of image and sound. The force of the action-image is exhilarating. Each time Shirō and EMIYA clash, blades shatter and bones break. The mixing of bodies and forces is cerebrally potent. In the words of Deleuze, this acceleration disintegrates bodies so to ‘let an incorporeal rise to the surface like a mist over the earth, a pure “expressed” from the depths: not the sword, but the flash of the sword, a flash without a sword like a smile without a cat’.⁷⁴⁵ The flash of the swords is spectacular, and the disintegration of each projected blade reveals the eternal return of the metallurgic, a heterogenetic science of creation and destruction.

The Daicon effect’s becoming and the exploded perspective begins to bend the 3-D Euclidean space of Unlimited Blade Works. The camera flies around the seemingly 2-D figure of Shirō frenetically against the superflattened layers, making the leaping hero slow down and speed up within each gap between layers. With the acceleration of the action-image of Shirō, the force of action is quickly dispersed across the entire surface of the transversal screen. Lamarre reminds us that when this happens,

it transforms the dynamics of character animation, making for inaction or inoperative action, or a crisis of body and soul, or both. This crisis in action does not simply result in inertia or stasis [...] Instead of fluidly cinematic movement across the screen or within a world, limited animation allows bodies to leap from field to field, from image to image, and even from medium to medium.⁷⁴⁶

Therefore, this crisis of action exposes the temporal power of the interval. It is in this animetic interval that the mutation of movement into time rapidly accelerate, and the flattening process of divergent and emergent temporalities. Lamarre claims further that as ‘the flattening of planes brings the animetic interval to the surface of the image’, the concept of the frame is compromised:

⁷⁴⁵ Deleuze, *Essays*, p. 23.

⁷⁴⁶ Lamarre, p. 201.

The movement of the simulated camera, as it slides over sliding planes, does not rely on structures of depth related to geometric perspective. Such movement does not rely on a sense of the bounded camera (echoed in perspectival depth) or of the bounded image. The animetic interval is dispersed into the play of elements upon the surface of the image. This is a variation on the distributive field, which is unbounded and continuous like Azuma's database structure; but it is not a structure and not infinitely symmetrical.⁷⁴⁷

This is important because Ufotable ludically alters the purpose of an accelerated action-image and captures the means of the movement-image in order to replicate an experience of rhizomatic temporality in the form of a schizophrenic time-travelling hallucination. This hallucination of time and History doubly functions as an otaku database of the all-times.

With each shot-reverse-shot of Shirō-EMIYA debating about the nature of idealism, with the quickening of cuts and frenetic framing in the mutated binomial field, the traumatic nuclear experience of *Fate/Zero* begins to bubble up to the surface. An intrusive, pixelated, and hazy opsign of a darkened sky and violet moon irrationally cuts in between a shot-reverse-shot of the combatants; as EMIYA's face cringes, denoting a nooshock to the brain, the screen shakes, tears, short-circuits, and glitches out. The opsign of the moon repeats and mutates with the inclusion of the same affection-image of Shirō-EMIYA shuddering. The glitches of the anime-image continue, indicating a crisis within the internalised edits of the hyperlimited animation. As Shirō shoots off like a bullet to deliver the final blow to EMIYA, the seed-images of Fuyuki City, of metallurgy, of Shirō's pacifist desires, of the end of the world (all of which was originally encased within the animetic interval) erupt onto the surface as pure traits of expressions: colour and sound. At the rhythm of the bursting breakbeat and electro theme song, each step that Shirō takes alters the colour of the spherical world of Unlimited Blade Works. A CGI illustration of a blue aura begins to enfold the reddened landscape. From rusted red to aerial blue – the two colours that oversaturated the lectosign of the Grail – we see light flood the darkened environment. As Shirō edges closer and closer with each nanosecond that passes, the encroaching blue light clears away the foggy environment. In the animetic clearing, the virtual seeds of peace, hope, and the messianic *ideals* of a soulful character become

⁷⁴⁷ Lamarre, p. 298.

actualised within the environment for the first time. The mirror-image of EMIYA is destroyed, and Unlimited Blade Works becomes the unobtainable Avalon for a brief second, within a blink of the eye.

Fast forward to Episode Twenty-Four. This episode depicts a battle of cosmic and temporal proportions: Shirō versus Gilgamesh. This fight is less than a minute, in which all time-images and action-images collide. A highly optimised anime machine can provide an accelerated and immanent experience of thinking through time; it mimics the sensory-motor systems and provides continually disruption and interruption. Like the previous fight, we experience the speed of the animetic interval transform space into time with each movement, each action, and each cut. Because of its accelerationist and rhizomatic nature, the anime machine allows us to experience what linguist Gustave Guillaume calls ‘operational time,’ or as Giorgio Agamben defines it, ‘*the time the mind takes to realize a time-image*’.⁷⁴⁸

Operational time, for Agamben

is something like a time within time – not ulterior but interior – which only measures my disconnection with regard to it, my being out of synch and in noncoincidence with regard to my representation of time, but precisely because of this, allows for the possibility of my achieving and taking hold of it.⁷⁴⁹

This is the defining experience of the anime-image and its animetic interval. This final fight simply heightens the speed of the EMIYA fight. Gilgamesh unleashes Gates of Babylon within Unlimited Blade Works, but as he begins his assault, Shirō counterfeits a similar power, mirroring Gilgamesh as he did EMIYA. The two begin their steely barrage. The innumerable sword-missiles that collide and dart across the screen is dizzying. Shirō is quicker in this fight, and in between each animetic interval, we must conceptualise how each sword-image will appear, disappear, and reappear in an infinitely exploded perspective across a superflattened surface. The camera consistently shakes and the screen glitches out. The 360-degree tracking shot of a 2-D Shirō that appeared first in the previous fight (180-degree) appears again, accompanied by a Daicon-inspired eruption of blue magic missiles from

⁷⁴⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. by Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). p. 66.

⁷⁴⁹ Agamben, p. 67.

Shirō's body. We count each blade of Gilgamesh that Shirō destroys or deflects, only to the point that it is completely impossible. Time is accelerated well beyond the point of conceptualisation; operational time becomes quicker to the point that our synapses are overrun and the sensory-motory system is completely overloaded and compromised. We know that the all-times – indicative of each weapon of time – are colliding to the end of times; each dodge, each deflection, each explosion is an access point into a post-historical virtuality.

The whole of History, the whole of virtual possibilities and outcomes are encased in this one frenetic moment. As Shirō escapes the weapons of Babylon, he eventually flies above the aerial wreckage to fall into the earth. In a brief second, Gilgamesh reaches for Ea, and prepares to end the universe, as he has done many times over in the *Fate* franchise. Here we feel the weight of History on our shoulders. Images of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and the terminus of modernity flood our memories. We wonder: will Gilgamesh destroy this world like he has numerous times with Enuma Elish, ending the entire Holy Grail War in a blink of an eye? Will Shirō overcome the oncoming historical destruction by simply going faster, by outrunning it, as accelerationists like Deleuze, Guattari, and Lyotard anticipated? At this moment, the anime machine forces us to think about time (even operational time) differently by simply outpacing traditional, linear, totalised spatiotemporal thought.

It is in these two final fights that we witness new sheets of time unfold and spread across the animetic interval. While the sense of operational time is first introduced in *Fate/Zero* with Artoria's final battle, the logic of operational time is extended from the virtual to the actual in this final scene. While Deleuze refers to this temporality as crystalline, Benjamin calls it *messianic* time. Agamben defines this phenomenon as 'the time that time takes to come to an end, or, more precisely, the time we take to bring to an end, to achieve our representation of time'.⁷⁵⁰ Agamben clarifies that messianic time 'is not the line of chronological time (which was representable but unthinkable), nor the instant of its end (which was just as unthinkable)', but rather, is 'operational time pressing within the chronological time, working and transforming it from within; it is the time we need to make time end: *the time that is left us*'.⁷⁵¹ Like the virtual seed, messianic time is encased in the stratigraphic and geological, but always rises to the surface when time has been displaced by radical forces.

⁷⁵⁰ Agamben, p. 67.

⁷⁵¹ Agamben, pp. 67-8.

With the visualisation of the end of times, crystals of another Fuyuki City, of another Nagasaki and Hiroshima resonate in our minds.

The result of this temporal hiccup, this virtual experience of the end, the simulation of a terrifying existential terminus, is the flash of a sword. As Shirō outpaces the speed of gravity itself, he craters into the earth, landing quick enough to slice off Gilgamesh's arm carrying Ea, and thus, stopping the end of time itself. In this Nietzschean duel of the untimely, we witness the obliteration of the first Man of the monumental, of myth, and of History (the Great Man, the hero, the remarkable), and the overcoming of the last Man of the critical, of the technological, and of nomadological (the failed man, the otaku, the unremarkable). This is the experience of overloading the action-image and revealing the crystalline regime of the time-image, of sowing the seeds of the virtual into the anime machine. By optimising the logic of the action-image (in form and fabulation) to this extent, I believe when watching or engaging with the *Fate* series, there are moments when the mixture of informatics, data, and affects overloads our sensorium. Otaku fans of *Fate* often find themselves stuck within the Holy Grail-as-wormhole, where they feel and see the historical pain of the nomadic memories in the recursive failed attempts of Shirō/Artoria/EMIYA that each Servant is summoned to overcome. In the Shirō-Gilgamesh fight, it is hard not to feel the intense affectivity of the end of times with each duck, bob, weave, and strike; in these movements, time and movement blur, and we feel an impending sense of existential dread manifest in unexpected shudders, turning stomachs, or welling tears. The implosion of History is experienced in a flicker, felt within a blink.⁷⁵²

As such, this is the first part of a two-part reading of the *Fate* series as a prime example of how we might witness alternative means of approaching the historical after History by animetically challenging how temporality can be felt in an overaccelerated action-image. The next chapter, specifically, examines how the most recent spin-offs of the series including *Fate/Grand Order* and *Fate/Extra Last Encore*, reveal how the enmeshing of gender politics and technological discourse can elicit questions about the digitisation of the historical, as experienced in the intermedial anime ecology. While *Fate/stay/night*, *Fate/Zero*, and *Fate/Unlimited Blade Works* established the franchise as a heady, philosophically speculative

⁷⁵² See Thomas Lamarre's most recent engagement with anime philosophies of blinking in *The Anime Ecology: A Genealogy of Television, Animation, and Game Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), pp. 95-108.

series that curiously investigated fabulations of History, the post-Fuyuki *Fate* series (*Fate/EX* and *Fate/GO*) explores a futuristic, cybernetic version of the Joan of Arc effect as History is captured in black boxes, consoles, smart phones, and cybernetic bodies.

The virtual appears not as historical possibility or quantum temporality, but rather, as a profound allegory of otaku techno-ontological mediations that translate and complicate historical traumas and nomadic fabulations through the body of the anime girl. The most recent series including *Fate/Grand Order* and *Fate/Extra Last Encore* expose the capture, commodification, and consumption of History as data-images. This otaku capture of the names of history is tactile as much as conceptual, as Anne Allison's work on the 'digital intimacy' of anime-images and otaku indicates. Allison's theorisation on the techno-intimacy highlights the intimate touch between the user and the names of history, transforming the themes of intermedial or simulacral simulation (in cinematicised manga, optimised limited animation) into a very real interaction with the digital virtualisations of each name of history on a touchable screen (in real digital applications and their simulated effects in manga or anime form). This is a nomadic traversal of not only the indices of the historical, but a profoundly personal, bodily, and intimate Pokémonification of the historical, whereby the rules of image consumption and desire consummation finally reach the realm of the virtual.

Chapter Six: The Joan of Arc Effect as Hypermnesia in Type-Moon's Digital Arcs

The previous chapter examined how the anime machine can transform into an apparatus for reconceptualising temporality, nomadic memories, and History, both in an analysis of Type-Moon's philosophy of anime fabulation (the Nasuverse's character design, historical gender-bending, world-building, and transmedia storytelling) and anime form (the Brechtian deployment of the distributive field, the animetic interval between the animation cel gaps of limited animation, and the blending of analog and digital forms of animation). In choosing Type-Moon's expansive *Fate* series, I sought to examine the ways in which Deleuzian film-philosophy could help viewers understand how the anime apparatus, its media ecology, and its philosophical moorings are consistently oscillating between expressing the intensities of movement (movement-image) and the immanence of temporality (time-image).

As the last chapter illustrated, the *Fate* series has exposed the nomadic sciences of the otaku to rethink how to do History when human extinction nips on the heels of History. In a way, we might say that Nasu and Takeuchi are shamans of otaku philosophy, purveyors of the mystical power of the anime machine. As much products of otaku philosophy as their fans, Type-Moon's accelerationist, cybernetic cult of antiauthoritarianism, velocity, and immanence anticipates the disintegration of movement, specifically of sensory-motor determinisms and the concepts of historical action and existential freedom. By producing animetic stoppages of movement, Type-Moon ushers in a nonhuman perspective of temporality, thus, altering the way we think through technology, and reminding us that technology is thinking through us. The automatic nature of the anime machine and the visual novel is important because it truly allows for a nonhuman perspective of time well beyond the anthropocentric tendencies of History, signalling toward the end of the human species. In the media ecology of *Fate*, History becomes nonhuman, which in turn allows for our reading of it to be geological and technological as much as spiritual and messianic, offering temporal solutions to a present that is overwhelmed by the doomed climate crisis, runaway zombie capitalism, antiquarian nuclear geopolitics of mutually-assured destruction, and the proliferation of cyberneticism and automation. Type-Moon teaches us that in the broken bodies and images of acceleration, we may reconstitute historical names and philosophies into temporary avatars for the virtual, indices for the database of time itself. The anime-image here mutates into a time machine, which is then digitised and reconstituted as a data machine (a computer), by which the

informatics of the image become as important as the interface and database it is encased in. Ontologically, we may say that Type-Moon flattens time so that its characters may jump the gap between cultures, milieux, and media to join us in this lifeworld as thinking-machines. Accordingly, I explored how the time-image emerges in the anime machine, and how the crystalline can be revealed as a rhizomatic, flattening, re-remembering of world history and its many minor mutations in *becoming-woman*. This is expressed in the Nasuverse and the extended *Fate* franchise as a recursive acceleration, optimisation, and replication of the logic of historical action that erupts into crystals and fractals of nomadic memories.

This is perhaps, as explained at the end of the previous chapter, best illustrated in *Fate/stay/night: Unlimited Blade Works* when viewers face the Shirō-EMIYA fold as a philosophically fraught expression of the failure of sovereign historical action and the vitalising impulse of forgotten memories. While these highly optimised cosmic battles for History examined in the previous chapter expose the most impactful expression of nomadological and virtual experiences of time in the anime machine, whereby operational time becomes the only mode of experiencing History and time as the end comes, the series ends with traditional modes of narrative continuity: Gilgamesh dies, EMIYA disappears into the ether smiling, and Rin, Shirō, and Artoria sip tea on the Kiritsugu estate. The conquest of the always replicated, always deterritorialised, always weaponised, always optimised, is fulfilled and quickly demilitarised. The ending of the Fuyuki City arc is not cosmic nor transcendent: its resolution is easily captured in the otaku's domicile, where it began in the first place. It is important to note that the Fuyuki arc of *Fate/Zero* and *Fate/stay/night: Unlimited Blade Works* ends within the temporal theatre of the everyday, back to Shirō's room and his garage where he – as a young mage, engineer, and, therefore, a metaphor for the otaku like Nasu and Takeuchi – became linked to Artoria in the first half of the visual novel. The otaku allegory here is perhaps overstated: after Shirō battles his historical doppelgänger (or himself as otaku positioned against himself as a historical subject) in his projected mindscape, where he must first overcome schizophrenising forces of the ends of History and then execute the first hero of History (Gilgamesh), he returns to the domestic, bourgeois, quotidian space. Shirō returns to the temporal dramas of Ozu or Proust, finding solace in the eddies and whirls of empty time.

Contemporary artist and critic, Sawaragi Noi, articulates this return to domestic life as a sort of compulsive eternal return, a historical amnesia for the otaku, where no true historical

conclusion or temporal (dialectic) resolution can take place. In this way, Sawaragi worries that the eternal return of the otaku imaginary entrenches the otaku in a world of withdrawal from our lifeworld, writing:

Japan's subculture generation is seemingly suspended in a historical amnesia, having little sense of the past and withdrawing from reality. Yet commanding the imagination of subculture, which it acquired in the childhood, the generation continues to mine the ancient narrative strata of the Pacific War and recast the reality of the Cold War into another form. How many times have they burned Tokyo to cinders, tirelessly fended off invaders, and persevered through radioactive contamination in order to chip away at the imaginary reality that forced them into self-withdrawal. All of this takes place in the closed space that is the *otaku's* 'private room,' the true history no doubt endures in this space – a microcosm of postwar Japan – albeit constricted and distorted.⁷⁵³

In my assessment, Sawaragi is correct in describing how otaku culture does indeed relive the traumas of Japanese post-war modernity: the entire Fuyuki City arc continually remembers a continuum of fiery apocalypse, from the crystalline images of the Battle of Camlann in Artoria's nightmares and the Fuyuki City Fire in Shirō's memories. However, it is his claim about self-withdrawal and the otaku's distortion of the historical that troubles me, primarily because it assumes that the otaku and the otaku's intensified internalisation of the nationally traumatic experiences of the past century is a symptom of a national crisis of historical amnesia, or at least, a compulsion to relive a past that was not, or at least, did not appear as it is portrayed. As Miura's *Berserk*, Yukimura's *Vinland Saga*, and Type-Moon's *Fate* series has shown so far, otaku artists engage in the affirmative, creative, techno-ontological, and vitalistic acts of creating art, thought, and affective schemas (or machines) for performing in the pain, pleasure, and problematique of History, thinking beyond the allegorical scope of the Pacific War, a burned Tokyo, the Cold War, and nuclear reactors (i.e., markers of Japanese post-war modernity). If there is one threat that permeates throughout otaku culture, it is that of species extinction and the deterritorialisation of the human by the nonhuman. Therefore, one otaku artist might imagine a world in which the Pacific War or Cold War has not ended, but

⁷⁵³ Noi Sarawagi qtd. from Wong in 'A Presence of a Constant End: Contemporary Art and Popular Culture in Japan', p. 97.

has mutated into an eternal string of world wars like in Sunrise Studios' *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion*; another might imagine a world in which Tokyo is not only burned to the ground, but has sunk into the sea due to the meltdown of nuclear facilities and impending climate change, like in Shiriagari Kotobuki's manga anthology series entitled *Manga after 3/11*.⁷⁵⁴ The first of prominent otaku artists, Anno Hideaki, envisioned a world in which none of these events were worthy of remembering because of a mass human extinction that took place in an alternative timeline, and instead of fearing the post-war traumas, Anno noted the crisis of the technological condition.

What Sawaragi criticises as an ahistorical passivity – one that denies Japan's historical and cultural memory of violence, fascism, imperialism, censorship, colonisation, and technocapitalism – is not entirely accurate. The otaku memory of Japan's history of modernisation has been allegorised and denaturalised through pulpy, popular, or speculative genres of fabulation (sci-fi, fantasy, yakuza noir, etc.), as well as thrown into relief by challenging the chronopolitical experiences of premodernity, modernity, and postmodernity in the Japanese imaginary. However, following Susan Napier, Type-Moon exhibits other forms of denaturalising History, especially by othering the historical experience for those who are often minoritarian figures, especially women, children, animals, and plants. Accordingly, Napier writes that Miyazaki Hayao's cinematic vision of History is a defamiliarising one, in which Miyazaki offers an eco-feminist historical revision of the medieval Muromachi era in *Princess Mononoke* (Studio Ghibli, 1997). Napier explains that Miyazaki's greatest skill in reconstructing the chronopolitics of Japanese national identity is by addressing the molar composition of Japaneseness first, to then map out the molecular lines of flight of other becomings in the film:

By confronting and even subverting traditional notions of the past, the film [*Princess Mononoke*] offers a new approach to constructing Japanese national identity, one that is not necessarily based on a strictly accurate adherence to historical fact but instead intermingles fact, extrapolation, and fantasy to provide a provocative, heterogeneous, and often bleaker view than the conventional vision of Japanese history and

⁷⁵⁴ See Jaqueline Berndt's 'The Intercultural Challenge of the 'Mangaesque': Reorienting Manga Studies after 3/11', in *Manga's Cultural Crossroads*, ed. by Jaqueline Berndt and Bettina Kulmmerling-Meibauer (New York: Routledge, 2016). pp. 65–84.

identity[...] Miyazaki uses the fantastic and the feminine to defamiliarize and even subvert conventional notions of history, progress, and gender coding in Japanese culture. In contrast to his previous films, which mined the history and legends of other countries, Miyazaki this time decontextualizes and defamiliarizes his country's past to create a vision of shifting alterities allowing the audience to range freely across a far wider continuum of both historic events and historical identities than the traditional history film usually presents.⁷⁵⁵

What Miyazaki does in his deterritorialisation of Japanese cultural, national, and gendered identity is to draw a critique of the binaries of man/woman, culture/nature, mind/body, etc., consequently challenging the gendered, environmental, and religious histories of Japan's national memory as hegemonic, violent, and oppressive. Miyazaki's recursive retellings and rewritings of transhistorical processes, discourses, concepts, and allusions are parallel critical histories that otaku artists too consider in their work, albeit in more vulgar, accelerated, and decentred modes. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter One, Miyazaki critiques Japanese modernity through fabulation defamiliarising the past from the present entirely and overcoming media censorship.

To go beyond Miyazaki, the superflat anime machines accelerate, dehierarchise, and flatten spatiotemporal difference as a certain categorical sameness (Viking as samurai, berserker as cyborg, holy wars as nuclear wars, and so on and so forth), while clearly amplifying teeming post-historical feelings of existential rage and temporal terror on the surface of the anime-image and its multiple machinic manifestations. This chapter argues that as the schizoid visions of Westernisation and its recursive recapitulation, psycho-social integration, and technocratic optimisation are mediated through multiple frames, windows, interfaces, devices, and bodies of the anime ecology. This mediation of the crises of the present channel overflowing and overwhelming memories that haunt and vitalise the otaku world-image as a force situated against extinction. In my Deleuzian assessment of otaku transhistorical thought, I maintain that the otaku imaginary is not an escapist amnesia, devoid of memories as many critics have feared. I think this is as an epistemological misunderstanding about how one *knows* the historical. Otaku nomadic memories, conversely,

⁷⁵⁵ Susan J. Napier, 'Confronting Master Narratives: History As Vision in Miyazaki Hayao's Cinema of De-assurance', *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* vol. 9, no. 2 (2001): pp. 467-93.

might best described as abstract and affective expressions of ‘hypermnesia’, an overaccumulation of memory that for Paolo Virno, ‘entails an over-abundance of history’. Virno explains that the highly affective experience of an

excess of memory, which without doubt characterises the contemporary situation, has a name: *the memory of the present*. This latter, rather than remaining a fundamental and yet hidden characteristic of the mnestic faculty, breaks through to the surface and is explicitly manifest. What is excessive is not *per se* the split in every instant between a perceived ‘now’ and a remembered ‘now’, but rather the fact that this split has been fully visible.⁷⁵⁶

In Virno’s schema, memory and history are categorically different phenomena and should be understood in terms of intensity (affects-becomings) rather than authenticity (essence-Being). To know the difference between the *perceived now* and the *remembered now*, one must not pine for knowing how to differentiate the real from non-real; rather, one must feel and see the abundance of flowing memories as possible (virtual) realities in the anime-image, as Virno writes: ‘The over-abundance of history (connected to the over-abundance of memory) points us to where human praxis is directly grappling with the difference between faculty and performance, which constitutes history’s condition of possibility’.⁷⁵⁷ As otaku memory fills the crystalline anime machine, it is mediated through the flattening forces of the anime apparatus; across the distributive field, within the animetic interval, and throughout the rhizomatic body of the anime ecology, ‘[t]he excess of memory *does not* induce lethargy and resignation, but on the contrary guarantees the most intense alacrity’, as Virno contends.⁷⁵⁸

Bluebeard and the Joan of Arc Effect: Overloading the Otaku Database in *Fate/Zero*

This excess of memory that characterises the Nasuverse is not merely an ahistorical obsession or a traumatic enclosure; rather, it is a radical fabulation of History after history. Let us read the otaku’s case of hypermnesia with the theory of co-existential history that was explained in

⁷⁵⁶ Paolo Virno, *Déjà vu and the Ends of History*, p. 46.

⁷⁵⁷ Virno, p. 49.

⁷⁵⁸ Virno, p. 47.

the previous chapter. According to Jay Lampert, these erupting flows of nomadic memories is a Deleuzo-Guattarian ‘running effect’ like ‘the Kelvin effect or the Doppler effect in physics’, which ‘is a virtual pattern, an abstract sequence of possibilities, which becomes actual whenever certain conditions and driving forces fall into place’.⁷⁵⁹ When Deleuze and Guattari write about the ‘Joan of Arc effect’, they envision a reality where Joan of Arc can be transported between numerous historical names and bodies, across the universe at any instant and in any form, as replications or transmutations of the original name or body. As Lampert and Rodowick explained in the previous chapter, the crystalline memories of the Joan of Arc effect can become mediated as overlays that stretch across striated maps of imperial and institutional History. It is because of this that Lampert argues that

it does not depend on our personal knowledge or imagination [of the historical name], but [it] vibrates through us as an after-effect of its *own* virtual reality. When we become Joan of Arc, the issue is not whether we do so in an objectively accurate way or not, but how long the effect can maintain its specificity before it commingles into another effect.⁷⁶⁰

For example, when Japanese Joan of Arcs appear in the historical record like ‘Fukuda Hideko (1865-1927), who was referred to as “Japan’s Joan of Arc” because in 1886 she had attempted – together with like-minded members of the Liberal Party [...] to set up a reform government in exile’, we must think about why this transhistorical association merits philosophical interrogation.⁷⁶¹ The reason for this transformation of Fukuda into Joan of Arc is not due to the State-mediated historical myths of Joan of Arc’s religious zealotry or national resistance to a foreign power. The resonance of Fukuda’s becoming-Joan is the result of an antihistorical experience of becoming-woman, a nomadic expression of a political charged and gendered mode of violent resistance that in turn created new masks of blinding intensities, of fury, rage, and rebellion. It is by nature of this transnational experience of becoming-Joan that Rodowick concludes that

⁷⁵⁹ Lampert, p. 3

⁷⁶⁰ Lampert, p. 5.

⁷⁶¹ For more on Japanese Joan of Arcs and the conflation of Western-Japanese women martyrs, see Melanie Trede, ‘Banknote Design as a Battlefield of Gender Politics and National Representation in Meiji Japan’, in *Performing ‘Nation’ Gender Politics in Literature, Theater, and the Visual Arts of China and Japan, 1880-1940*, (Boston: Brill, 2008). p. 89.

[t]he relation of history and memory is equivalent to that of power and resistance. The memory of resistance is not a 'human memory,' though its forces can be marshaled for all kinds of mobilizing narratives: alternative histories, or popular memory and counter-memory in the Foucauldian sense.⁷⁶²

Lampert clarifies the Joan of Arc effect, writing that names of history like Joan of Arc

performed some acts, and now those acts can take place on our bodies, following more or less the same kinds of series, offering more or less the same potentials for decisive changes of direction, creating contexts and milieus for new acts of Joan of Arc, assembling surrounding people into Joan of Arc's new allies and enemies, and so on. Joan of Arc is a diagram, an abstract machine, a vibration of potentialities; Joan of Arc happened once to a person some centuries ago, and can happen again on anyone who has a body.⁷⁶³

As Lampert reminds us, it is not us who seek the transversal Joan of Arc. Rather as Benjamin's Angel of History can confirm upon high, 'Joan of Arc runs on *us*' like a runaway train, barrelling down the tracks of time after us. When she passes by at high speeds, we feel her intensities, affects, and becomings 'vibrate through us as an after-effect of [her] *own* virtual reality'.⁷⁶⁴ Most importantly, the latency of Joan of Arc's after-effects – which in a Deleuzian context may translate to Joan of Arc's traits of expression, from her rage and fury to her becoming-woman, becoming-god, or becoming-steel – allows us to experience 'how long the effect can maintain its specificity before it commingles into another effect'.⁷⁶⁵ I do not need to know everything about Joan of Arc to feel her fury strike at any moment; I simply need to be in her vicinity, to feel her resonances in different bodies, events, or expressions. Her presences in the present is a recognition of a minor history that might offer correctives to ideologically-mediated forms of oppression, neglect of the most precarious and minor, and the complete obliteration of minor populations and ecologies by the forces of the Majoritarian.

⁷⁶² Rodowick, p. 206.

⁷⁶³ Lampert, p. 3.

⁷⁶⁴ Lampert, p. 4.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

And even this being said, her effect can be entirely disorienting, ushering in multiple shadows of History that illicit experiences of not only becoming-woman, but also, of becoming-imperceptible. One of the more sophisticated examples of this manifests itself as a subplot of *Fate/Zero*, which is co-written by Urobuchi Gen, a prominent horror and psychological thriller otaku writer. Early in the Fourth Holy Grail War in *Fate/Zero*, Gilles de Rais returns from fifteenth century Orléans to assess the identities of all the Heroic Spirits that have been revealed so far in the tournament. Known by History as one of Joan of Arc's most loyal lieutenants and a serial killer of women and children (Bluebeard), Urobuchi describes Gilles de Rais as a powerful Satanic warlock whose obsession with dark rituals and blood magic has afforded him incredible, Faustian knowledge about the world in the past, present, and future.⁷⁶⁶ While viewing a battle between Artoria, Gilgamesh, Lancelot, and Alexander the Great, Bluebeard becomes deliriously overwhelmed, forsaking all the data and information that he inscribed in his compendium on this world by mistakenly identifying the femme King Arthur (Artoria Pendragon) as his greatest desire of all: Jeanne d'Arc. Urobuchi's decision to conflate Jeanne d'Arc and Artoria indeed establishes character context for Bluebeard's chivalric and sadomasochistic desire-production of polymorphous perversities.⁷⁶⁷

However, *Fate* fans (like Urobuchi) will also note that this is a self-reflexive comment on the seemingly derivative and redundant nature of the Nasuverse's historical database. Takeuchi designed most of the Saber heroes within a vague template that Jeanne d'Arc fits into perfectly. In this 'Joan of Arc database,' the Saber names of history often appears as blonde and petite, donning an armoured dress, and wielding an ornately decorated sword. While Jeanne d'Arc is situated outside of the Saber subclass, Type-Moon's illustrators follow a certain trend in their design of Saber heroes, as indicated by the first century 'mad' Roman emperor Nero Claudius Caesar, the last samurai of nineteenth century Kyoto Okita Sōji, and the roguish eighteenth-century French spy Chevalier d'Éon. For Bluebeard to be confused by the dozens of Joan of Arc doppelgangers is only natural in the context of the *Fate* universe as much as his obsessive delusions seem unnatural in the context of one manic episode. This scene produces a new awareness, an awareness of the false, a sense of Brechtian alienation, one that reminds the viewer that Type-Moon is actively cannibalising and mass producing

⁷⁶⁶ George Bataille, *The Trial of Gilles de Rais*, trans. by Richard Robinson (Monroe: Amok Books, 1991).

⁷⁶⁷ Slavoj Žižek, 'Courtly Love, or, Woman as Thing', in *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality* (London: Verso, 2005). pp. 89-112.

queered images of History at a rapid pace. This reproduces the schizoid-otaku assemblage that Bluebeard seems to embody. It should be no surprise that Bluebeard is described as an otaku; he collects manga, plays video games, tinkers with model kits, etc. Unlike the benevolent Shirō, however, the fiction of Bluebeard's modern life as a serial killer and an otaku harkens back to the cultural fear of the 1990s that he lives in, whereby his interaction with Saber and even his Master (a serial killer as well) links another frame of reference to Tsutomu Miyazaki ('The Otaku Murderer' as described in the Introduction) to the network of images and references. Urobuchi, with the help of Nasu, utilises the character of Gilles de Rais to express the dizzying madness of the Joan of Arc effect, as well as the horror of internalising the Joan of Arc effect as a schizophrenising break. Bluebeard's madness, however, is not a result of the unmediated capture of these names of history and the intensities they inhabit can produce. Rather, he is unable to see the molecular becomings of the Joan of Arc effect without seeing the molar template; Gilles sees the power of Joan of Arc as the mover of a historical moment, of the nomadic war machine, of the trampling of a State in the name of God. Gilles cannot see History beyond this perspective, because in fairness, neither can anyone who thinks through teleological or linear movement. He is unable to experience the radical force of the Joan of Arc effect because he misidentifies the historical as the Real, as an ontological target to *have*. The otaku cannibalisation of historical thought and the bodies that inhabit the historical is not always liberatory; the problems of capture and objectification is pervasive throughout *Fate* series, and can evoke misogynistic solutions to the problem of History. Nasu and Type-Moon are keenly aware of this problem, and by establishing two versions of otaku hypernesia – Shirō's hallucinations of transhistory and Bluebeard's antihistorical capture of History – which reveals a path toward philosophically examine and challenge ontological capture in their later series.

This scene is one of many examples of how Nasu's rhizomatic narrative modes investigates the nature of truth, perception, and the authority of imperial History itself. Like Bluebeard, *Fate* fans mistake names, characters, and motives of Heroic Spirits due to the historical knowledge that is recorded for us in our world. The counter-memories that Nasu imagines range from altering gender and sexual orientation to complicating personal ideals and political exploits of each Heroic Spirit, revealing a falsified historical account of the lives of each Heroic Spirit. As *Fate/Zero* shows, Artoria is not a destined boy-king, but a peasant woman thrust into kingship by accident; as *Fate/Extra Last Encore* depicts, Nero is not a

decadent despot, but a maligned reformer; as *Fate/Extella* indicates, Attila the Hun is not a brutal barbarian, but a brilliant young girl who rose to chieftain after the death of her father, excelling as a nomadic strategist who sought to end Roman hegemony across its frontier territories. And the list goes on and on throughout the Nasuverse's transhistorical database, whereby historical injustices are exposed and each Servant must find peace in their past.

Moreover, the problem with misidentifying the names of history is one of representation, and mixing up representation with the real, an accident of understanding that is driven by the intense sensations that the Joan of Arc effect exhibits in the soulful body of the anime-image, and in the viewer. In the words of Deleuze, 'When sensation is linked to the body in this way, it ceases to be representative and becomes real'.⁷⁶⁸ This is the most important aspect of the Joan of Arc effect: 'the names of history do not lose their singularities in the course of their migrations across bodies'.⁷⁶⁹ This means that Joan of Arc is not a fully individuated body that transcends time and space by merit of a metaphysical Bergsonian principle of memory = matter. Rather, Joan of Arc becomes an assemblage of transhistorical events, fractal intensities, and variants of minoritarian experience that resonate within the bodies of those who are swept up in her transversals across the vectors of transhistorical fabulation and vision. Type-Moon reveal in this way then that otaku, like Joan of Arc, are names of history, too, stuck between the minor and Major.

Depending on each historical vector (or historico-materialist phenomenon, say like slavery, colonisation, environmental devastation), Joan of Arc can be propelled into new bodies and other abstract machines and diagrams, regardless of her own identity or the identity given by other bodies, as Lampert concludes:

To identify with a figure from the past is not to identify with an identity, but with a zone. For that matter, the historical personage could not have been entirely self-identical in the first place, since she in turn will have circulated through the names of history on the periphery of her own zones of intensity. In any case, one's own body is hardly one's own, since the zones on that body are liable to become somebody else; the body without a self is the body on which all subjects circulate.⁷⁷⁰

⁷⁶⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *FB*, p. 33.

⁷⁶⁹ Lampert, p. 5.

⁷⁷⁰ Lampert, p. 2.

It is in this temporal zone of intensity that Nasu and Urobuchi create a necessary misreading of History in *Fate/Zero*. Bluebeard's experience – albeit problematised by madness – is an experience of the Joan of Arc effect that reflects the Deleuzo-Guattarian logic against History and for nomadology. As the long-passed after-effects of Joan of Arc pass through Artoria's body and Bluebeard's sensorium, intensities overcome information, and the case of mistaken identities develops into a grotesque comedy of errors. While the themes of *Fate/Zero* align with the logic of co-existential history and an experience of hypermnnesia, it is because of the rhizomatic nature of the Nasuverse (energised by otaku movement) that epistemological circuits burn out. All that remains in the nexus of the Nasuverse is the virtual possibilities of *homo historia*, of the names of history, and of Joan of Arc's eternal return.

Becoming-Woman and the Nero Effect: Overloading the Otaku Sensorium

These transhistorical names of history and heroines of the Nasuverse – Jeanne d'Arc, King Arthur, Nero Claudius, Atilla the Hun – flow into multiple becomings (becoming-woman, becoming-god, becoming-steel, becoming-nomad), erupting into events that relive the Joan of Arc effect in the anime machine. In these multiple nomadic transformations, counter-memories flow from the affective anime icon of the *shōjo* to the otaku. As a coupling interface, a semiotic conduit for the desires and dreams of new historical becomings, Type-Moon – unlike other series like *Nobunaga the Fool* or *Code Geass*, series that seek to examine alternative histories from the perspectives of a losing hegemon, nation, or empire – explores the overturning of History in the hypercharged, affective, and intense image of what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the most iconoclastic figure in their nomadological schema, as introduced at the end of Chapter Two: *the anime girl*.⁷⁷¹

Type-Moon's signature design choice of altering the gender and sexuality of key historical figures (i.e., Great Men of History as anime girls) contributes to producing a

⁷⁷¹ For a brief history on the formation of the anime girl (*shōjo*) and its queering of gender (and demographics in readership) in Japanese manga culture, see Kanako Shiokawa's 'Cute but Deadly: Women and Violence in Japanese Comics', (pp. 93-126) and Setsu Shigematsu's 'Dimensions of Desire: Sex, Fantasy, and Fetish in Japanese Comics', (pp. 127-63) both in *Themes and Issues in Asian Cartooning: Cute, Cheap, Mad and Sexy*, ed. by John Lent (Bowling Green: Popular Press, 1999). For more on otaku sexuality, see Saitō Tamaki's *Beautiful Fighting Girl*, trans. by J. Keith Vincent and Dawn Lawson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011) and Patrick W. Galbraith's 'Otaku Sexuality in Japan' in *Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia*, ed. by Mark McLelland and Vera Mackie (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 205-15.

profound counter-memory of global cultures and civilisations through a critical evaluation of gender politics and History, like Miyazaki's feminine and fantastic vision of History. As if following Deleuze and Guattari, Type-Moon's process of reviving the names of history in the anime-image (as the girl) is the first step in irrevocably rewriting the historical process, amending the Hegelian impulses of phallogocentrism, and reclaiming a new world-image of the *shōjo*, as Deleuze and Guattari write,

Trost, a mysterious author, painted a portrait of the girl, to whom he linked the fate of the revolution: her speed, her freely machinic body, her intensities, her abstract line or line of flight, her molecular production, her indifference to memory, her nonfigurative character [...] Joan of Arc?⁷⁷²

By reimagining the Great Men of History as many different versions of the anime girl, Nasu complicates these historical personae throughout the series to expose a nomadology of world history, rewriting it so to illuminate the failings of all historical discourses as examples of masculine, anthropocentric, ontological, political, and sexual capture. As Type-Moon indicates throughout the Nasuverse, pseudo-historical and legendary figures (often figures that identify as national identity avatars) like King Arthur, Nero Claudius, or Atilla the Hun are represented as victims, rather than perpetrators, of imperial History and the violence of nationalist myth-building. Nasu reminds us repeatedly in manga, light novels, anime, and video games that all his gender-queered names of history are visions and replications of Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc), the series' transhistorical exemplar, and the avatar of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of History.

⁷⁷² Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 305.



Figure 15

As visions of the Joan of Arc effect, Artoria, Nero, Atilla, and dozens of others face the traumatic, violent, and painful experiences of Jeanne d'Arc in a multitude of different ways. Each shade of Jeanne d'Arc in the series is a woman of History who was forced to deny sexual difference in order to lead revolutions; each character faces the repercussions of their actions in the wake of eras of brutally oppressive systems of mass misogyny through politically ordained conspiracies of delegitimizing, usurping, and whitewashing their legacies; each memory of historical violence is relived over and over in each Holy Grail War, in fiery, apocalyptic detail. Each minor name of history returns to fight the injustices of a male-past.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the image of the girl has always been the territory for a confrontation with the patriarchal project of History, as the end of Chapter Two introduced. Throughout the Nasuverse, the nomadic memories of Jeanne d'Arc resurface as time-travelling Servants throughout the Holy Grail Wars (Artoria, Nero, Mordred) as antihistorical personae who sacrifice their lives to alter the historical record for the better. The revolutionary historical allegory of Trost's girl (Joan of Arc) is a deterritorialising force, as Type-Moon's *Fate/Grand Order* motto's puts it in vernacular terms: 'This is a story about taking back our future'. As spectres of their respective historical events, epochs or, situations, these girl-shades of Nasu's *de facto* existential martyr, Jeanne d'Arc, haunt the Nasuverse as ghosts of ethico-historical failure, recursively returning to fight in the Holy Grail War in order to right the wrongs they *felt* they made and to overcome their traumatic memories. Type-Moon's entire fabulative network shows how the Joan of Arc effect is not only another transhistorical

articulation of nomadic becomings, but that it is the origin of all nomadic becomings, as Deleuze and Guattari explain: ‘It is perhaps the special situation of women in relation to the man-standard that accounts for the fact that becomings, being minoritarian, always pass through a becoming-woman’.⁷⁷³

Type-Moon’s relationship with exploring becoming-woman is connected to their history with the *shōjo* manga style. Type-Moon’s use of *shōjo* style in early male otaku fan circles is complicated and at times, contradictory.⁷⁷⁴ However, because of the influences of Sadamoto and many other female illustrators, character design within the *Fate* universe has retained a *shōjo* spark. Deborah Shamoon describes *shōjo* as a manga aesthetic originally marketed for teenage girls by male illustrators in the 1920s; the style grew into a specific style of manga illustration and narrative that women’s writers soon reclaimed from their male progenitors in the 1970s, altering the genre forever.⁷⁷⁵ *Shōjo* manga often tells stories in domestic spaces (school, work, home),⁷⁷⁶ explores the intensities of female friendship and same-sex desire,⁷⁷⁷ narrates interior experiences of desire, loss, and love,⁷⁷⁸ and illustrates images within a semiotic network of ‘throbbing, palpitating excitement, readily flowing tears,

⁷⁷³ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 321.

⁷⁷⁴ It is important to state that it is debatable to what extent Type-Moon’s transhistorical database is radically feminist, or at least, feminist in an antihistorical tinge. It must be acknowledged that throughout the Nasuverse, there are many naturalised elements of fanservice, which Keith Russell explains ‘is the random and gratuitous display of a series of anticipated gestures common in Manga and Anime. These gestures include such things as panty shots, leg spreads (spread legs) and glimpses of breasts’, in ‘The Glimpse and Fan Service: New Media, New Aesthetics’, *The International Journal of the Humanities* 6.5 (2008), pp. 105-10. Fanservice throughout *Fate* should not be discounted: it is a misogynistic element of not only mass male otaku culture, but *Fate/stay/night*’s own publication history, in which its own visual novel inception was as a pornographic video game, whereby the premise of the Servant-Master relationship arose as a male-focused harem sexual fantasy. The problem of Type-Moon’s sexual politics, however, was not in its eroticism, but rather, with its fixed, heteronormative male gaze, which was the anchoring principle of the first game in which Shirō had to choose between three lovers. However, I would argue that in more recent series, Type-Moon has exhibited alternating models of visual pleasure and desire-production between the male-female, heteronormative-queer gazes in demographics, genre, and style. For example, the *Fate* series (after 2010, especially) has featured the works of female artists and illustrators, including Type-Moon dynamos like Wada Aruko (creator of Nero for *Fate/Extra* and the executive character designer for *Fate/Extella*), AKIRA (character designer of the Gorgon sisters Stheno, Euryale, and Medusa in *Fate/Grand Order*), Kurahana Chinatsu (character designer of William Shakespeare in *Fate/Apocrypha*), and Morii Shidzuki (executive character designer of *Fate/Strange Fake* and gender androgynous/queer characters like Enkidu, Tristan, and Ishtar in *Fate/Grand Order*). See *Type-Moon Wiki*: http://typemoon.wikia.com/wiki/List_of_illustrators. The illustrious illustrative work of these female artists has significantly solidified the aesthetic oeuvre of the *Fate* series that was inspired by the style of Sadamoto Yoshiyuki, as described earlier in Chapter Five. This style is closer in relation to *shōjo* than to *shōnen*.

⁷⁷⁵ Shiokawa, p. 104.

⁷⁷⁶ Shiokawa, p. 109.

⁷⁷⁷ Deborah Shamoon, *Passionate Friendship: The Aesthetics of Girls’ Culture in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2012), pp. 34-7.

⁷⁷⁸ Shamoon, ‘Situating the Shōjo in Shōjo Manga’, p. 146.

and lushly blooming flowers'.⁷⁷⁹ *Shōjo* manga display a 'narrative style [that] became as recognizable a feature of *shōjo* manga as the large eyes and willowy limbs',⁷⁸⁰ in which *shōjo* writers tended toward plots with 'a reliance on sameness and certain difficulties in portraying realistic heterosexual romance narratives'.⁷⁸¹ Shamoons and others have extensively examined the patriarchal limitations and feminist experiments within the *shōjo* genre, they do note in different ways, however, that very definition of *shōjo* style is difficult to pin down, especially since it is at the heart of aesthetic, philosophical, cultural, and industrial innovations in manga and anime.⁷⁸²

In this context, specifically, note that Wada's gender-queering of Nero not only established the narrative arc of each *Fate/EX* media artefact (*Extra* and *Extella*), but the shojo-ification of History marked a significant shift in the Nasuverse, resulting in Type-Moon's retroactive gender-blurring of most names of history in the series. With Wada's help, Type-Moon transformed the historical memory of a mad emperor into a full embodiment of the *shōjo* ideal. It is no surprise that Nero followed Artoria in the next expansion of the *Fate* universe, transitioning from the Fuyuki world of *Fate/stay/night* to the latest instalments of the series, what I refer to as the 'post-Fuyuki' or 'virtual arcs' of the *Fate/EX* and *Fate/GO* universes. Nero, like Artoria, is another shade of an intensification of becoming-woman, 'defined by a relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness, by a combination of atoms, an emission of particles: haecceity', as Deleuze and Guattari write.⁷⁸³ Wada's soulful illustration of Nero and Type-Moon's most recent deployment of her character design in the opening music video of *Fate/Extra Last Encore*, describes her as an avatar of affirmation, a cipher through which the signs of excess, decadence, and free-roaming desire is not to be viewed as admonishing qualities of Roman life, but rather, as energising, vitalising, and life-affirming traits of expression in the face of the last encore of life: the digital expunging of humanity and its history on the planet Earth. In the opening music video of *Last Encore*, for example, the avant-garde animation studio Shaft retains Wada's *shōjo*-ified illustration of Nero to a tee. Clearly drawn through a *shōjo* lens, the entire opening (directed by famed magical-girl directors Miyamoto Yukihiro and Shinbo Akiyuki) is an love letter to Wada's

⁷⁷⁹ Shamoons, p. 145.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁸¹ Shamoons, p. 153.

⁷⁸² Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 218.

⁷⁸³ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 305.

shōjo revision: the entirety of the introduction depicts Nero in a crumbling Roman Coliseum fighting mangled shadows of the past, dancing with her blade in elaborately choreographed motions as roses and rain drench the ossified ruins of History. As Nero blends into the nonhuman milieu of flora and water in a concrete coliseum, she is seen continually outrunning and dodging the phallic weapons of time: gunfire, missiles, bombs, and explosions.

Throughout the music video, the poetics of becoming-woman flow throughout the the animetic form, enhanced especially by the *shōjo* aesthetics and a commitment to varied shots and cinematic compositions of dance and flight. The up-tempo, J-rock ballad – ‘Bright Burning Shout’, written and performed by otaku pop idol Nishikawa Takanori – synchronises with Nero’s movements; with each shift in tempo or pitch, each acceleration or slowing down of the beat, the volatile affects running on the surface of Nero’s character design take a life of their own in quick edits, close-ups, and tracking shots of Nero’s innumerable lines of flights, similar to *Daicon IV*’s Bunny as explored in Chapter Four. We experience another animetic experience of becoming-woman (Bunny in *Daicon*) through flight, echoing Hélène Cixous: ‘Flying is woman’s gesture – flying in language and making it fly. We have all learned the art of flying and its numerous techniques; for centuries we’ve been able to possess anything only by flying; we’ve lived in flight, stealing away, finding, when desired, narrow passageways, hidden crossovers’.⁷⁸⁴ Having described flight in terms of becoming-woman, and further writing that Type-Moon’s *écriture féminine* is marked by the language of aerial acrobatics, chthonic memories of rebirth and desire, and slippages within the animetic interval, we can read the same character movements as the primary animetic language Shaft deploys to overcome the allegorical encroaching images of History, to unseat Nero from imperial History.

With each thrust into the camera, with each somersault out of frame, with each vaulting leap and backflips from shot to shot, we see multiple transhistorical visions of Nero crystallise on the surface: (1) Nero as emperor, depicted as being sumptuously clad in deep imperial crimson, gossamer white, and resplendent golds; (2) Nero as avenger, illustrated by the close-ups of her vibrating agate eyes, flickering with rage and desire; (3) Nero as performer, emphasised by her body in continual motion, mobilising her historical struggles into a whirlwind of swordplay and acrobatic dance; (4) Nero as cosmic artist, symbolised by

⁷⁸⁴ Hélène Cixous, ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’, trans. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs* 1.4 (Summer 1976). p. 887.

the painterly strokes of her sword which produce spurts of roses that dart and float throughout the Coliseum, mixing and mingling with other flowing fluids that soak the screen in tears, raindrops, wine, and blood. Entirely corporeal and seemingly cosmic, Wada's Nero-as-anime-image overflows with polymorphous desire, affective intensities, and visceral sensations, seemingly overloading the heterosexual otaku circuits of desire with an alien, aloof, and entirely antihistorical name of history that resurrects a planetary vitalism against digital extinction. Moreover, this music video floods the otaku viewer with an elusive affective barrage of desire-production that becomes overdone, overproduced, and overwhelmed. This overproduction of desiring-images is situated well beyond the limits of traditional heterosexual circuits, as is later exposed in her relationship with both catatonic male protagonists from the *Fate/Extra* and *Fate/Extella* series in more prosaic terms. Wada's Nero, like Cixous' Medusa, shatters the historical model that the rhizomatic *Fate* series sought to abolish in its early iterations, echoing the post-historical screams of the suppressed voices of women across History that Cixous attributes to the *jouissance of écriture féminine*:

When the "repressed" of their culture and their society returns, it's an explosive, utterly destructive, staggering return, with a force never yet unleashed and equal to the most forbidding of suppressions. For when the Phallic period comes to an end, women will have been either annihilated or borne up to the highest and most violent incandescence. Muffled throughout their history, they have lived in dreams, in bodies (though muted), in silences, in aphonic revolts.⁷⁸⁵

Like the transhistorical cipher of Medusa, Nero is the queen of *shōjo* onto-aesthetics in the *Fate* series, resonating more intensely with queer otaku desire (linkages to nonhuman desires) more than heterosexual male gazes, identifying and binding an experience of becoming-woman more intently for female readers, viewers, and players through the painterly and animetic expression of *écriture féminine* (or women's writing).⁷⁸⁶ Nero is to Type-Moon just

⁷⁸⁵ Cixous, p. 875.

⁷⁸⁶ For more on the theorisation of Cixous' concept of *écriture féminine*, see Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément's *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986). Cixous importantly notes that while she calls for women to express their embodied experience of sexual difference through their aesthetic endeavours (to thus, overcome the constraints of difference in a celebration of it through a

as Virginia Woolf is to Deleuze and Guattari; like Woolf, Nero's character design expresses how her character 'lived with all her energies, in all of her work, never ceasing to become'.⁷⁸⁷ Shaft's poetics of becoming-woman, as animated throughout *Last Encore*, are not simply contained by the logic of the Joan of Arc effect as the Nasuverse is.



Figure 16

Rather, due to the shōjo-ification of the traditional boy-Servant interface of the first visual novel (and its animetic mobilisation in the latest series), the narrative alibi of gender-bending History must be read as an experience of becoming-woman, or reexamined as a vitalistic and violent sundering of the towering monoliths of sedentary-imperial-white-heterosexual-male History. While Artoria is unable to overcome her eternal, messianic return throughout *Fate/Zero*, in *Last Encore* Nero overwhelms the West's ideological *paterfamilias* – the Roman State – in dance and flight, leaving the Coliseum a burned-out ruin, and returning to the present to rescue the human species from its own impending technologically-mediated extinction.

***Fate/Grand Order's* Capture of Tactile Intimacy and Epistemological Closeness**

While Type-Moon's most recent exploration of becoming-woman (*Last Encore*) reflects on the multiple formulations of becoming-minor in animetic and fabulative ways, the series also poses questions about the liberatory qualities of the greater anime ecological network,

rewriting of sorts), she also claims that men, too, can express becoming-woman in their works, as she describes is indicative of the literary works of Shakespeare and Kleist, p. 98.

⁷⁸⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 305.

primarily in the phenomenological reading of the tactile and haptic. From the abstract logic of the Joan of Arc effect to the embodied sensations of the Nero effect, otaku viewers feel the raging sensations of becoming-woman, but these experiences are intensified in the mediatic leap into the touchscreen. Type-Moon's release of the persistent *gachapon* ('toy vending machine') mobile game called *Fate/Grand Order* and an anime film adaptation offer yet another path in the franchise to reveal visions of the otaku world-image, transitioning the focus of the series from the optic, hermeneutic, and ontological questions of History to the tactile, the haptic and epistemological answers of the nomadological.

The *Fate/GO* series takes place concurrently with our reality, receiving content updates regularly. In the *Fate/GO* universe, the year is 2015 (when it released in Japan) and a clandestine group called the Chaldea Security Organisation seeks to save humanity from a seemingly inevitable extinction by 2017. The protagonists of *Grand Order* learn new technologies of time-travel from continual scientific experimentation on spatiotemporal rifts caused throughout the globe after the destruction of Fuyuki City in 2004, as depicted in *Fate/Zero* and *Fate/stay/night*. The protagonists time-travel through traumatic events of ethico-historical failings; while most of the early events in the series begin in Japan, the protagonist is sent off across human history. To avoid being accused of historical libel, Type-Moon warns gamers that the game "is a work of fiction," and that it in no way reflects our current world, like all game companies are required to do. However, this is the furthest from the truth when playing the game: *Fate/GO* specifically transforms the conceptual discourses of the historical to the embodied sensations of the nomadological, encouraging players to begin to answer the epistemological questions of what to do with History after its ends through fabulation and touch. If most of the *Fate* series (especially the *EX* series) is stuck between the fatalistic and messianic poles of the nomadological, *Fate/GO* escapes the ouroboric allegories of time, truth, and the historical by mobilising the sense of touch and optimising the effects of digital intimacy between players and their Servants that they randomly collect throughout playtime sessions.

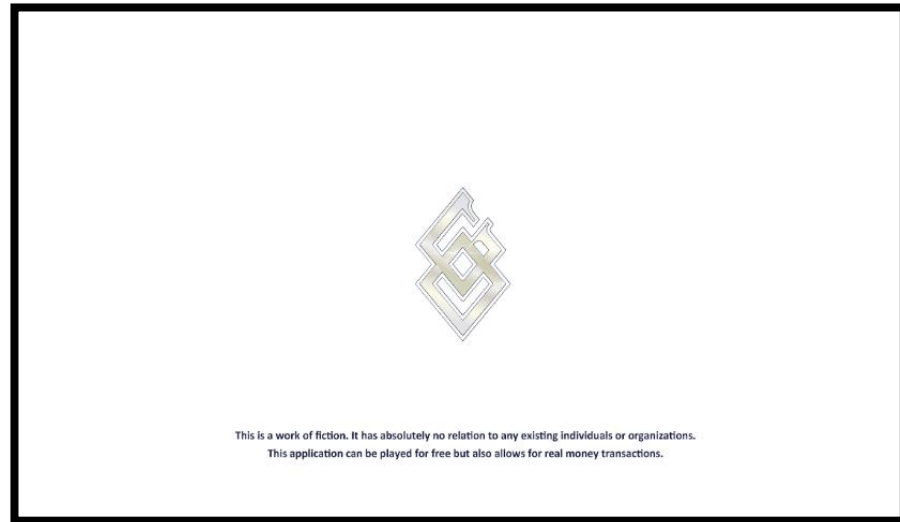


Figure 17

Fate/GO is, on the surface, a typical millennial mobile game. By using the smartphone as a conduit into the Chaldea time-traveling mechanism, players randomly summon Servants to combat dozens of automatons that have emerged mysteriously, and to confront enemy Heroic Spirits that are traversing different timelines and alternate realities in the Nasuverse to collect remnants of the Grail. Players navigate nodes on alternating maps from History, from Shirō's contemporary Japan, Nero's Rome, Jeanne d'Arc's France, to Francis Drake's Caribbean Islands, and Jack the Ripper's industrial London. More maps of alternative histories also populate the game, including one of North America that retells the American War of Independence as an indigenous rebellion led by the time-traveling Apache hero Geronimo against Celtic colonisers, one of Jerusalem during the Ninth Crusade that witnesses the rise of a Templar-esque New Camelot, and finally, another of Gilgamesh's ancient Sumerian kingdom of Uruk. Within each node is a turn-based combat scenario that three Servants can fight in at a time. While the world-building and alternative historical alibis are fascinating, the game's overall character-driven narratives and gameplay elements are not entirely compelling, for me at least. Although Nasu wrote large chunks of the game, the mobile iteration is not that inquisitive or philosophical, but it is accessible for many ages and demographics in Japan and internationally. In many respects, *Fate/GO* is simply another one of thousands of Japanese *gachapon* mobile games that have dominated the Eastern gaming markets since the late-2000s.⁷⁸⁸ However, I contend that the most compelling elements of *Fate/GO* are not located in

⁷⁸⁸ Serkan Toto, 'Gacha: Explaining Japan's Top Money-Making Social Game Mechanism', in *KantanGames* (12 February 2012: <http://www.serkantoto.com/2012/02/21/gacha-social-games/> [Accessed 31 October 2018]).

the gamic systems, but rather in the ways in which it might explain the intensive, affective relationships that users establish with their digital companions. The mobile game also reveals how users articulate their affective connections with specific characters as ways of seeking an intimacy or closeness with what might simply be described as a digital object obtained through a random loot economy that pressures players to buy more in-game currency.



Figure 18

For a group of Type-Moon fans that I met at Anime Expo 2018 in Los Angeles, California – which I must add was almost entirely sponsored by Aniplex and Type-Moon, as was illustrated by the scrawling *Fate/GO* banners and advertisements bestrewn across downtown L.A. skyscrapers, buses, and the convention centre itself – they too articulated their intimate, personal, and affective connections to the characters they would randomly obtain in the game. While at the conference, I joined a large group of *Fate* fans at the Aniplex America booth in the main conference hall. One woman from Australia (whose family was originally from Mumbai, India) mentioned that when she got the Sanskrit hero Arjuna, she was so excited, tearful even. She said it was the first time she saw an Indian character depicted in an anime context and felt an immediate kinship with him; she eventually cosplayed as Arjuna on the second day of the convention. A young LGBTQ couple from the same group of fans were eager to explain to me that their favourite character was Astolfo, Type-Moon's gender-ambiguous, intersex version of one of Roland's greatest knights in *The Song of Roland*. Two sisters from Ireland explained to me why they love collecting the many versions of Cú Chulainn in the series (as a druid, as a warrior, as a monster, etc.); one of the sisters even admitted to writing erotic slash fiction versions of the Ulster Cycle, with Cú Chulainn and

Fionn mac Cumhaill as star-crossed lovers.⁷⁸⁹ And the list goes on. Most of these fans mentioned in many ways that their favourite anime characters from the *Fate* anime ecology were now their favourite historical figures, telling me that they were inspired to learn more about these intimate incursions with each name of history. A few female fans explained to me that playing *Fate/GO* inspired them to write their own versions of the historical personas that they already liked; since they were not happy with the way Type-Moon depicted or wrote them, a few fans admitted to writing their own fan fiction about Nero, Francis Drake, Atilla the Hun, and Cleopatra.

This is Type-Moon's most effective form of participation, urging fans to engage with their theories of becoming-nomad, literally in the very nomadic object of the mobile, tactile device. Anne Allison explains that the mobile and personalised integration of the nomadic with the personal is a technological closeness that has defined post-industrial Japanese design philosophy throughout the digital revolution, claiming that 'Japanese play goods become a currency for multiple things (identity, closeness, coolness, comfort), and they also travel in multiple circuits – friendship, pop culture, corporations, the global marketplace'.⁷⁹⁰ Allison continues, writing that

“Closeness” means, in this context, both extending a product's range of play to make it as intimate for fans in as much of everyday life as possible (from toys to food, clothes, phones, and airplanes, for example) and capitalizing on the popularity of an already established character to foster an intimacy in others for the goods in question, whether this be a product, a company, or a country.⁷⁹¹

Mobile expression of my experience of Nero and her experiences of becoming-woman is mediated through differing levels of closeness. Nomadic memories are then mediated between

⁷⁸⁹ The historical irony is that both figures have been appropriated by sectarian organisations associated with Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in their own campaigns to rewrite their cultural pasts for specific political futures beyond The Troubles. To understand how the Protestant-led Orange Order began utilising the myth of Cú Chulainn as their folk hero in loyalist murals during the twentieth century, see Máiréad Nic Craith's *Plural Identities – Singular Narratives: The Case of Northern Ireland* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002), p. 96. For more on the literary adaptation of the myth of Fionn mac Cumhaill into IRA politics, see Michael L. Storey's *Representing the Troubles in Irish Short Fiction* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004) (p. 203) and Philip O'Leary's *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State: 1922-1939* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004) (p. 318).

⁷⁹⁰ Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, p. 17.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

multiple sensory, perceptual, and ontological layers. First, my optic, auditory, and tactile senses establish sensory-motor linkages between the abstract and the bodily, capturing the affectivity of Nero's shōjo-fication, her becoming-woman, within an individuated field of perception that dictates the degrees of actual and virtual closeness; i.e., Azuma's thesis on the database animal and image consumption. Second, the perceptual fields formulated by my sensational engagements with said image is gauged by the efficacy of not only the image or the content, but of the user interface that the software deploys to frame, contain, and project the images of Nero becoming-woman in various ways. Finally, with the image of Nero's becoming-woman closely linked with the constructions of identity or desiring networks, the prosthetic integration of the hardware, say my iPhone 8 Plus, becomes an integral part of my bodily and perceptual relations with the anime-image. The mobility and tactility of my personal cellular device means I can, at any time of the day, engage with what I am perceiving as Nero, further binding together my embodied experience with an ontological understanding of the anime-image

This experience is the culmination of a prosthetic, cybernetic relationship with an image, a concept I introduced at the end of Chapter One while discussing the embodied readings of gekiga manga. Cyberneticist, media theorist, and digital artist Sandy Stone, a contemporary of Donna Haraway, similarly writes about the seductive nature of sensuous technology, or what she calls the 'prosthetics of presence', describing screens as shrouds in an erotic sense:

The newly constituted 'shroud,' described as streamlined, futuristic, and decorative, not only conceals the operation of the device (which had been hitherto implicit in its specularity), thus producing the interiorized space of desire, but also redirects the gaze to a featureless, shiny screen upon which is projected the new meaning and purpose of technological prosthetics in an age in which the physicality of agency is irrelevant. The surface that in Deleuze and Guattari's words becomes deterritorialized, also becomes *hypertactile*; the ontic quality of touch decouples from the object being touched.⁷⁹²

⁷⁹² Rosanne 'Sandy' Stone Allucquere, 'Split Subjects, Not Atoms; or, How I Fell in Love with My Prosthesis', *Configurations* 2.1 (1994): 173-90. (p. 178).

Like Stone, Allison, too, refers to this phenomenon of sensuous integration, describing how ‘a prosthetics bleeds into the flesh, becoming a new part of a (new kind of) entity, body, and social network, no matter how tentative or temporary this connection is’.⁷⁹³ This is the cybernetic potential of ‘techno-intimacy’, what Allison further explains is the primary design philosophy of post-industrial Japan:

Techno-intimacy is a sign of the times. While *mecha*-tronics was the fantasy as well as national policy for rebuilding Japan after the war – remaking the country as a techno supnation – sof-tronics is the symptom and corrective to this industrial master plan in the new millennium – assuaging the atomism, alienation, and stress of corporatist capitalism with virtual companionship.⁷⁹⁴

The philosophies of accumulation and affective connection integral to the popularity of mobile *gachapon* games like *Fate/GO* exist within a recent media history within Japan, one that can be traced back to early digital companion toys, ranging from the keychain hardware of Tamagotchi pets to the gamic software of Pokémon as played on the Game Boy.⁷⁹⁵

The role of techno-intimacy is not only to capitalise on discourses of affective connection and intimate closeness between the consumer and product, citizen and state, user and application, but most effectively, to construct an entire perceptual ecosystem around social and intimate actions (touch, care, work, and play). While I am inclined to agree with Allison that otaku philosophies of digital closeness and techno-intimacy are integral elements of maintaining ideological control over consumer-citizens of overdeveloped societies like Japan and the United States, I am very aware that they also have the potential to produce haptic epistemological experiences of the historical. The many touchscreen devices and platforms replicate, navigate, and mediate the pedagogical sensation of touch that has been continually lost throughout media history. Alexandra Schneider describes how the haptic turn in current touchscreen technologies is a ‘shift from the knob to the switch to the screen as a semantically loaded technical skin’, a shift that can be traced through ‘a media-historical genealogy’ back through ‘the nineteenth century and to early optical toys such as the flip book, where the

⁷⁹³ Allison, p. 187.

⁷⁹⁴ Allison, p. 190.

⁷⁹⁵ Allison, p. 180.

physical contact and manipulation was a prerequisite of the visual experience'.⁷⁹⁶ Primarily focused on the now-ubiquitous pinching technology of the iPhone, Schneider argues that 'the "pinchable" iPhone screen points us to [...] a realignment of sight and touch around the sensitive surface of the screen', which she continues to claim, marks 'the return of the culturally repressed' elements of haptic experience in a post-cinematic world where we are told to look, but not touch.⁷⁹⁷ Schneider's epistemological history establishes the sense of touch in pre-cinematic society as a key perceptual and pedagogical tool that was utilised in multiple fields of knowledge acquisition in everyday life. Drawing from the Cartesian turn and the Scientific Revolution in continental Europe, Schneider writes that it was up to 'the eighteenth century, at least, touch remained one of the master senses. It verified perception and gave solidarity to other, less reliable impressions'.⁷⁹⁸ As previously mentioned throughout Chapter Two, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century art historians like Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin, and Wilhelm Worringer similarly addressed the movement away from touch and toward vision as the primary sense in Western culture. These art historians argued, like Schneider, 'coincided with the emergence of a new regime of scientific knowledge and, in particular, an ideal of "objectivity" evolving around the figure of the scientist as a detached observer' as well as the rise of a Eurocentric, colonially-motivated position dedicated to 'a new discipline of the body and the senses',⁷⁹⁹ an ideological move situated against 'the realm of the nursery and the "savage,"' against the messy, embodied, carnivalesque logic of Mikhail Bakhtin's lower-bodily stratum.⁸⁰⁰ While other sensuous scholars and tactile theorists including Laura Marks, Vivian Sobchack, Jennifer Barker, and David Trotter have all associated the revival of touch as a post-cinematic urge to integrate touch back into the epistemological and pedagogical exercises of our everyday lives, especially in the public knowledge-spaces of museums, art exhibitions, and classrooms, Schneider contends that the nomadic potentialities of the iPhone like the Sony Walkman and the Nintendo Game Boy constructs new fields of epistemological, pedagogical, and perceptual engagement with digital images. Touch, according to Schneider, is mobile, nomadic, affective, and is therefore, the perfect sense for minor art.

⁷⁹⁶ Alexandra Schneider, 'The iPhone is an Object of Knowledge', in *Moving Data: The iPhone and the Future of Media*, ed. by Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 55.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁸ Schneider, p. 56.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁰ Schneider, p. 55.

In this context, we might think of the rise of haptic modes of knowledge acquisition as a cybernetic extension of the Joan of Arc effect. In this schema, the Joan of Arc effect is visible in my digital engagements with the Type-Moon universe on my iPhone. While playing at the train station, on an airplane, or on the bus, I am not contained in an empty time between work and leisure, for example. During brief moments, my ability to pet and pinch images and avatars, to move and resize images resituates my perceptual fields around my haptic and tactile relationships with the screen and the image. It is true, as David Parisi qualifies, that in a deeper media history, we must acknowledge that ‘[w]hile the rise of touchscreen interfaces provided touch with a new primacy in digital interfacing, the gradual displacement of buttons, keys, and knobs by the flat glass of the sensitive screen did little to alleviate the situation that had prompted the formation of computer haptics in the 1990s’.⁸⁰¹ And even though Parisi argues that ‘computing, much to the disappointment of haptics proponents, still depended heavily on routing messages through the visual and aural channels’, it does not change the fact that the flattening of analog elements of the handheld device establishes an illusory interface effect that – regardless of the authenticity debate of media effects, sensation, and mediation – still intensifies my affective relationship with these data-images that function as touchable vessels of becoming. Thus, knowledge acquisition, integration, and critical observation can be felt and experienced more intensely through mediatic touch because the combination of haptic, visual, and aural sensations and digital feedback responses to touch produce abstract diagrams of becoming that alter the way in which flattened data and information can be integrated into our sensorium. These becoming effects range from the becoming-mouse of *Pokémon*’s mouse mascot Pikachu to the becoming-woman and becoming-berserk of *Fate/Grand Order*’s Penthesilea, as shown on the next page.

⁸⁰¹ David Parisi, *Archaeologies of Touch: Interfacing with Haptics from Electricity to Computing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Kindle edition, 2018). Kindle Locations, 4420-4422.

Figures 19-22



In these examples, we can see that the technology of the touchscreen enhances the ontological resonances of the Joan of Arc effect. Therefore, *Fate/GO* must be understood as an case study of how otaku discourses of closeness are integral in understanding the affective and haptic elements of the posthuman otaku database. In *Pokémon: Let's Go, Pikachu! / Let's Go, Eevee!* (Game Freak, Nintendo, 2018) players not only have the option of capturing monsters and raising them in an entirely more expansive version of *Pokémon Go* (Niantic, The Pokémon Company, 2016), but players are encouraged to spend their time training, feeding, and petting Pikachu (or Eevee). Following Nintendo's long history of featuring its touchscreen tech in its most popular titles like *Fire Emblem* and *Pokémon*, *Let's Go Pikachu!* significantly structures a large portion of its gameplay around the importance of fostering relationships with digital companions. In the process of petting a cute Pikachu, my mouse companion responds with smiles and cooing sound loops; in this multi-sensational feedback loop, the affective relations between the screen's skin and my own are affirmed intensely. The more I customise Pikachu in outfits I collect, or the more I learn new touch mechanics including poking, tickling, and swiping, Pikachu responds differently, accordingly, and affectively. In these moments, I feel a kinship with not only a data-image, but an abstraction of 'of real becomings-animal', of the

pack affects of Pikachu, of a becoming-mouse like in Deleuze and Guattari's readings of Kafka. The user becomes like Kafka, who they write 'sings of mouse-society', fabulating and simulating the pack affects of cybernetic animals like Pikachu, further reminding me, at least, that I too feel pack affects, that I can also feel a becoming-animal of some sort in these mediatic moments.

Conversely, in Type-Moon's *Fate/Grand Order*, the moment I simulate the process of poking or pinching an irate Penthesilea, the image responds by shouting at me 'Halt! You are not Achilles!' In this instant, I am reminded to *not* touch, to back off from this female cyborg stuck in my screen.⁸⁰² But I experience this in the very act of touching of data-image only because the agency of the image is established (albeit, in a computational form) in this moment. As it asserts its denial of mediatic touch, I can feel the intensities of Penthesilea's iconoclastic expressions of rage and desire. Like in Kleist's play, 'Penthesilea, for her part, cannot enter the passional relation of war with him [Achilles] without herself betraying the collective law of her people, the law of the pack that prohibits "choosing" the enemy and entering into one-on-one relationships or binary distinctions', so too does Penthesilea's cybernetic stand-in reveal that I will not receive the same kind of feedback as others through the haptic interface (Artoria, Jeanne, Nero), further verifying her historical personae as a nomadic memory in flux, but still constituted as one retaining an intensified resonance. I will, however, like another one of her Amazonian soldiers, see Penthesilea transform throughout the Holy Grail War as I play the game longer; as she gets stronger, is granted more spell,

⁸⁰² Out of context, this example is perhaps unsettling to those unaccustomed to otaku culture or millennial touchscreen technologies, and it does have problematic implications with regard to the wild transformation of the male gaze to some technologically mediation of touch. Lamarre has written about the philosophical conflation of gender and cybernetic discourses in otaku culture, noting that one of the most popular and paradoxical expressions of the technological condition in Japan is the formulation of the concept of the *gynoid*. The gynoid, or the 'female cyborg, woman robot' is defined as 'another situation in which technology and gender become inextricably meshed', whereby the 'girl-jewel interface' of shōjo series 'is almost like a robot in that she is subject to remote control, and she is like a communicative technology in that her jewel is the telecommand for the activation of weapons of mass destruction', p. 215. Lamarre highlights the essential philosophical question raised by the gynoid that I think the Penthesilea example reveals: 'By collapsing the gap between jewel and girl, the gynoid poses a new question: What happens when the girl actually is the technology, not merely the pivotal subject of and for it? How does the force of the moving image then affect questions of gender and sexuality? What happens when you can't separate the force of destruction (jewel) from the girl-savior?' (Ibid). I want to qualify my position on the radicality of becoming-woman in the machine, in that we must address how the anime-image of the gynoid offers radical posthuman possibilities (Haraway) as much as misogynistic discourses of female capture (Mulvey).

cosmetic, or story updates, I witness her becoming-woman, becoming-berserk, and becoming-dog in the process.

In my mediated experience of both experiences of touch, I am not only engaging with mere content or data anymore, because as Parisi writes, ‘[t]he proliferation of haptics came to depend increasingly on the successful appeal to and cultivation of a haptic subjectivity in consumers, who were asked to identify themselves as deficient information-manipulating subjects in need of the rehabilitation haptic feedback promised to provide’.⁸⁰³ I am – for better or worse – taught through interfaces and an expansive media ecology to actively engage with an image, to integrate the image into the way I conceptualise myself and the world, and perhaps most importantly, to look to the image-as-other, and bring the ontic other closer to my sensorium not as something to consume, but rather, as ‘a companion, “partner”, and pet: an imaginary creature with which, thanks to its technological simulation of life, a player can both mimic and create a “social” relationship’.⁸⁰⁴ In this cybernetic relation, abstract becomings are embodied, and otaku are encouraged to integrate the alienated data-images of the nonhuman and the transhistorical into their entire sensorium.

A Heap of Sunken Images: The Reticular Pessimism of Type-Moon’s Virtual Worlds

For all of the experimental elements of Type-Moon digital and otaku philosophies of becoming-woman and the experience of feeling this becoming in the in the palm of a user’s hand, *Last Encore* articulates a concern that the Deleuzian concept of the virtual (of immanence, of flattening, of infinite possibilities) has become conflated with the computational and the digital, seemingly challenging the liberatory elements of *Fate/Grand Order*. I am not arguing that Type-Moon is internally combatting its own otaku philosophies, but it is important to conclude that the franchise is deftly aware of the problems and contradictions of digital experience especially as it leads to an extinction event in the virtual arcs of the Nasuverse. In their most recent series, we must read how the series – while often cavalier in its approach to the flat ontologies of postmodern life in a digitised world – is slowly becoming disenchanted with networks, interfaces, and the data-image. Or at least, we might argue that in these latest virtual arcs, Type-Moon is becoming more aware that the

⁸⁰³ Parisi, Kindle edition, location 4433.

⁸⁰⁴ Allison, p. 187.

crises of climate, capital, and cyberneticism is interconnected, and is perhaps, exacerbated by the proliferation of digital fields of perception that internally, externally, and relatively infect human experience of History and temporality. As I argued previously, the transhistorical flow of memory and its surplus is most intensely felt in the historical bodies in flux as well as those machines, interfaces, and screens that mediate otaku hypermnnesia of modernisation and its chronopolitical antipodes. As Type-Moon pushes the anime-image beyond the cinematographic simulation of becomings, and into hundreds of other surfaces and interfaces, the questions of the virtual and the actual, of the nomadological and the historical, merges into an animetic critique of the otaku's most powerful philosophical and cultural tool for flattening: the computer.

Type-Moon created an alternative reality beyond the *Fate/stay/night* realm of Fuyuki City, which manifested itself in a futuristic, virtual universe on the Moon called SE.RA.PH. The virtual arcs of the *Fate/EX* universe began as console video games on the Playstation Portable (PSP) and the Nintendo Switch, including *Fate/Extra* (2010), *Fate/Extra CCC* (2013), *Fate/Extella* (2016). Unlike the original games, the anime adaptation *Last Encore* is a very different series, narratively and philosophically. The beginning of the series, for example, takes place at the very end of the game, when the antagonist, an otaku-esque cyberneticist-turned-god named Twice Pieceman, summons his Servant, Gautama Buddha, to destroy the Holy Grail (also known as the Moon Cell) and the realm of SE.RA.PH that he created. The first episode of *Last Encore* briefly shows Nero's previous incarnation (or upload) obliterated by Buddha's world altering Noble Phantasm, 'Chakravartin: The Turner of the Wheel', which ends the Holy Grail Wars. After the complete destruction of SE.RA.PH, Nero and Hakuno return in *Last Encore* to beat Twice Pieceman before he can summon Buddha and reverse the course of this digitised history that seeks a complete harddrive wipe of humanity's memory of life on Earth. And yet, like other *Fate* series, no temporal resolution arises; Nasu dwells recursively and pessimistically on the radical imagining of SE.RA.PH, a gigantic transhistorical computer that, as Twice Pieceman claims, 'was originally created for observation of humans. But the Moon Cell was nothing more than a machine. It only did maintenance and couldn't understand the hearts of humans. That's why it invited humans and record their activity'.⁸⁰⁵ As Pieceman recounts, when the final humans from Earth arrived on

⁸⁰⁵ 'Olympia Plaudere', *Fate/Extra Last Encore* (Season Two, Episode Three), dir. by Miyamoto Yukihiro and Shinbo Akiyuki, prod. by Shaft Studios, (Netflix, 2018). [Accessed 5 November 2018].

the lunar colony established after Earth's destruction, they killed each other for the Moon Cell. With all of humanity dead and gone by the year 3020 C.E. (a result of both human violence and Buddha's world-ending powers), all that remains are the spiritual automatons, cybernetic mannequins, and artificial intelligence units that fight in eternal conflicts so to accumulate data for a machine that is supposed to be the last record of human civilisation, the last watcher, Benjamin's Angel of History. As Nero and Hakuno overcome their own existential crises and rise to the top of SE.RA.PH, *Last Encore* urges toward exposing the complications of the rise of the data-image and enunciates the problems of flat ontologies as they define digital technologies. The actual ends of History is not entirely liberatory; it is, rather, entirely hostile to human existence and time. While Nasu philosophises throughout the series about the nature of time, truth, and memory at the posthuman ends of human experience, the series ends as it began: by thematising battles and duels as dialectical metaphors of contemporary digital discourse, ranging from questions about algorithmic determinism, the fascism of protocological societies, the anxiety of bioethical exceptionalism or cybernetic dependency, and the ontic primacy of the interface effect.

Throughout the series, the allegories of mediation, transmedial transcendence, and virtual reality resituate the entire lore and mythos of the *Fate* universe; morphing from mythic fantasy to a speculative science fiction, the series' fabulative framing alters significantly, traversing the philosophical and aesthetic inquiries into the logic of the digital and the simulacral. In the larger *Fate/EX* series, the protagonists become users of apps rather than clandestine wizards at war.⁸⁰⁶ As mentioned by Twice Pieceman, we learn that the Holy Grail War is not a fated magico-theological battle for time itself, but rather, it is an artificially projected simulation, and that the Grail itself is no alien technology or magical artefact, but rather, a constructed artificial intelligence and virtual reality supercomputer that revives spectral replications of names of history to consume, distribute, and store their data in a future where the Earth and humanity has been annihilated.

In the virtual arcs of *Fate/EX*, the nature of the Grail has shaped each iteration of the series, even those that are described as parallel universe arcs. The revelations of *Fate/EX*, seek to answer the questions Type-Moon poses throughout their entire catalogue of otaku works:

⁸⁰⁶ Lamarre describes a similar trend in the *Shin Megami Tensei* series, especially in the anime adaptation of the Nintendo DS game, *Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2*, called *Devil Survivor 2: The Animation*, dir. by Kishi Seiji and produced by Studio Bridge (2013). For more on the conflation of magic and software in the series, see Lamarre's *Anime Ecology*, p. 318.

what is the actual and what is the virtual, how can we view alternative formulations of time, and how does one do History at the ends of history or in the shadows of extinction? In *Fate/EX*, we learn that the virtual is the actual, that time is imperceptible, and that one cannot do History at its ends. As if mimicking Gainax's cybernetic-angelic semiotic confluences in *Evangelion*, the digital realm of SE.RA.PH is the same realm where humanity is reborn, or at least, the image of humanity is reconstructed by the Heroic Spirits and their homunculi Masters who are retrieved and reconstituted in corporeal form in a virtual environment. SE.RA.PH is a paradoxical realm for all the characters in the series; it is both defined as a heaven and a hell, it is both real and unreal, it is both situated outside of and deeply within History, and it is both the watched and the watcher. Most importantly, it is a realm that produces hundreds of simulations of current twenty-first century crises: the climate catastrophe, nuclear proliferation, and the scars of imperialist neocapitalism. Thus, it is simultaneously described as 'a new and final frontier that opened up for humanity' by the NPC (Non-player character) Rani VII,⁸⁰⁷ 'an electronic hell devoid of people' by the protagonist Hakuno,⁸⁰⁸ and 'a world that turns souls into data and confirms them' by an alternate reality Tōsaka Rin from *Fate/stay/night*.⁸⁰⁹ This overarching allegory of simulacra and mediation, while a trope throughout cyberpunk films including *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982) *Ghost in the Shell* (Oshii Mamoru, 1995), *The Matrix* (The Wachowski Brothers, 1999), and *A Scanner Darkly* (Richard Linklater, 2006), articulates questions of virtuality and digitality that Alexander Galloway addresses when he claims (in Deleuzian fashion) that 'the virtual is real [...] the real, while remaining immanent to itself, is present at every point, and thus in some basic sense, "virtual" to every point'.⁸¹⁰ But is the computational or the digital the same as the virtual?

While the previous sections illustrated Type-Moon's commitment to the transhistorical experience of alternative becomings (becoming-woman) in the bodies of Nero and in the black boxes and touchscreens of tactile tech, *Last Encore* seems to be committed to a complete alienation of the interface of said becomings, or at least, a recognition of what Galloway calls a *reticular pessimism*, which he defines as such:

⁸⁰⁷ 'No Face May King', *Fate/Extra Last Encore* (Season One, Episode Four), dir. by Miyamoto Yukihiro and Shinbo Akiyuki, prod. by Shaft Studios (Netflix, 2018). [Accessed 8 October 2018].

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁹ 'The Queen's Glass Game', *Fate/Extra Last Encore* (Season One, Episode Six), dir. by Miyamoto Yukihiro and Shinbo Akiyuki, prod. by Shaft Studios (Netflix, 2018). [Accessed 8 October 2018].

⁸¹⁰ Galloway, *Laruelle*, p. 68

we are trapped in a sort of “networked” or “reticular” pessimism [...] reticular pessimism claims, in essence, that there is no escape from the fetters of the network. There is no way to think in, through, or beyond networks except in terms of networks themselves. According to reticular pessimism, responses to networked power are only able to be conceived in terms of other network forms. (And thus to fight Google and the NSA we need ecologies, assemblages, or multiplicities.)⁸¹¹

Perhaps, following Galloway, we might qualify the Nasuverse’s version of reticular pessimism as a conflicted reticular scepticism, or at least, a reticular ambivalence, especially in *Last Encore*. The world of SE.RA.PH is a highly controlled, surveyed, and protocological being, and therefore, this anomaly of networking becomes Nasu’s most problematised critique of the otaku philosophies of flattening and digitising the lifeworld and its histories.

Throughout *Last Encore*, the artificial world of SE.RA.PH is digitally and visually mediated, internally and externally. The digital world of SE.RA.PH is perhaps best described as a richly cinematic, gamic, and digital mediation of multi-visual interfaces (i.e., painting, mosaic, television, film, novels, picture books, comics, etc.), which is depicted through spatial, aesthetic, semiotic, and philosophical representations, compositions, and layers of the anime-image. Galloway importantly defines this collection of images and interfaces as a flattened grid of visual mediation, or as he terms it, an experience of ‘flat digitality’, which he writes, ‘results from the reduplicative multiplexing of the *object*’.⁸¹² Flat digitality, like Deleuze’s smooth space or de Landa’s flat ontology, is yet another way of describing post-structural ontological truisms, of how discrete parts ‘are aggregations of cells that combine and coordinate to create some kind of whole’.⁸¹³ Galloway further claims that flat digitality is a phenomenon that has been naturalised in our wholesale perceptual integration of

the many kinds of grid screens that popular our world: the security guard’s multichannel montage of closed-circuit security camera feeds; the cellular grids of

⁸¹¹ David M. Berry and Alexander Galloway, ‘A Network is a Network is a Network: Reflections on the Computational and the Societies of Control,’ *Theory, Culture & Society*, (2015), 1-22 (p. 7).

⁸¹² Galloway, *Laruelle*, p. 68.

⁸¹³ Ibid.

video compression codecs or more prosaically the bitmap image itself; the computer game with its multiple parallel and overlapping windows; the television sportscast with stat buffers, text crawls, inset videos, and split screens.⁸¹⁴

Flat digitality, then, is the phenomenon produced by network of interfaces that stacks images and their mediated reflections into one unseen world-image, which in this series, is the otaku world-image of a dehierarchised and virtual History. Galloway asserts that the interfaces of flat digitality become synonymous with ‘[t]he political-architectural touchstone for flat digitality’, which he describes ‘is thus the panopticon prison’, while ‘[t]he photographic touchstone is the telephoto view: the flat scope of view, with peripheral vision boxed out and all relations reduced to planar relations one behind another’.⁸¹⁵ Galloway’s analysis of the omnipresent powers of networks best characterises both Nasu’s fabulative description of SE.RA.PH as an enclosed interface, as well as the otaku media ecology’s reliance on the flattening and distributing of images across surfaces, screens, and scopes of view.

It is important to note that Galloway defines interfaces as ‘not simply objects or boundary points. They are autonomous zones of activity. Interfaces are not things, but rather processes that effect a result of whatever kind [...] Interfaces themselves are effects, in that they bring about transformations in material states’.⁸¹⁶ It is through these autonomous zones of activity that *Last Encore* constructs its spatial narrative and an allegorical template, continually placing the viewers into close proximity with semiotic reminders of how interfaces – or as Galloway lists them, ‘windows, screens, keyboards, kiosks, channels, sockets, and holes’ – work in conjunction with the replication and production of otaku philosophies in the anime machine and its webbed ecology.⁸¹⁷ Each episode guides Nero and Hakuno to a new floor (seven in total), a new level, a new digital environment, and a new interface. Throughout *Last Encore*, Nero and Hakuno traverse the bottom floor’s series of screens and cameras, the third floor’s maze of illustrated pages from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, and the fourth floor’s cinematic projection of flashbacks through a sentient film reel, as if uncovering a

⁸¹⁴ Galloway, *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁵ Galloway, p. 68.

⁸¹⁶ Galloway, *Interface Effect*, p. vii.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*

media archaeology of the interface in all of its mediated manifestations.⁸¹⁸ After each victory over a gatekeeping Heroic Spirit (Francis Drake, Robin Hood, Alice of Wonderland, etc.), Nero and Hakuno rise closer to the top of the cyberspace tower (the core of SE.RA.PH) called the Angelic Cage; this is where the Moon Cell is kept, and it is also the realm guarded by Twice Pieceman. *Last Encore*, like many anime adaptations of video games,⁸¹⁹ exposes how media mixing, remediation, digitisation, and most importantly, what Lamarre calls ‘the portable interface complex’ alters techno-ontological visions of the world’s historical relationship with technologies.⁸²⁰ As the camera and characters pass through this database of media and aesthetic artefacts – the painting, the novel, the film, the computer game – viewers are able to ascend the spire with Nero and Hakuno to experience the simulation of media shifts and the resulting shifts in human consciousness that these machines helped facilitate. As the otaku traverses the imagistic regimes of the organic to the crystalline to the digital in this episode, we find ourselves at the heart of the nomadological, the smooth regime that Deleuze describes as ‘pure patchwork. It has connections, or tactile relations. It has rhythmic values not found elsewhere, even though they can be translated into a metric space. Heterogeneous, in continuous variation, it is a smooth space, insofar as a smooth space is amorphous and not homogenous’.⁸²¹ This is where the series offers its most poignant critiques of an otaku messianism, one that contradictorily shapes its entire media ecology from visual novel to mobile video game app: the transcendent dreams of networks, databases, interfaces, and platforms should be suspect at all times, and may not offer a way out.

More specifically, *Last Encore* considers the way in which these smooth spaces and virtual interfaces enframe, foreground, and reposition other visual media in a multitude of ways to reveal problematic and disruptive experiences of an infinite and recursive loop of mediation, of data transmission, and internal-external replication. For example, in Episode One, Nero and Hakuno traverse the first level of SE.RA.PH, which is an anachronistic projection of Rome as if imagined in the twenty-first century.⁸²² More like Tokyo’s Akihabara or New York City’s Times Square, Nero and Hakuno wander through a pseudo-historical,

⁸¹⁸ ‘Nursery Rhyme’, *Fate/Extra Last Encore* (Season One, Episode Seven), dir. by Miyamoto Yukihiro and Shinbo Akiyuki, prod. by Shaft Studios (Netflix, 2018). [Accessed 9 October 2018].

⁸¹⁹ Lamarre, *Anime Ecology*, pp. 314–16.

⁸²⁰ Lamarre, *Anime Ecology*, p. 311.

⁸²¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 536.

⁸²² ‘Prateritus Limbus Vorago’, *Fate/Extra Last Encore* (Season One, Episode One), dir. by Miyamoto Yukihiro and Shinbo Akiyuki, prod. by Shaft Studios (Netflix, 2018). [Accessed 3 October 2018].

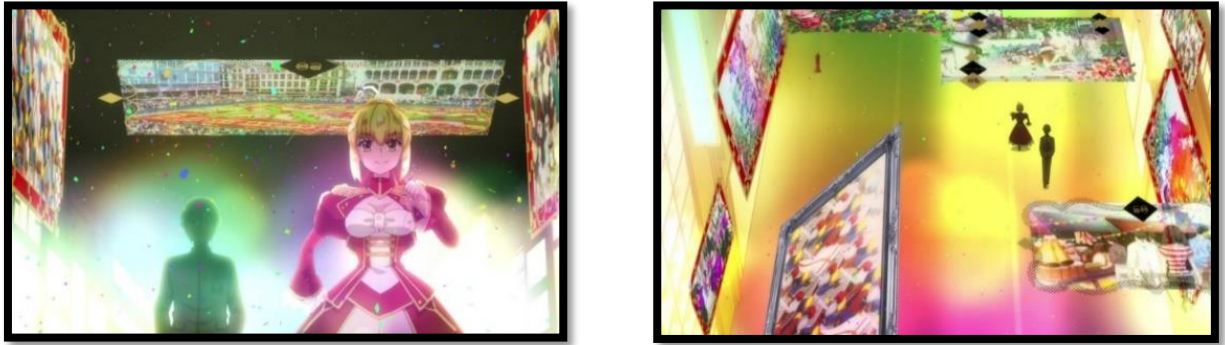
hyperreal mash-up of a spectacle-saturated paratext of Rome, adorned with techno-coloured skyscrapers, futuristic blimps, a continual flow of confetti-coloured pixels, and giant screens projecting images of imperial History, oscillating from live camera footage of a global events in para-Rome and in an overdeveloped nation-state like Japan or the U.S. As Nero introduces Hakuno to the virtual capital city of SE.RA.PH, the camera continually frames and reframes each character in relation to themselves and the pixelated screens; this allegory of meta-mediation conjoins close-ups of an ecstatic Nero and bewildered Hakuno with its screenic antecedents so to diegetically remind the viewers that they are ensnared in the anime interface. This episode illustrates that SE.RA.PH, like the otaku world-image and the anime ecology is ‘made up exclusively of semiotic interfaces like television screens, advertisements, paintings, film reels, and corporate logos’, as well as affective mobilisations and cerebral abstractions of images, that as Galloway writes,

might better be understood as referring to any likeness or motif that fixes some grouping of elements, such that one might “see” these elements both as a relational whole (as a memory, refrain, gesture, raster, etc.) and also in terms of their constituent parts (phoneme, texture, color, pitch, pixel).⁸²³

Lamarre refers to the multiplexing of said interface effects that adorn SE.RA.PH as the mobile, portable, and screenic nature of the anime machine and its ecology, as he writes: ‘The anime and game series focus specifically on the television screen, but in keeping with the media ecology for the franchise which is centered on porting games from platform to platform (console to console, console to smartphone), the behaviour of the television screen is compatible with mobile phones and smartphones’.⁸²⁴

⁸²³ Galloway, *Laruelle*, p. 62.

⁸²⁴ Lamarre, p. 342.



Figures 23-24

This intermedial interface transforms the traditional animetic distributive field that at one time would overpopulate the screen with a semiotic bricolage of signs into a series of slippery portals that one might fall into. As our eyes track each window and screen, image to image, from platform to platform, we begin to realise that the transhistorical world of *Fate* has converged upon itself and collapsed. In this vortex of interfaces, these scenes reveal the flattening of representational discourse (on History or human time) through a denaturalisation of the digital image, the media object, and our phenomenological perception of both at the verge of endness, of the terminus of the planet and its human occupants. Shaft Studios artfully captures the hypermediated virtual realm of SE.RA.PH in this network of interface effects and the projection of History through the animetic allegories of flat digitality, illustrating that in SE.RA.PH, the resonances of the all-times are all projected on the walls, streets, and corridors at all times, screens that capture the infinite possibilities in an infinite loop in a realm, most importantly noted throughout the series, without us, without the human.

Lamarre writes that these allegorical themes of digitality and of intense mediation has become a trend in recent anime and game series, noting that each series attempts to project a semiotics of digitalisation as a manifestation of the portable interface complex in animetic form:

the screens of smartphones and television sets operate in different ways, and the actual platforms would seem to entail different kinds of experience. They diverge, technically and socially. The actual divergence of screens makes for a virtual unity, and this virtual unity becomes technically actualized within a media ecology, whose form of expression is media mix or multimedia franchising. In other words, the counteraction

of the television screen, its pressure, bears with it the virtual unity of its media ecology. In the anime and game series, the TV screen is enacting the portable ecology based on porting media across platforms.⁸²⁵

Following Galloway's theorisation of digitality and the interface effect alongside Lamarre's articulation of the portable interface complex in recent anime series, we can read the first episode's elaborate depiction of surfaces and screens to imagine SE.RA.PH as the digital inception of the otaku world-image. More poetically, SE.RA.PH's animetic portrayal in *Last Encore* reveals what Galloway describes as 'the apotheosis of the wide angle (a wide-angle ontology)' that rips and reframes the world 'from one to two,' exposing to the viewer that 'deep digitality reintegrates the world into a *rendered* universe, viewable from all sides, modelled from all angles, predictable under all variable conditions'.⁸²⁶ Like the nomadological otaku world-image, SE.RA.PH is a database of potentialities, virtualities, and infinite temporal transformations that is entirely constructed, sculpted, and performed. History, at the ends of History, is computer generated and digitally rendered in the Nasuverse, like the three-dimensional, projected spaces rendered by the Reality Marble class of Noble Phantasms, like Alexander the Great's 'Ionioi Hetairoi,' Jeanne d'Arc's 'La Pucelle,' and Shirō-EMIYA's 'Unlimited Blade Works.' Nero and Hakuno prompt the question, as they fight through this world of illusions: how do minor histories of the otaku escape a protocological hellscape of projection and hypermediation, to escape the loop of subjectivation as a historical subject that Shirō faced?

While *Last Encore* is not the only series that deploys a semiotic and allegorical schema that interrogates the logic of the interface effect and its ability to totalise the rhizomatic, the vectoral, and the transversal, it is perhaps one of the best series to animate what Galloway refers to as the internalisation of flat digitality, of what he calls a 'deep digitality', which 'results from the reduplicative multiplexing of the *subject*':

Instead of a single point of view scanning a multiplicity of images, feeds, deep digitality is a question of a multiplicity, nay an infinity, of points of views flanking and flooding the world viewed. These are not so much matrices of screens but matrices of

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

⁸²⁶ Galloway, p. 69.

vision. They are the CCTV meshes deployed across cities; the multiple data points involved in data mining; the virtual camera of “fly-through mode” in CAD software; or crowd-sourcing swarms that converge on a target.⁸²⁷

Just as the duplicated anime-images of Nero, Hakuno, and other characters recursively slide in and out of windows, screens, mirrors, and surfaces, pass across thresholds and planes, slip between the animetic interval, and spread across the distributive field to different platforms, so too do we feel the divergence and emergence of the otaku world-image, with which we are able to experience by engaging with the deep digitality of SE.RA.PH. As the series continues, *Last Encore* highlights the dangers of deep digitality, whereby it becomes a ‘universe of separation, alienation, distinction, division, and making discrete’.⁸²⁸

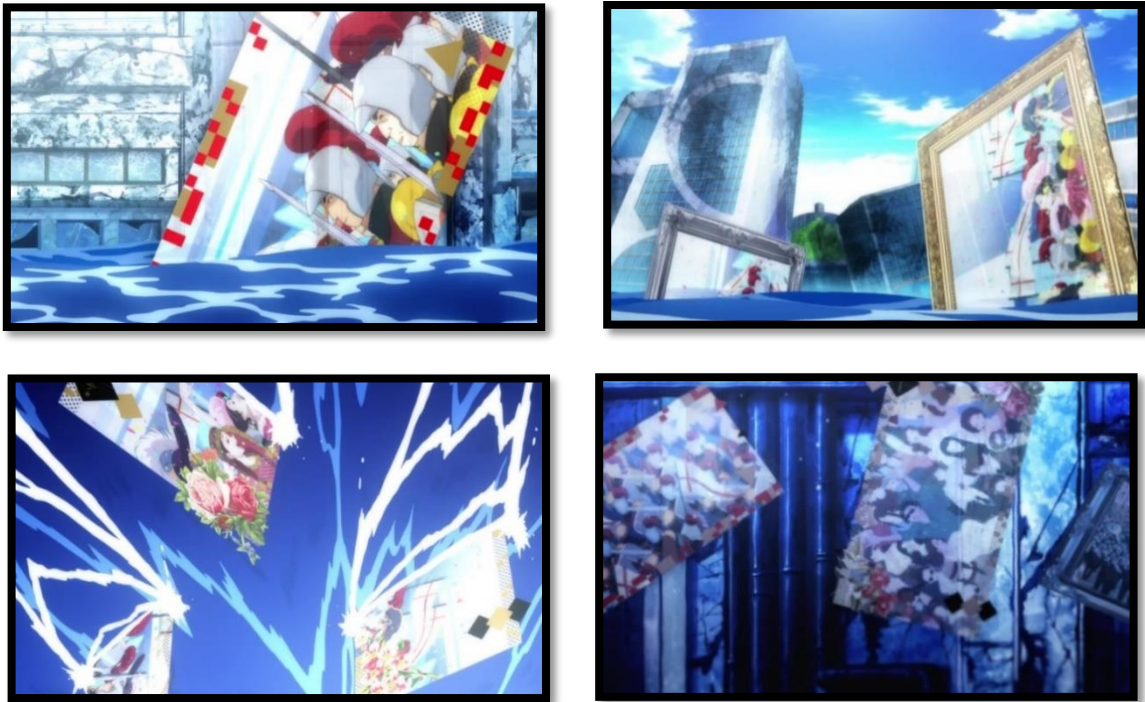
In Episode Three, an alternative universe version of Matō Shinji and his Servant, a femme Francis Drake, block Nero, Hakuno, and Rin from rising to the second floor.⁸²⁹ Shinji meets his rivals atop the highest spire on the first floor, and in a short conversation, reveals that he is the designer of the first floor, which Nero calls ‘the City of Deceit’, due to the many traps and illusions that nearly killed the group in Episode Two.⁸³⁰ Upon high, Shinji – often described throughout the Nasuverse as a cliché of madness and narcissism – taunts Hakuno and accepts a duel from the Nero. To ensure that Francis Drake can stand a chance against Nero, Shinji hacks into the first floor’s rendered program to raise up a thousand-story tower that floods the region below, granting his Servant the ability to fight on her legendary ship: The Golden Hind. While the gamic alibi is clearly articulated, the cinematic framing of the flood is symbolic; in the montage, the shots of the flood scene depict a desolate city, seemingly abandoned. No NPCs or automatons that populated the screens of Episode One are seen by the camera or swallowed up by the surf. The world-image of a populated, thriving, and utopic cybercity that Nero celebrated in the first episode is made false, revealed as a dangerous artifice to ensnare and destroy Nero and Hakuno in their own memories. Shaft’s stylistic shot sequence is dedicated less to the apocalyptic destruction of the empty city, and more to the framing of interfaces and images of screens sinking beneath the waves.

⁸²⁷ Ibid.

⁸²⁸ Galloway, p. 70.

⁸²⁹ ‘Golden Wild Hunt’, *Fate/Extra Last Encore* (Season One, Episode Three), dir. by Miyamoto Yukihiro and Shinbo Akiyuki, prod. by Shaft Studios (Netflix, 2018). [Accessed 4 October 2018].

⁸³⁰ ‘Dead Face’, *Fate/Extra Last Encore* (Season One, Episode Two), dir. by Miyamoto Yukihiro and Shinbo Akiyuki, prod. by Shaft Studios (Netflix, 2018). [Accessed 4 October 2018].



Figures 25-28

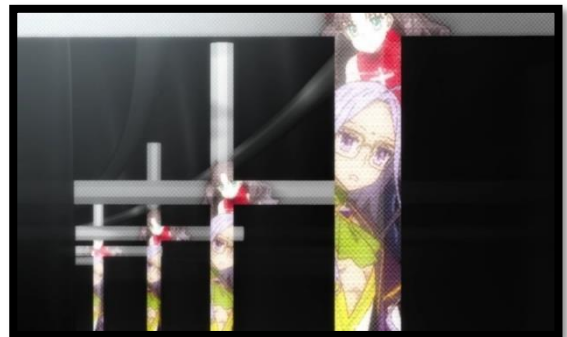
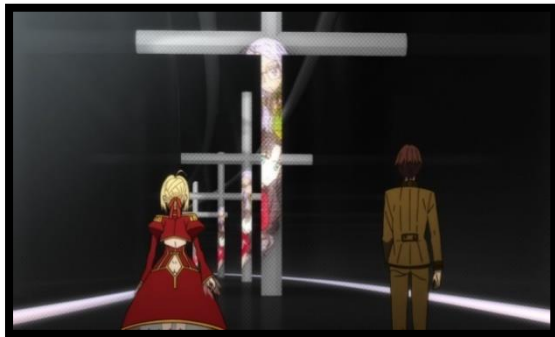
This is notable to otaku viewers because the interfaces that projected and shaped the City of Deceit become unforgettable, repeatable, iconic emblems, and gestures toward conceptualising a reticular pessimism. Viewers might note that the flood scene contains a handful of pillow shots that may seem entirely ornamental at first; but in relation to the series' critique of interfaces, these shots of the sinking city are integral shots that collate opsins and sonsins together so to effectively depict the obliteration of the spectacular screens of History (a semiotic conflation of the imperial and the digital).⁸³¹ This collection of sinking screens serves as memory-images that were extracted by Shinji and then projected and rendered for Nero and Hakuno in Episode One; memory is translated no longer as matter, as perhaps, we might have

⁸³¹ This scene can be read poetically, like first canto from T.S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land,' when the narrator, praying for the coming flood in a desolate, ossified world, overexposed and devoid of man – a world after History – asks the reader: 'What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man, / You cannot say, or guess, for you know only / A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,' (line 22). See Eliot's 'The Waste Land', in *Poetry Foundation* <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47311/the-waste-land> [accessed 30 October 2018]. Like Nasu and his interlocutor, Twice Pieceman, Eliot's narrator asks what can one know of the rooted past, the sedentary tree of History that Deleuze and Guattari compare to the transversal rhizome? The answer is nothing; all that remains in our world are the broken images of memory and time that appear in art and philosophy, lost fractals transformed into screens and interfaces: mere representations and replicated copies of those representations.

argued in Part I and the early elements of the *Fate* series. Rather, memory and History is constructed as informatics and data projected into reality, the phenomenon of deep digitality that Galloway explains is a hyperexternalisation of the informatic:

The cybernetic world may be a control society, but it is a reverse panopticon [...] The object is now a Euclidean point, while the ‘subjective’ points of view have metastasized into multiplicity. What this produces is a curvature of space. Space bends and recedes. Space grows deep as the subject metastasizes and engulfs it.⁸³²

Shaped by planted memories, projected and mediated through panoptic and protocological interfaces, Nero and Hakuno are tasked to overcome the hyperaccelerated, supranomadological, post-historical machines of the digitised otaku database that automates indiscriminate informatic accumulation, distribution, and codification. That is the existential task throughout the series: to make false of the interface, to overcome the spiritual automaton, to evade the torrents of time-images (real) and data-images (unreal) that manifest as glitches, ghosts, and shades of uncertain temporalities, which we see in Episode Seven in a labyrinthian, protocological Wonderland and in Episode Ten’s traversal through the panoptic crucifix hall, as Figures 29 and 30 show below.⁸³³



Figures 29-30

⁸³² Galloway, p. 70.

⁸³³ ‘Unlimited/Raise Dead’, *Fate/Extra Last Encore* (Season One, Episode Ten), dir. by Miyamoto Yukihiro and Shinbo Akiyuki, prod. by Shaft Studios (Netflix, 2018). [Accessed 16 October 2018].

In each one of these scenes, viewers are forced to confront the actuality that within the digital sphere ‘it is the image that has suffered. These are no longer images in any traditional sense. Not the collage of flat digitality, deep digitality is para-photographic, more sculpture or theater than anything else. Or like music, perhaps, with its penchant for multiple voices’.⁸³⁴

Therefore, SE.RA.PH is exposed in *Last Encore* as the manifestation of Deleuze’s spiritual automaton, as mentioned at the end of Chapter Four. This otaku world-image, however, is revealed as a fraught construction taken to the most logical extent of otaku philosophies; it reveals that the computational does not equate the virtual. Instead of virtualising the potential forces of fabulation, play, affect, and sensation, the computational captures and harnesses these forces for the sole purpose of rendering the illusion of a virtual unity between images, platforms, and entities, as Lamarre writes: ‘the multiple screens are also enacting the virtual unity of television platforms, as if these televisions were, somehow, somewhere, connected. It is like a distorted version of the television studio, with its multiple cameras capturing the drama from multiple angles’.⁸³⁵ Type-Moon’s newfound reticular scepticism exposes the problems of the spiritual automaton like SE.RA.PH, because the technological becomes synonymous with the transcendental, the machinic becomes the metaphysical. In the context of responding to the numerous multiple angles of mediated vision and ontic exposure, *Last Encore* illustrates in the animetic form that

these multiples (merely reduplicative copies of the twos) are themselves transcendental because they accomplish a persistent expression of being across the extension of space, through time, and in relation both to themselves and to other things. This is why the most basic forms of digitality are differential being and dialectical being. The former exhibits the transcendental simply as mediation through the different layers of the metaphysical cosmos, while the latter through the persistence and transformation of entities as they weather the mutations of contradiction.⁸³⁶

⁸³⁴ Galloway, p. 70.

⁸³⁵ Lamarre, p. 342.

⁸³⁶ Galloway, p. 70.

In other words, as we are presented with each screen, page, mirror, camera, or film reel in the series, we learn that each media machine becomes much more than a portal for each name of history to traverse through. We learn that the Joan of Arc effect has its limits in the digital; it is not merely a thought experiment in the otaku world-image, but rather, a mechanism for recursively repopulating the world with an infinite number of *objects* or data points rather than possibilities. For Nasu's generation of otaku, this is perhaps why *Last Encore* was rewritten after a decade removed from the original video game's release; in traversing the cinematics of intermediality, interfaciality, and meta-mediation, the seemingly infinite becomings are captured replications of the same entity, of Joan of Arc herself, Nasu's lost Angel of History. This awareness of deep digitality also transforms the otaku yet another name of history (Shirō → EMIYA / Hakuno → NPC).

In confronting a machine that populates time and space with historical personae at the end of History repeatedly, there is no philosophical solution, there is no historical end or nomadic flux: the eternal return retains the entropic, ossified, and controlled structures of History, culture, and civilisation. In this way, Nero, Hakuno and the otaku viewer must fully realise the truth of Twice Pieceman's cybernetic hell that was constructed to obliterate a world that has foreclosed the possibilities of living outside of the violence of History. Like the conclusions of Chapter Three, we learn that escape might not be possible even in the smooth spaces of the nomadic war machine. Following Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations* again, Deleuze writes that because 'History presents all violence of culture as the legitimate property of peoples, States and Churches, as the manifestation of *their* force', figures like Twice Pieceman seek cybernetic negation, critique, and destruction of said violent elements of History which is exposed as a trauma of a war refugee, a scene depicted in a flashback in Episode Thirteen in which a child version of Twice wanders around a bloody, burned out war zone which resembles Vietnam in the 1970s.⁸³⁷ Twice Pieceman's ontological tirade against History is one of active nihilism, which in his formulation of SE.RA.PH, highlights the necessity for starting anew: 'negation in this form has become critique: destruction becomes active, aggression profoundly linked to affirmation. Critique is destruction as joy, the aggression of the creator'.⁸³⁸ However, by destroying History for the sake of a posthuman pacifism, SE.RA.PH recreated the means of its violence in the form of the digital, revivifying

⁸³⁷ Deleuze, *NP*, p. 129.

⁸³⁸ Deleuze, *NP*, p. 81.

the eternal return's potency as the mathematic law of recursion. Protocols, projections, interfaces, and surveilled thresholds have become the new pillars of a digital imperium, symbolically exposed in *Last Encore* as the foundations of New Rome with the anime-image as its keystone.

Last Encore compels its viewers to always heed Deleuze and Guattari's warning at the end of *A Thousand Plateaus* when otaku engage with nomadologies: 'Of course, smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory. But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries. Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us'.⁸³⁹ *Last Encore* similarly ends by reminding viewers that 'the digital is an actualization' rather than a solution to 'the virtual, territorializing it back into discrete things', and that we should not confuse infinite possibilities of the virtual (of becomings, transhistorical lines of flight, of the powers of fabulation) with the unseen elements of computational decisionism, of the algorithmic *fate* of our lifeworld.⁸⁴⁰ *Last Encore* marks the moment in which Type-Moon announces that the digital and its interfaces are not metaphysical or transhistorical machines that offer patterns of becoming; rather, they are computational conditions, not post-structural philosophical explorations. Through Shaft's artful animetic gestures and Nasu's philosophical fabulations, we learn from Twice Pieceman, not our protagonists, the ultimate moral of this fable, articulated best by Galloway: 'Do not believe the dot-com ideology: the digital has nothing to do with the virtual'.⁸⁴¹

The latest rendition of *Fate/Extra* presents a world of control, much like ours, that like History and the eternal return is entirely inescapable. SE.RA.PH reveals the dangers of placing faith in a transcendent messianism in the hopes of upending human time and the teleological, linear trajectory of History and civilisation at moments of crisis and rupture.⁸⁴² Even so, Nasu's

⁸³⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP*, p. 551.

⁸⁴⁰ Galloway, p. 70.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid.

⁸⁴² Type-Moon's creation of SE.RA.PH reveals, especially in *Last Encore*'s animetic reflection, that like the trapped image of *Angelus Novus* that Benjamin claims there is no way out of the techno-ontological trap constructed to escape the gales of History, which he explains in the oft-cited essay, 'On the Concept of History', found in *Selected Writings (Volume 4) 1938-1940*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 389-411. Benjamin responds to the networks of capital enshrined in our everyday lives as if the aura of capital has become entirely religious, claiming: 'We cannot draw closed the net we stand in', in his essay 'Capitalism as Religion', found in *Selected Writings (Volume 1) 1913-1926*, trans. by by Marcus Bullock and ed. by Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 288-91 (p. 288). Japanese Marxist Sabu Kohso follows Benjamin, writing that it is

reinterpretation of the *Fate/EX* series in *Last Encore* offers a new otaku world-image that equally (1) reminds otaku to produce fabulative worlds that seek an ethico-historical response to the failures of History, and (2) offer limitations to discourses on the end of History and the nomadological liberations that the digital revolution offer to individuals. In this double bind of affirmative and pessimistic philosophies regarding the virtual, it seems that rather than appearing as mere ambivalence, Type-Moon's deployment of SE.RA.PH exposes a world that reflects Alexandre Kojève's proclamation that postwar nations like the U.S. and Japan have a unique expression of temporality because both cultures 'experienced life at the "end of History"''.⁸⁴³ In other words, SE.RA.PH is the result of living through History after its ends, as Miyoshi and Harootunian write: 'To live in the time of post-history – a condition Kojève believed to be as universal as the structure of desire, recognition, and action (work) that propelled history everywhere – meant acknowledging the abdication of philosophy's claim to offer new truths about the human condition'.⁸⁴⁴ In accepting the digital recapitulation of these postwar considerations, Type-Moon's animetic masterpiece urges toward a reticular pessimism, that as Berry and Galloway write, reveals that the post-historical condition, the digital reclamation of History and time, and the radical desires to overcome memory itself has produced new machines of control that 'forecloses any kind of utopian thinking that might entail an alternative to our many pervasive and invasive networks'.⁸⁴⁵ This is Type-Moon's initiating an intensive critique of the otaku world-image and the limits its liberatory gaze in the twilight of History.

necessary to demystify the messianic ideals of digital culture and the otaku world-image, writing that: 'our angels are looking at history, split between political reality and messianic ideal, as well as memories of catastrophe and signs of progress. But the history they seek to recollect and amend may not exist strictly in the temporal past. In the form of capital (qua savings), and like the storm from paradise, it drives time and determines the future [...] That will be the day when we have nothing but our mass corporeality. On that day there is no other choice for the potency of the multitude but to blossom in full. Then, if the angels are messianic, they are so only for themselves', from his essay 'Angelus Novus in Millennial Japan,' in *Japan After Japan: Social and Cultural Life from the Recessionary 1990s to the Present* (Durham: Duke University Press), p. 435.

⁸⁴³ Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, p. 159.

⁸⁴⁴ Miyoshi and Harootunian, *Postmodernism and Japan*, p. xiii.

⁸⁴⁵ Berry and Galloway, 'A Network is a Network', p. 7.

Conclusion: The Otaku World-Image as Any-Worlds-Whatever

Throughout this thesis, I have observed that the avant-garde and vernacular rise of *gekiga* manga, television *anime*, and transmedial *otaku* culture reflects the post-historical. In these chronopolitical anxieties, the Japanese popular imaginary poses precarious questions of the nature of time and History as it relates to rapid modernisation, overdevelopment, global capitalism, environmental devastation, and the mourning of the loss of a premodern Japan. The otaku imaginaries of Miura, Yukimura, Nasu, and Takeuchi, however, offered equally cavalier and cautionary experiences of a post-historical world, often through world historical allegories and highly expressive and experimental aesthetic styles that blended the chronopolitical and cosmopolitan interests of the fabulative otaku, which in turn produces inverted, mangled, yet highly potent histories of any-world(s)-whatever. In these anachronistic worlds of *Berserk*, *Vinland Saga*, and the *Fate* universe, the otaku world-image projected a kaleidoscopic and phantasmagoric experience of History that melded the seemingly opposed universes of the medieval Occident and postmodern Orient, of the pre-industrial Migration Age with the post-industrial Information Age, of the mystical visions of transcendence to the digital simulations of transhumanism. In these confluences of world histories and their signifiers, I sought to examine how both the form and philosophies of each text exposed the falsehoods and contradictions of the chronopolitical anxieties that haunted each otaku artist.

Both Chapter One and Chapter Four sought to contextualise these speculative fabulations as global minor art forms that demand investigation in the academy and in public humanities. Chapter Two explained how Miura Kentarō's manic manga series *Berserk* functioned as a perfect medium for feeling the prehistorical fury of the barbarian in the manga machine. In *Berserk*, Miura's cosmological nihilism and gekiga-revivalist style, as revealed as becoming-gothic, revealed an intense barbarian hatred of this world, as Andrew Culp described it.⁸⁴⁶ In an otaku mishmash of Nietzsche's world-breaking, prehistorical rage (or what Deleuze calls the phenomenon of *ressentiment*) and what Eugene Thacker refers to as the popular Japanese expressions of 'dark media',⁸⁴⁷ Miura's series saw an end to History and human time itself by philosophising means for severing human identity from the historical

⁸⁴⁶ Culp, *Dark Deleuze*, p. 14.

⁸⁴⁷ Eugene Thacker, 'Dark Media' in *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014): 77-149. (p. 85).

process. In an existential shearing-away-of the historical subject of Man, Miura's gekiga-informed indulgence in three nomadic becomings of becoming-berserk (becoming-monster, becoming-steel, and becoming-shadow) affectively shocked the reader into feeling a deterritorialising fury directed at the imperial, the anthropocentric, and the cosmic. Miura, like his gekiga forebearers, saw an answer to the precarity of global capitalism, the everydayness of exploitation, and the revival of a greater feudal proletarianism expressed in a deployment of the nomadic war machine as an intensified, nihilistic, and weaponised action-image.

Chapter Three follows Yukimura Makoto's revision of Miura's war machines. More Doestoevsky than Nietzsche, *Vinland Saga* traverses a parallel track to Miura's *Berserk*, diverging from celebrating the intensive force of the action-image as the iconoclastic answer to History, control, and overdevelopment. Rather, Chapter Three explored how Miura's fascination in becoming-intense, becoming-animal, and becoming-imperceptible could be turned against itself, made false as Deleuze writes, to expose the limits of the gekiga manga machine and its political allegiance with historical action. In a critique of the action-image as a vehicle of wartime ideologies, Yukimura explores other options of becoming-nomad to illustrate how there are other transhistorical options to disrupt the destructive flows of History. Deserting from the war machine, Yukimura's Thorfinn is a master of escape, inverting the expectations of nomadic and Viking becomings outside of the heroic register of the Nietzschean overman. *Vinland Saga* is an exemplar of escaping the regime of the action-image in manga form by revealing the illusions of liberation that Miura's series pushed to its most intensified and material limits. Instead of destroying History in the manga form, Yukimura's Brechtian revelations of the gekiga war machine shatters the manga action-image, transforming the historical experiences of the fading Viking into a wealth of infinite potentialities of the nomadic. Formally, as the series began to bridge the onto-aesthetic gaps between the organic and crystalline regimes of manga and anime, it resulted in revealing the generative forces of traversing any-worlds-whatever rather than destroying all worlds whenever. This thesis seeks to not only expose the planetary crises of collapse and the extinction of Man and its imperial historical models, but it hopes to examine the otaku not simply as a subcultural consumer, but as a new assemblage for a post-historical world, reifying

Deleuze when he writes: 'There is no work of art that does not appeal to a people who do not yet exist'.⁸⁴⁸

The abstract relations between the otaku art form and philosophical discourses of History and its social, political, and ethical implications can be, perhaps, unclear to those not accustomed to a pan-Deleuzian reading of texts such as these. However, Part II necessarily hinges on the analysis of *Berserk* and *Vinland Saga* to illustrate how manga and anime forms are integrally linked in their aesthetic formulations and philosophies. In this way, the gekiga manga machine and its vernacular avant-gardism lied dormant in the earliest days of the otaku movement of anime, which I explain throughout Chapter Four as an introduction to the anime theories of History. Chapter Five introduced the massive anime franchise *Fate/stay/night* as a lynchpin in articulating an animetic nomadology, as both an intermedial aesthetic form and a transmedial franchise that transcended the scope of medial specificity. In a Deleuzian cinematic analysis of *Fate/Zero* and *Fate/stay/night: Unlimited Blade Works*, this chapter returned to the questions raised in Chapter Three about the rise of the time-image in anime, and it specifically explored how these two series effectively blended both approaches from *Berserk* and *Vinland Saga* in a hyper-accelerated yet hallucinatory experience of the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of coexistential histories. By over-accelerating the anime action-image beyond its conceptual breaking point, both series revealed time-warping experiences of the end of days, of History at its most strained. The Fuyuki City arcs of *Zero* and *UBW* cinematically meshed together transhistorical experiences of radical messianism in the very form of the animetic interval, in the blink of an eye, therefore radicalising the crystalline potentials of anime. Chapter Six concludes on the *Fate* series by examining the nomadological elements of the Joan of Arc effect, becoming-woman, and the virtual potentials/limits of the data-image in *Fate/Grand Order*.

Throughout the entire doctoral thesis, I have attempted to illustrate that the otaku world-image is a transhistorical vision that transcends periodisation, localisation, and the prescriptive dimension of language. It is a motivating factor for otaku to revisit nomadic memories and experiences that challenge the state-mediated, nationalistic histories of overdeveloped countries like the United States and Japan. Otaku philosophy is a vulgar Deleuzianism, a minor philosophy of the cosmocultural; it is an art of technological and

⁸⁴⁸ ("Having an Idea in Cinema: On the Cinema of Straub-Huillet," 19) Deleuze & Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy, and Culture

imaginative innovations that utilise visual culture to challenge archaic censorship laws and fascistic propaganda, as well as the rise of a *post-truth* media ecology that has so viciously ravaged the precepts of liberatory thought and collective politics throughout the world. Chronopolitical fabulations and nomadologies like those in *Berserk*, *Vinland Saga*, and *Fate* are in no way solutions to these problems. They simply shift the discourse toward a more robust examination of vernacular philosophies that exist in all forms of media, ones that shape affective relations more than logical opinions.

It is for this reason that I began writing this thesis. In the fall of 2014, I was teaching as an affiliate English professor at Metropolitan State University of Denver. I was granted the opportunity to teach an early British literature course by a former professor of mine who was on leave, and since I studied medieval and Renaissance literatures, histories, and languages in my undergraduate and Masters education, the department felt comfortable with me taking over that semester. It had been my third-year teaching by this point, and I had begun to shift my interests away from medieval studies and toward media studies. During this time, I would teach classes on the introduction to media studies and visual culture, I was the faculty advisor of the Comparative Media Club on campus, and in general, I was much more aware of my student's interests outside of class. This course was the highlight of my young teaching career in Denver, primarily because it blended my interests together: philosophy, history, art theory, and media studies. The entire class was full of fourth-year students who would graduate in the spring, and half of them were students that knew me or had me at one point in their college career. When we began our first section on Anglo-Saxon poetry and Arthuriana, many of them enjoyed my theoretical readings of the texts. But when we approached the first exam, my class of twenty-four fell to about twelve. I asked a few former students what went wrong, and one student admitted that the texts felt alien. I was reminded that the student body of my university was non-traditional, diverse, and urban. The imperial histories of dead white kings did not excite the class as much as it did me. Like my students, I did not have an exceptional American education, but because I was an otaku, a nerd, a comic book collector and a gamer, I was introduced to fabulative and discursive nomadologies within vernacular texts. Nonetheless, I emailed the class to arrive early for the next seminar for an important pre-exam review. Most of the class arrived, and to their surprise, instead of reviewing the texts for the exam, I screened an episode of *Fate/Zero* to explain the complex Arthurian concepts of bloodfeud, the economy of honour, and messianism.

After the viewing, we discussed this section's themes through an extensive formal analysis of the episode. To my delight, the students finally saw what ancient texts could not show them: the affective resonances of the nomadic, rather than the hollow antiquarianism of the imperial. The media experiment was a success, and I found that most of the students would continue throughout the semester to expand their theoretical approaches to these alien texts through their own vernacular, rhizomatic connections. The class was an incubator for this thesis, and while my project has evolved substantially since its early days, this research started out from a pedagogical lesson about how to teach History at the end of it. My project assumed a position of praxis: a vernacular *how-to* guide to a critical and iconoclastic approach to world history and aesthetic discourses.

As a final note, the American historian, writer, podcaster, and communication theorist Marshall T. Poe, a descendant of Edgar Allen Poe, recently wrote a guide to thinking about the post-historical in an era overwhelmed by information and scientism. In a satirical telling of a pseudo-fictional life of a young would-be historian named Elizabeth Ranke, Poe weaves together a modern-day fable about a historian who goes through the entirety of academia attempting to shift the institutional perspectives on the discipline of gender history itself. She experiences the mundanity of graduate school, of writing her first book, of dealing with publishers, and living her entire life attempting to read and tell all the most accurate histories of women, to contribute to the corpus of institutional knowledge. By the end of her life, Elizabeth is described as lying on her deathbed, pondering the meaning of a historian's life, of History itself on a planet that is billions of years old. At her deathbed, Poe describes Elizabeth's post-historical revelations:

"Everything we sense," Elizabeth thinks, "has already happened. We never experience the present. We only experience the past. What we call 'now' is always 'then.' We live in history." Elizabeth and her colleagues had often joked that, as professional historians, they lived in the past. Little did she realize that everyone lives in the past all the time. She finds this funny. Many scientists look down on history as being unscientific, and many historians feel bad that history is not more scientific. But there's a sense in which history is the *only* science.⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁹ Marshall T. Poe, *How to Read a History Book: The Hidden History of History* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2018). p. 125.

Like Elizabeth who finally views History in the Nietzschean scope of materiality and existence, the low theories of otaku and other speculative fan cultures would agree with Poe's assessment that the discipline of historiography should be a nomadic science, one that demands to be written as a minor science that observes any-worlds-whatever, *hic et nunc*, in between the material worlds of 'physicists, astronomers, geologists, chemists, biologists, anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, and political scientists', as Poe writes.⁸⁵⁰ That is what the otaku world-image reveals: that the historical is more physics than metaphysics, more real than representation, not merely in its constructions or in its carefully curated relationship with fact, but in the everydayness of its potentialities and its latent effects.

Hence, the post-historical signals the rise of a global world-image that implores us to face the Nietzschean truism that nothing is new, that encourages us to experience a dizzying sense that everything has already happened, and simulates the intense becomings and affects of what many call the historical. From Poe's satirical portrait of a historian to my own experiences as a young educator of culture, I want to conclude with the hope that *the post-historical turn* in the humanities should be reexamined as a productive way to think about the ways in which all representations of the past, of cultural memory, and of the trauma of History can be translated into vernacular and accessible experiences, embodiments, and expressions of an event, a body, or a haecceity that have become alien to us through its very institutionalisation. Through the soulful bodies and superflat temporalities of manga, anime, and the media ecologies they produce, the otaku world-image functions as a case study for global questions about how to tell a global History at its ends in the most critical, fabulative and vitalistic manner. In this accessible, imaginative, ludic, and hallucinatory vision of the post-historical, we might find that by participating in the projections of any-worlds-whatever like on the holodeck from *Star Trek* is not a panacea for the worlds we must outlive. But in these affective, intimate, and engaging simulations, we may realise that the worlds of *Berserk*, *Vinland Saga*, and *Fate* are transhistorical, nomadological, and vernacular world-images that show us how to *take back our future* from the crippling despair of futurelessness that has shaped this early millennium.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid.

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