'The Wandering Adolescent of Contemporary Japanese *Anime* and Videogames'

Matthew Jacobsen

Queen Mary University of London

July 2014

Thesis submitted for the qualification of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Abstract

This thesis examines the figure of the wandering adolescent, prominently visible in Japanese television *anime* and videogames produced from 1995 to the present. Japan in the 1990s and at the millennium experienced intense economic and social change, as the collapse of the 'bubble' economy of the 1980s resulted in a financial recession from which the country has yet to recover. At the close of the decade, the national experience was characterised in media descriptions of malaise and disenfranchisement, and the loss of perceived core traditional cultural values.

Arguably in this period the figure of the adolescent changed qualitatively in Japanese culture, rising to prominence within youth panic discourses circulated by the Japanese news media. These concerned the perceived rise in antisocial and problematic teenage behaviour, including the *otaku*, the *hikikomori* shut-in, classroom disobedience, bullying, and prostitution, while multiple cases of brutal murder perpetrated by teenagers became the focus of extensive media coverage. Public discourse expressed alarm at the perceived breakdown of the traditional family and the growing commodification of childhood in Japanese culture.

This thesis develops understanding of the shifting attitude in Japan towards adolescence within the context of these cultural anxieties, and through the analysis of *anime* and videogames suggests strategies that are at work within popular cultural texts that are the product of, contribute to and reorient debates about the position of the suddenly and inescapably visible teenager in Japanese society. Through analysis of discourses relating to the shifting representation of the wandering adolescent as it moves across cultural texts and media forms, the thesis forms an original contribution to knowledge and understanding of Japanese *anime* and videogames through illumination of a prominent motif that to date remains unexamined.

Contents

Acknowledgements

残酷な天使のテーゼ悲しみがそしてはじまる抱きしめた命のかたちその夢に目覚めたとき誰よりも光を放つ少年よ　神話になれ

<div align="right">

- 'A Cruel Angel's Thesis', *Neon Genesis Evangelion*

</div>

Thank you to all my friends and family for their love, encouragement and patience during the research and writing of this thesis. I have been repeatedly told that a PhD thesis is never truly a solo accomplishment, but I want to thank especially the people without whom it is safe to say this work would simply not exist:

Mark Glancy, for being a steady source of advice, support and guidance throughout my teaching career, and for measured direction, encouragement and draft-reading beyond the call of duty during the craziest times of the writing of this thesis – also for patient, tolerant indulging of Bette at her very worst.

Emma Yates, whose extraordinary wisdom, uncanny insight and shrewd guidance over the last three years has had a truly incalculable impact on my life. Thank you for believing so stalwartly in my potential and for being so inspiring – and for always reminding me that there is always an elegant practical solution to existential crises that seem insurmountable. I would not be here without you!

Danielle, who has had the often dubious pleasure of living with this work and its writer during some gruelling times, administering emotional triage and, occasionally, full-on surgery. Thank you beyond words, especially for the weekend that we will not forget, but will never speak of again.

I would also like to thank my dear friend Chris Sparks for being so supportive during some rough patches, always being an inspiration and, generally speaking, an extremely good influence professionally and personally (and knowing when it is preferable *not* to be a good influence).

I would sincerely like to thank my examiners, Dr. Rayna Denison and Dr. Julian Stringer for the extraordinary level of guidance and detailed commentary on my work. I would especially like to thank Dr. Denison, whose thought-provoking, challenging and encouraging words have made all the difference.

Introduction

The subject of this thesis is the figure of the wandering adolescent, prominently visible in Japanese television *anime* and videogames produced from 1995 to the present. Japan in the 1990s and at the millennium experienced high levels of economic and social change, as the collapse of the 'bubble' economy of the 1980s resulted in a deep financial recession from which the country is yet to fully recover. At the close of the decade, the national experience was characterised in media descriptions by a deep-seated malaise and disenfranchisement, and a loss of perceived core Japanese cultural values. For many commentators, including novelist Haruki Murakami, the connection was made between the conditions of the recession and the twin disasters of 1995, the *Aum Shinryko* cult's Sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway and the catastrophic Kobe earthquake, which 'will remain embedded in our psyche as two milestones in our life as a people'.[1]

At the heart of accounts of the Japanese cultural situation of the post-bubble period, the experience of the Japanese adolescent became of particular concern and, circulated by the Japanese print media and television reportage, a series of panics arose concerning the perceived rise in antisocial teenage behaviour. In addition to sensational accounts of classroom disobedience, extortion, bullying, prostitution and the breakdown of the *ie* (familial) system, several cases of brutal murder perpetrated by teenagers became the focus of extensive media coverage. On January 1st 2000, national newspaper *The Japan Times* printed an editorial encapsulating the hallmarks of the nationwide malaise as the media had seen it, specifically locating adolescents at the centre of the period's social consequences:

> The last ten years have been a dismal experience. In the economic sphere Japan has degenerated from the pinnacle of world success to a fumbling giant; the art of governance is in shambles; and the nation has seen the rise of a moral vacuum as classrooms have turned into battlefields and teenagers sell their bodies in the name of 'subsidised friendship'.[2]

While Japan was certainly hitherto a highly active producer of visual media, during this heightened period of cultural transition there was a dramatic mobilisation of

---

[1] Haruki Murakami, *Underground* (London: Vintage, 2003), p. 206.
[2] James McClain, *Japan: A Modern History* (W.W.Norton and Co., 2002), p. 629.

the *anime* and videogame industries, which became industrially hyperproductive, enjoyed financial success both at home and overseas and in specific cases demonstrated seminal instances of technical and narrative innovation.

During the 1990s the adolescent became prominently visible in visual media as a protagonist of a distinct majority of *manga*, *anime* television and videogames. I became interested in investigating why this sudden and inescapable visibility of the teenager should occur, and wanted to explore the relationship between changing Japanese discourses around the adolescent in the period and their shifting representation in cultural texts. It seemed to me that in this period the figure of the adolescent changed qualitatively in Japanese culture. From about 1995, there were far more instances of young people who were wanderers; they experienced varying degrees of autonomy and institutional alienation, and I wanted to try to account for this shift.

As cultural representations are shaped by, and in turn shape, social practices, an examination of the inner workings of *anime* and videogame discourse can help to comprehend the Japanese conception of adolescence as a stage in the life cycle, and can account for their representation in visual media. As so much media discourse circulated around the adolescent in the post-bubble period, analysis of the depiction of teenagers in the popular media can reveal much about Japan's cultural mindset. As will be discussed shortly, comparatively to the West, adolescence came to exist relatively recently as a demarcated stage in the life cycle in Japan, its cultural acknowledgement and definition fundamentally associated with identification of consumer tendencies and product marketing strategies. As in other cultures, the teenager became recognised by the consumer industries as an individual in possession of a disposable income to whom trend products could be marketed.

Inevitably, gender to an extent determines social perceptions of adolescence and media accounts reflected phenomena particular to males and females. Boys were principally the subject, though not exclusively, of concerns regarding physical violence and *ijime* (psychological and physically aggressive bullying and torment) while girls were the subject of panics about sexuality, with concurrently circulating concerns over the widespread male sexual preference for high school age girls and the significant rise of *enjo kōsai*, 'compensated dating' or prostitution.

In the *manga* and *anime* industries, texts are specifically targeted towards genders and age groups, and are denominated indicatively, with the most popular and profitable varieties being *shōnen* (boy) and *shōjo* (girl). These words roughly correspond to teenage boy and teenage girl, but with more complex implications that I

shall discuss later. There is slippage between these modes: for example the traditionally female-oriented *kawaii* style (appealing, infantile cuteness) occurs in traditionally male-oriented texts centred on martial arts or robotics, and instances of aggressive combat features in texts indicated for a female consumer. That said, there are certain limitations on what can be expected from a majority of texts that are immediately anticipated by knowledge of the intended viewer. Why should this demarcation be so? What factors govern the construction of texts created with a specific core audience in mind, and in what ways do the representations of male and female wandering adolescents and their narrative situations differ? Do texts that feature a male protagonist operate differently to those with a female protagonist?

The urban centres of Japan at the millennium had become crowded and overpopulated, with the cost of living increased beyond manageable means owing to the conditions of recession, and space for the family and for the individual increasingly limited. A key source of discursive information for my analyses across the thesis, Anne Allison's anthropological study of the production, marketing and reception contexts of children's toys in Japan in the 1990s, *Millennial Monsters,* finds that the life of the modern Japanese is characterised principally by nomadicism.[3] Teenagers in particular will have to commute for several hours of the day, making long journeys alone between home, school, after-hours cram school (a social norm in Japan owing to competitive university entrance examinations) and urban social/leisure centres. The wandering adolescent of many examples of Japanese visual media exists as a nomad, making extensive journeys across a variety of terrains using a variety of means. I am particularly interested in assessing the relationship between discussions of the lack of space afforded to the nomadic teenager in Japan and the representation of the teenage negotiation of space in *anime* and videogame discourses.

Many commentators, both in the Japanese media and retrospectively in analyses within international and domestic Cultural Studies and Sociology asserted that a breakdown of the Japanese familial system reached a crisis point in the 1990s, with an emphasis placed on the time spent separately commuting by family members and longer hours expected at work (to earn extra money) and at school (in anticipation of limited, competitive university admissions and job opportunities).[4] I intend to investigate the

---

[3] Anne Allison, *Millennial Monsters* (London: University of California Press, 2006), p. 67.
[4] See Marcus Rebick and Takenaka Ayumi, 'The Changing Japanese Family' in *The Changing Japanese Family,* ed. by Rebick and Takenaka (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 3-16; Akiko Hashimoto and John W. Traphagan, 'Changing Japanese Families' in Akiko Hashimoto and

extent to which *anime* and videogame representations of the adolescent engage with and contribute to this complex debate on the changing nature of the family in Japan and the perceived concurrent abandonment of children. How is the family represented and what does this have to say about its status in contemporary Japan? What is the significance of texts that position the teenager outside of the regulated boundaries of the family home?

Media and Society

The analysis of film, television, videogames and other media as primary sources can help the scholar to understand social practices and cultural phenomena. Visual media shapes, and is shaped by, its agents and audiences' conceptions of social categories such as gender, class, age group and ethnicity. Of particular concern to this thesis is the representation by animation and videogames of adolescence as a demarcated section of the life cycle. Analysis of visual texts aids understanding of the developing cultural status of the teenager and the expectations and anxieties circulating around them in contemporary Japanese society.

In order to comprehend the motivations behind the representation of the adolescent in Japanese visual media, analysis must take into account the producers and industrial factors that have lead to the creation of discourse and the social relations and societal structures that it engages with. The scholarly comprehension of ideology is useful here as it helps us to understand the motivations behind discourse creation and the power relations that inform it.

Film Studies has attempted variously to explain the relationship between representations in film texts and culturally dominant ideology. Drawing on the work of Louis Althusser, studies initially saw film as embodying the values, assumptions and organizational principles of the ruling classes.[5] His model has it that the subject is 'interpellated' or 'hailed' by 'Ideological State Apparatuses' that embody dominant ideological viewpoints, which would include media such as film and television.[6] The

---

John W. Traphagan, eds. *Imagined Families, Lived Families* (Albany: State University of New York press, 2008), pp. 1-11; Anne Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* pp. 66-92.
[5] For a comprehensive discussion of the influence of the work of Louis Althusser on Film Theory, see Richard Ruston 'Discovering a Politics of Cinema: The Influence of Althusser' in *The Politics of Hollywood Cinema: Popular Film and Contemporary Political Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), pp.33-56.
[6] Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 121-176.

viewing/participant subject is powerless to resist or reject, and is caught within the system of power relations that discourse expresses. From an Althusserian perspective it was therefore tempting in Film Studies and elsewhere for the scholar to reductively identify an apparent ideological position taken up by one or more discourses and 'reveal' that position within a larger body of texts. This method is essentialist and would fail to see, in this case, visual media as emerging from and engaging with a multiplicity of shifting contexts. Ideology should be understood as in continual flux, adapting to social and political circumstances rather than fixed.

Siegfried Kracauer's work on Weimar German cinema put forward the provocative and influential but now contested claim that cinema 'reflects' society and that there may be perceived a psychological 'fit' between a film text and its culturally-specific audience. To some extent, the work of Allen and Gomery helps us to refine on, and to critique, the work of Kracauer and so is useful for this project. Their 1985 reconfiguration of the role of the film historian and the methods of film analysis available to the scholar acknowledge that films 'derive their images and sounds, themes and stories ultimately from their social environment'.[7] However, while through film analysis we may encounter the 'fears, hopes and hidden anxieties' of the culture within which a film is made and viewed, the relationship is a more dynamic one and does not constitute a straightforward and readily accessible reflection of currently-circulating social trends and ideologies. The analytical task of the film scholar is to decode and unravel the complex relationships between a film text and its various contexts of production and reception, and the social, economic and market-driven factors that determine and influence them.

It is especially tempting in the case of the contemporary Japanese popular media to view repetitive imagery, narrative construction and character types as products of a dominant ideological position. While replication of popular phenomena in the culture industries might ensure particular representations (in this case the teenager as an autonomous wanderer) are circulated more prominently than others, it does not necessarily follow that texts following a popular 'original' share the same ideological/political agenda. Close analysis and interpretation of the inner workings of specific texts is required in order to go beyond the surface of aesthetic and storyline to speculate as to their variety of cultural functions.

---

[7] Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Methodology and Practice* (New York, London: McGraw Hill, 1985), p. 158.

Art forms do not of course precisely or obliquely mirror society or culture, rather there are a series of exchanges which take place between art and its contexts. It is profoundly unstable to argue for a 'psychic fit' between art and its proponents and audiences, so rather a suitable methodological apparatus needs to be identified in order to comprehend this dynamic relationship. As Graeme Turner states 'Film does not reflect or even record reality; like any other medium of representation it constructs and "re-presents" its pictures of reality by way of the codes, conventions, myths and ideologies of its culture as well as by way of the specific signifying practices of the medium'.[8] I will be using medium-specific discourse analysis that takes in the peculiarities of each medium in an attempt to produce a view of core texts at the 'nexus of a complex and dynamic set of relationships between producers and consumers'.[9]

While I am not attempting a reception study nor an account of authorship and agency, developments in the field of Film History provide important guiding principles for the study of film and a means of the analyst avoiding falling into a reductive, essentialist trap. Chapman, Glancy and Harper differentiate the 'New Film History' from the 'old' through an assertion of the movement beyond 'reflectionism' and the sophistication inherent in identifying the complexities of the relationship between film production, reception and cultural contexts. Primary sources are now of greater significance to historians than previously, with an emphasis on analysis on sources both filmic and non-filmic. An important statement the authors make is that the historic divide between Film Studies (in particular the theoretical, text-focused abstractions of the 1970s *Screen* studies) and Film History is less defined, with the New Film History acknowledging the 'formal properties and aesthetics' of visual media rather than assessing narrative elements in isolation.[10] Audiences clearly respond to the visual and aural qualities of film texts, which analysis should take into account.

Discussing analysis of cinema that takes into account a multiplicity of contextual factors that might be seen to govern production, response and meaning, film historian Barbara Klinger refers to the 'discursive surround' of a filmic text to indicate the multiplicity of factors governing a film's production and reception in a given cultural instance.[11] She makes the distinction between *synchronic* and *diachronic* research methods, where the former presents a limited, stable view of a text determined

[8] Graeme Turner, *Film as Social Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1988; 4th ed. 2006), p.178.
[9] James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper, 'Introduction' in *The New Film History* (Basinstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 7.
[10] Chapman, Glancy and Harper, *The New Film History*, pp. 7-9.
[11] Barbara Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the past in Reception Studies', in *Screen*, 38:2, 107-128 (p. 109).

by a singular contextual element, and the latter takes into account the variety of ways in which meaning changes over time. In film analysis, we are concerned with what Klinger refers to as the 'public's structuring principles for viewing films'.[12]

I have suggested that it is important, if we are to arrive at a satisfying account of this moment in cultural history, to avoid reflectionism and to look at the range of functions which art can have. The work of Italian historian Gramsci is particularly fruitful in this regard, as he helps us to think about culture's role in society. While he did not write specifically about film, his work has been taken up usefully in film studies and film history in order to understand the interaction between culturally dominant value systems and film production and reception. His concept of hegemony is flexible in its explanation of the subject's relationship to discourse. Hegemony equates to 'leadership' where in an apparently culturally diverse setting the world view of the ruling class is enforced, circulated and made the social norm through the workings of cultural institutions and practices (such as cinema). As Tessa Perkins notes in her summary of the development of theoretical positions in Film Studies, Gramsci's writing on hegemony is a less static model for the comprehension of ideology as it 'could account for protest and dissent' and in relation to film could see how 'cultural phenomena played a role in the process of negotiation, of gaining, or even undermining, the *consent* of the population to be *led'*. Thinking about film using Gramsci, a text becomes 'a site of struggle rather than a simple instrument of ideological imposition'.[13] According to Gramsci, majority consent is 'expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion – newspapers and associations – which, therefore, in certain situations are artificially multiplied'.[14] Such insights might be of crucial importance for this project.

Videogames and *anime* are multi-layered texts that must be decoded and deconstructed in order to comprehend their meanings.[15] *Anime* television programming

---

[12] Barbara Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable', in *Screen*, 38:2, 107-128 (p. 117).

[13] Tessa Perkins, 'Who (and What) Is It For?' in Gledhill, Christine, and Linda Williams, eds. *Reinventing Film Studies*, *Reinventing Film Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 76-95, (p. 85).

[14] Antonio Gramsci, 'Notes on Italian History' in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. by Gramsci, Hoare and Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970) pp. 52-120 (p. 81).

[15] On approaches to the analysis of *anime*, see e.g. Susan Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Stephen T. Brown, ed., *Cinema Anime* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Dolores P. Martinez, ed., *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture: Gender, Shifting Boundaries and Global Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Mark W. MacWilliams, ed., *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*

emerged and boomed in the 1960s, and has remained popular.[16] In the late 1970s, Japan became, along with the USA, one of the two most significant global videogame industries both in terms of economic factors and influence on developments and technological innovations in the medium.[17] Both *anime* television and videogames boomed industrially and increased in popularity both in Japan and transnationally during the late 1980s, through the 1990s and around the millennium, and analysis of the textual discourses of these two media can help us understand the changing perceptions towards adolescence in Japan during the period.[18] Discerning the extent of difference in the representation of male and female adolescents is a particular interest of the thesis, and cultural texts can be an index of culturally inscribed notions of gender; occasionally it may contest them.

It is outside the remit of this thesis to make an assessment of *global* types of representation of the adolescent, though I will go on shortly to note significant developments in filmic representations of teenage experience and observe moments of synchronicity between Japan and the West. What I hope to be able to demonstrate is the specific take on the issue that is evident in Japanese cultural texts, and to hazard some speculations about their patterns and intensity.

In this thesis I intend to undertake contextual analyses of Japanese culture and wider discourses about childhood, masculinity and femininity at a particular juncture in Japanese history. I am extending work that has been done on discourses within Japanese culture and developing my understanding of *anime* and videogames witnessed through the lens of these discourses. A comparative study that took into account a range of international media might be necessary to fully answer the question of cultural specificity. There are, however, self-evident elements that suggest the culturally particular idiosyncrasy of the texts under scrutiny, which I will at this stage briefly

---

(Armonk, New York; London: M.E.Sharpe, 2008); Christopher Bolton, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. and Takayuki Tatsumi, eds., *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); on analytical approaches to the videogame see e.g. Mark J.P Wolf and Bernard Perron, eds., *The Video Game Theory Reader*, (New York, London: Routledge, 2003); Barry Atkins and Tanya Krzywinska, eds., *Videogame, Player, Text* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Jason Rutter and Jo Bryce, eds., *Understanding Digital Games*, (London: Sage, 2006); Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska, *Tomb Raiders and Space Invaders: Videogame Forms and Contexts* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006); Bernard Perron, ed., *Horror Video Games: Essays on the Fusion of Fear and Play* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2009).
[16] Marc Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 13-17.
[17] Mark J.P. Wolf, *Encyclopedia of Videogames: The Culture, Technology and Art of Gaming* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2012), p. 334.
[18] Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine*, p. 249; Wolf, *Encyclopedia of Videogames*, p. 335.

identify. Specifically, in aesthetic terms there is the readily-recognisable *manga/anime* art style (identified occasionally via the term 'Japanimation' in the West) whose abstraction of the human form finds evolved partly in dialogue with the art of the American comic book but whose signifying peculiarities evolved indigenously with distinctly separate representational codes and practices.[19] This aesthetic is echoed in videogame representation, which I shall explore more fully later. In industrial terms it is safe to assert that there is no comparable animation output and market anywhere else in the world. There are certainly animated television programmes for children globally, and family films with wide-ranging appeal, but despite occasional examples with more mature content, the teenager is nowhere near so extensively the subject, nor the intended recipient of such a large body of texts. There are videogame industries worldwide, and a range of American and British videogames have been marketed successfully in Japan, but similarly the overwhelming volume of output marks Japan out from other national production contexts.[20]

Andrew Higson is one of several commentators to address the limited usefulness of the term 'national cinema'.[21] In his argument, he advances the idea that the taxonomic classification of films produced within a particular nation-state as part of an industry based in that nation as 'national cinema' may be helpful for reference but 'erects boundaries between films produced in different nation-states although they may still have much in common' and 'may therefore obscure the degree of cultural diversity, exchange and interpenetration that marks so much cinematic activity'.[22] Similarly, in the rationale for her co-edited collection *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, Natasa Durovicova argues against the study of 'national cinema' with 'the limits of the

---

[19] See Paul Gravett, *Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics* (London: Laurence King, 2004), pp. 10-23.

[20] For an account of Japan's leading status in the global videogame industry, see Mark J.P. Wolf, *Encyclopedia of Videogames: The Culture, Technology and Art of Gaming* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2012), pp. 334-337; For an account of milestones in Japan's videogame industry and its success at home and overseas, see Tristan Donovan, *Replay: The History of Video Games,* (Lewes: Yellow Ant, 2010), pp. 153-177, 265-187; also Steven L. Kent, *The Ultimate History of Video Games,* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2001), pp. 277-312, 331-366, 529-543; On the industrial interactions in videogame production and marketing between Japan and the West see Chris Kohler, *Power Up: How Japanese Games Gave the World an Extra Life,* (Indianapolis, IND: BradyGames, 2004).

[21] See multiple approaches to the problematic taxonomy of 'national cinema' compiled in these collections: *World Cinemas, Transnational* Perspectives, ed. by Natasa Durovicova and Kathleen Newman (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010); *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader,* ed. by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006 [1999]); *Cinema and Nation*, ed. by Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000).

[22] Andrew Higson, 'The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema' in *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader,* ed. by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006 [1999]), pp. 15-25, p. 16.

nation-state as the basic film-historical unit' and asserts that, 'Given the rapid and pervasive changes in moving image economies and technologies, the backdrop against which any represented geopolitical entity now appears is the scale of the whole – "the world"'.[23] Whilst I acknowledge that the meaning generated by a text shifts diachronically across time frames and synchronously across audiences and is dependent on a variety of contextual variables, my study is focused on the relationship between Japan as a specific nation-state's popular media output and its relationship to discourses of childhood, adolescent masculinity and femininity circulated by means of print media and news coverage.

I do not intend to argue for cultural *specificity*, which would be nonsensical in the face of the clearly evident success of exporting both *anime* and videogames overseas, nor do I want to assert that it is crucial for the spectator to be immersed in the discursive surround of Japanese culture in order to enjoy or comprehend these texts. While it is evident that the principal market for *anime* television is domestic (an array of successful series are never released officially overseas, though they may be subtitled or *fansubbed* by enthusiasts and made available via the internet) and overseas marketability is often a secondary concern, I do not intend to make overarching claims in defense of a Japanese 'national television' or 'national videogame' industry. It is clear that *anime* and videogames produced by Japanese staff in a studio in Japan for consumption primarily, but not exclusively, by a Japanese audience watching Japanese TV channels are enthusiastically received when these texts are marketed overseas, and are consumed by a variety of audiences of different backgrounds. Indeed some *anime* and videogame studios develop their products with mass global appeal in mind.[24] To assess Japanese media in conjunction with these transnational audiences is not the purpose of this study, though this approach continues to be fruitful throughout *anime* studies.[25] It may also be productive to view Japanese depictions of the wandering adolescent in relation to Hollywood iterations such as Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), or contemporary to some of the texts considered in this thesis to the representation of teenagers experiencing varying degrees of autonomy and parental

---

[23] Natasa Durovicova, *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, p. 10.

[24] See Ian Condry, *The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan's Media Success Story*, (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 139 for comment on the Gonzo animation studio's global appeal remit.

[25] See e.g. Rayna Denison 'The Global Markets for Anime' in *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts* ed. by Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007) on the strategies employed in the global translation and localisation of the films of Studio Ghibli; Ian Condry *The Soul of Anime,* pp. 161-184 on fansubbing and overseas *anime* fandom.

neglect in American television programmes such as *The OC* (Fox, 2003-2007) or *Gossip Girl* (The CW, 2007-2012).

I want to consider what *anime* and videogames can tell us about attitudes to adolescence in Japan, and in turn what national discourses on adolescence can tell us about the construction of *anime* and videogames. I wish to avoid being deterministic in my textual analyses, and so refrain from seeing these cultural texts as specific products of a narrowly-defined socio-historic instance – there are many factors which make up their 'discursive surround' and could contribute to a 'total history', as Barbara Klinger's discusses, which are outside the intentions of the thesis to address. [26]

Addressing the conceptual move away from 'national' cinema, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano expresses her skepticism that transnationalism provides more suitable and productive alternative frameworks for film analysis. She argues that 'regional production practice can be analyzed in contexts of both the transnational and the national, and neither of them is exclusive.'[27] Her opinion on the global marketing of the *Pokemon* franchise is that 'local strategy, whether within national or regional spheres, comes first, and the global phenomenon or fad follows', and out of this contends that 'without analyzing the local phenomenon first, it does not make sense to simply analyze the global or transnational result'.[28]

Japanese cinema and television developed somewhat separately to Hollywood and Europe, and many of the narrative codes that govern it are uniquely identifiable; Gregory Barrett's wide-ranging survey of *Archetypes in Japanese Cinema* pointedly establishes the derivation of central figures in Japanese cinema from folk tales and unique historical settings when Japan was resolutely isolationist and governed by internal mechanisms rather than by a flow of international trade and exchange.[29] That is clearly not to say that it is impenetrable to Western audiences, as the continually expanding market for Japanese texts in the West attests, but there is perhaps less pronounced a drive towards, for instance, pastiche and homage such as the play on Hollywood genres found in Truffaut and the French New Wave directors, or the melodrama of Sirk in the films of Rainer Fassbinder. A set of unique cultural artefacts

---

[26] Barbara Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable', in *Screen*, 38:2, 107-128 (p. 109).
[27] Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, *Japanese Cinema in the Digital Age* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), p. 109.
[28] Wada-Marciano, *Japanese Cinema in the Digital Age*, p. 109.
[29] Gregory Barrett, *Archetypes in Japanese Cinema: The Sociopolitical and Religious Significance of the Principal Heroes and Heroines* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989).

and circumstances informs and determines the construction of texts that are the subject of this thesis.

The peculiarities of the visual style of *anime* and its recognisable characteristics announce it as a phenomenon unique on the world stage, influenced by Western animation (particularly Disney) but intrinsically emergent from the Japanese cultural environment. The antagonists of the Japanese horror film, as Colette Balmain has demonstrated, are specifically redolent of figures from indigenous folk tales and myths.[30] The Japanese conception of the monstrous arises partly from the tradition of folktales that feature *yōkai* (otherworldly demons, spirits).[31] We might identify a commonality of interests in terms of imagery and *mise-en-scene*, as well as the stylistic and technical means by which tension and suspense are created, but these foundational principles set Japanese horror film apart from other national cinemas. The same principle of culturally unique signifying practices is true of Japanese *anime* and videogame texts, and at various junctures during the thesis I will introduce a range of cultural, aesthetic, intellectual and stylistic contextual factors in order to explore more fully their breadth of meanings.

Discourse around the cultural type of the *otaku* has provided scholars and journalists with a seductively generalised means of identifying and referring to practices supposedly unique to Japanese fandom. Introduced within fan circles as a means of identifying an aficionado with an impressive knowledge of *manga* and *anime*, the term later came in the media at large to indicate a fan, also likely to be a shut-in (a '*hikikomori*'), with an antisocial overreliance on the consumption of visual media and the retention of associated factual data.[32] The term became inextricable in popular media discourse from the spate of brutal murders in 1989 perpetrated by Miyazaki Tsutomu, an *otaku* anime enthusiast with an extensive collection of media and merchandise, leading to print and television media-fuelled panics around the consumption of *anime*, videogames and *manga*.[33]

Wada-Marciano rightly brings up the pitfalls in *anime* studies when using the term *otaku* to refer to a body of enthused Japanese spectators in the absence of a

---

[30] Colette Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 47.
[31] For an introduction to *yōkai, see* Michael Dylan Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai* (Berkeley, California, London: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 3-5.
[32] Kinsella, Sharon, *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), pp. 126-133.
[33] Kinsella, Sharon, *Adult Manga,* pp. 126-127.

substantive reception study, where the word has been employed wholesale to '[unite] anime as a monolithic group of texts consumed by this pseudo-national identity' which leads to the suppressing of variations in audience habits.[34] While it would be a reductive mistake to limit an assessment of *anime*'s engagement with audiences to the positioning of a hypothetical *otaku* as a quantifiably dominant consumer, it is worth considering *anime* and videogame texts' relationship to discourses about the *otaku* circulating in the popular media, and to critical investigations and speculations into 'their' habits and predilections (whoever 'they' may be).

It is clearly demonstrable that both *anime* and videogames are part of a wider phenomenon of marketing and profit (as I will go on to explore in Chapters One and Two), and that the wider commercial reaches of a franchise shape the ways in which an *anime* and videogame text is received and understood. The term '*media mix*' is essential here, and throughout the thesis, used to refer to the range of cross-platform texts produced and circulated under the umbrella of a particular brand or intellectual property. Marc Steinberg defines *media mix* as 'the cross-media serialization and circulation of entertainment franchises', arising with the growth of *anime* television in the 1960s as 'a system of interconnected media and commodity forms'.[35] It is certainly the case that both cultural forms are part of a wider system of production and consumption, and it would be interesting to follow through the alterations made to the texts by the processes of cultural adaptation. Rather than undertake this, however, I want to concentrate on the complex processes within the texts themselves. In order to establish the cultural significance of the texts, we need to move beyond straightforward plot paraphrasing, and instead concentrate on their visual style and methods of cultural quotation. What I mean by this is the general 'look' of the texts - their use of proportion and decor, the stylisation of colour and costume. In looking at the ways in which these texts deploy cultural quotation, we can consider whether they recycle and re-use established images in order to produce something new. Where it is particularly fruitful to analysis and can give insight into domestic marketing strategies or the discourses surrounding the reception and consumption of a text, I will refer to simultaneously coexistent or diachronic forms present in the *media mix* of a particular intellectual property.[36]

It needs to be stressed at this point that it is not my intention to undertake a reception study of *anime* and videogames. Such a task would not be feasible, given the

---

[34] Wada-Marciano, *Japanese Cinema in the Digital Age,* p. 246.
[35] Marc Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix*, p. viii.
[36] Marc Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix*, pp. viii-ix.

breadth of my study. We are able, of course, to make some fairly straightforward assertions about popularity and worldwide distribution of these texts. But what I want to ask also is whether there is a consistent audience position inscribed into them. What demands do they make of the audience? What do they expect them to know? And (more importantly), what do the texts imply about the kinds of textual pleasure that the audience can expect? It is all to do with the audience competence inscribed into the texts. Since on the whole these are popular rather than avant-garde productions, they will have a large measure of the familiar written into them. To establish this issue of audience contextual familiarity with the breadth of representations found in *anime*, in Chapter Two I explore a range of the contextual parameters within which *anime* television operates, highlighting the industrial factors governing *anime* production and a variety of the common tropes and articulations found in the medium. Similarly in Chapter Six on videogames I consider the issue of genre and style, and the expectations knowledgeable players will bring to their experience of each individual game.

Representations of Adolescence in Japan and Hollywood

As Catherine Driscoll in her book on *Teen Film* attests, 'The conditions for film as youth culture were established wherever industrial modernity met new theories of adolescence and this was the case in Japan as elsewhere.'[37] It is not my intention to account for the full range of exchanges between representations of the adolescent in Japan and other transnational cinema cultures, but it must be noted that an interest in the teenager as both empowered and a symbol of existential confusion and cultural disenfranchisement is not exclusive to Japan. I will provide an overview of some of the approaches to the teenager within other national contexts, and a few instances of synchronicity and interaction between Western and Japanese visual culture that might be pursued in future studies.

The milestone films for the Hollywood teenage archetypes are frequently argued to be *The Wild One* (László Benedek, 1953), with Marlon Brando as the motorcycle-riding rebel, and *Rebel Without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955), in which James Dean defined the vulnerable, existentially-frustrated and angst-ridden American post-war teenager – a type which proved more resilient as the teen film developed. Roz Kaveney notes in her book *Teen Dreams* that *Rebel* conceived of teenagers as 'a social problem to be understood and solved, rather than the teen years as a transitory phenomenon to be

---

[37] Catherine Driscoll, *Teen Film: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Berg, 2011), p. 161.

enjoyed and celebrated'.[38] Comparatively and in dialogue with these representations, Japan in the 1950s saw the rise of the *seishun eiga* ('youth film') and the 'Sun Tribe' film (*taiyozoku eiga*) named after and following the popularity of Furukawa Takumi's film adaptation of the novel *Season of the Sun* (*Taiyo no Kisetsu,* 1956) which depicted an affluent, pleasure-seeking post-war Japanese youth indulging in sensory consumerist pleasures, clad in skimpy swimming costumes in a coastal town at the height of summer.[39]

Japan's own 'New Wave' movement of directors including Oshima Nagisa and Masumura Yasuzo made films with a specific interest in adolescent experience. In Masumura's *Kisses* (*Kuchizuke,* 1957), two young lovers who are restricted by social conventions (yet not particularly rebellious or antiestablishment in their actions) are shown in a famously lengthy moving take riding a motorcycle together around the town at night. Like Brando in *The Wild One*, the bike acts as a symbol of exuberant liberation and temporary release from social strictures, but unlike Brando the teens are directionless and unfocused, unsure how to free themselves from restrictive conventions and are separated at the film's gloomy conclusion. In Oshima's *Cruel Story of Youth* (*Seishun Zankoku Monogatari,* 1960) another doomed teenage couple lure older men into sexually compromising situations in order to extort money from them. In this similarly tragic film, the teen is a victim of society's exploitative cruelty, but their actions mimic and reproduce this cruelty rather than resisting or transcending it.[40]

Timothy Shary has written comprehensively on the representation of adolescence in American cinema during the 1980s and 1990s in *Generation Multiplex,* in which he divides his study into sections dealing with youth in relation to the repeated motifs of school, delinquency, horror and the supernatural, technology and science and sexuality.[41] Each of these prominent thematic tropes, he argues, provides the adolescent with a backdrop against which to pursue self-definition and identity formation. He concludes that youth films in the late 20th century, contrary to representations of antisocial or problematic adolescents of the 1950s, 'depicted teenagers as an

---

[38] Roz Kaveney, *Teen Dreams: Reading the Teen Film from Heathers to Veronica Mars* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2006), p. 4.

[39] For discussion of the 'Sun Tribe' films and their domestic impact, see Isolde Standish, *A New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York; London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 222-229.

[40] See Isolde Standish, *New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York; London: Continuum, 2005) pp. 233-237; Yoshimoto Mitsuhiro, 'Questions of the New' in *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts,* ed. by Alistair Phillips and Julian Stringer (Abindgon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 168-179.

[41] Timothy Shary, *Generation Multiplex* (Texas: University of Texas, 2002).

increasingly self-aware and insightful group, who are still learning much about life and about who they are, and who are usually doing so with energy and intelligence'.[42] While films of the 1950s and beyond presented a visible split between good and bad teens, Shary argues that at the millennium, teen films 'problematised the image of youth having inherent values' and gave their subjects a greater degree of agency and responsibility over their maturation and the acquisition of knowledge and social values.

The keystone for the representation of adolescence in Hollywood in the 1980s are the films of director John Hughes (*Sixteen Candles,* 1984; *The Breakfast Club,* 1985; *Pretty in Pink,* 1986 etc.) which, as Roz Kaveney notes owing to his prolific activity writing and directing six films in three years, 'created or crystallised many stock expectations and character types that we find in the canonical work of the teen genre over the next two decades'. These tropes include an emphasis on the 'outsiders and underdogs', teenagers who do not conform to peer-group social expectations or have limited success romantically, athletically or educationally.[43] Catherine Driscoll notices the interesting parallels between Hughes' *The Breakfast Club* and the contemporaneous Japanese film *Taifu Kurabu* (*Typhoon Club,* 1985), both of which feature teens locked in a school building, but the latter is 'more overtly sexual, less dominated by dialogue and more by mood and the fact that nature rather than school discipline traps the students'.[44] She cites synchronicity in technology and viewpoint rather than deliberate cultural exchange when accounting for the overlap.

Gavin Smith noted in 1987 the emergence of a gloomier representation of teenage life, with films characterized by 'absurdist nihilism… an inverted glamour adopted by kids as they indulge in the peculiarly narcissistic masochism of adolescent self-martydom.'[45] Films with bleak depictions of male adolescence like *Less Than Zero* (Marek Kanievska, 1987) and *Heathers* (Michael Lehman, 1989) reconfigure the Brando and Dean personae into characters who are alienated by choice and exhibit, according to Jon Lewis' 1992 study *The Road to Romance and Ruin,* acute 'anomie' and instability.[46] This anomie and social detachment is a mode of adolescence found in a number of 1990s *anime.* The biker gang youths of the roughly contemporaneous *anime Akira* (Otomo Katsuhiro, 1988) at least partly fit this description, though one

---

[42] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 261.
[43] Kaveney, *Teen Dreams*, p. 3.
[44] Driscoll, *Teen Film*, pp. 161-162.
[45] Gavin Smith 'Pensées: Pretty Vacant in Pink' in *Film Comment*, Vol. 23, No. 4. (Jul-Aug, 1987), p. 70.
[46] Jon Lewis, *The Road to Romance and Ruin: Teen Films and Youth Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), pp. 33-34.

character, Tetsuo, is subject to excessive, destructive supernatural bodily transformation which figures as an expression of the breakdown of social bonds and disenfranchisement from the community writ large.

Popular representations of supernaturally-empowered male and female adolescents in American visual culture during the 1990s and 2000s were found in the high-profile TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Smallville*, while the *Harry Potter* franchise is the most popular and lucrative iteration in literary and film history, followed swiftly after by the *Twilight* franchise. Driscoll sharply summarises the themes of the *Harry Potter* films: 'focus on the power of institutions, the question of maturity, and the danger of minority'.[47] A further pointed comment on *Potter*'s approach to teenage desire throws the frequently sexually inexperienced teenagers of *anime* into fascinating relief: 'the sexual development of characters in the book series lags considerably behind adolescents of the same age in the real world – at fifteen, Harry is still puzzled by awkward feelings around wanting to ask out a girl'.[48] Many *anime* and videogames depict romantic tensions, misunderstandings and moments of embarrassment around implicit sexual desire among adolescents, but remain firmly unconsummated - as Thomas Lamarre argues when he writes about 'platonic sex' in relation to the *anime Chobits (*Jap.: *Chobittsu*; Production Studio: Madhouse; originally aired on TBS, 2002).[49] In that series, protagonist Hideki owns a devoted female robot designed and programmed for sexual contact, and the two are paired as a romantic couple, yet they are never physical with one another.

While there is a very large industry of pornographic *manga, anime* and *eroge* ('erotic videogames') in which teenage protagonists are explicitly depicted engaging in sexual and romantic activity, it is common for mainstream, televised *shōnen* (boy's) *manga* and *anime* to avoid romantic and sexual consummation between principal characters.[50] In the 'magical girlfriend' genre, exemplified by the *manga* and *anime Ah!*

---

[47] Driscoll, *Teen Film*, p. 146.

[48] Driscoll, *Teen Film*, p. 146.

[49] Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine,* pp. 221-241. Throughout the thesis, upon the first mention of an *anime* series, production information will follow in brackets, including the original Japanese title (if it differs from that commonly used to refer to the series in the West), the animation studio that produced the series, the TV channel on which the series originally aired (or in some cases if it was originally released to purchase on video or DVD as an 'OVA' or Original Video Animation), and the original broadcast date.

[50] On *anime* pornography see Jonathan Clements, *Schoolgirl Milky Crisis: Adventures in the Anime and Manga Trade* (London: Titan, 2009), pp. 72-88; Susan Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, pp. 63-85; Joel Powell Dahlquist and Lee Garth Vigilant, 'Way Better than Real: *Manga* Sex to Tentacle *Hentai*' in *Net.seXXX: Readings on Porn and the Internet* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 91-104. On *manga* and pornography see Sharon Kinsella,

My Goddess! (A! Megami-sama!, AIC, original OVA released: 1993-1994; *Manga* serialised: *Afternoon*, 1988-ongoing), a male teen protagonist will be exclusively paired with a beautiful supernaturally-empowered girl, but again no physical contact beyond chaste embracing is ever seen or implied. Sex is a complete mystery and a cause of extraordinary anxiety to protagonist Shinji in *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (*Shin Seiki Evangerion*, Gainax: TV Tokyo, 1995-1996). It must be stated that this occurs in tandem with the overtly titillating sexualised representation of female *anime* characters in television shows themselves, but particularly in the *media mix* product lines including scantily clad figurines and in various states of undress on the covers of *otaku*-oriented magazines such as *Megami*.[51] Discussions of romance, courtship and sex does not even come up among the characters of many *anime*, as I will go on to discuss in Chapter Two and further within the analyses in Chapters Three and Four on *anime.*

Antecedents to the Wandering Adolescent: the *Nagaremono* and the *Rōnin*

There are a number of wandering figures in live action Japanese cinema that are antecedents to those adolescents who wander their environments in contemporary *anime* and videogames. Introducing a range of these wanderers and tracing a trajectory through Japanese visual culture in the 20th century will aid here in establishing the parameters of 'wandering' as it has been represented in Japan, and as it pertains to my wider argument in this thesis.

Gregory Barrett's study finds that two manifestations of the wanderer are prominent in Classical Japanese film: the Vagabond and the Exile, each permutation of the wanderer providing a framework within which to consider the relationship between the individual and wider social groups.[52] For Barrett, the cinematic representation of wandering 'symbolizes the human condition as an individual' and these three types present differing viewpoints on the issue.[53] According to Barrett, the lonely, outcast Exile is presented within the context of man as inherently social and defined through social ties, and is therefore a figure of deep suffering, alienated and cut off from others.

Adult Manga, pp. 45-47, 140-145; Anne Allison, *Permitted and Prohibited Desires: Mothers, Comics and Censorship in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 51-78.
[51] See e.g. the female characters of *Evangelion* as presented in skimpy swimwear on the cover of *Megami,* vol. 111, June 2009 (Tokyo: Gakken, 2009).
[52] Barrett, *Archetypes*, p. 77. The Pilgrim is another manifestation that Barrett identifies but is less significant as he is represented infrequently, wandering in order to seek penance for past sins in preparation for the afterlife.
[53] Barrett, *Archetypes*, p. 77.

The Vagabond, conversely, depicts man as naturally free and self-governing, with ties to others hindering his autonomy.[54] In the representation of the adolescent *anime* and videogames I analyse in this thesis, I am interested in the depiction of the individual in relation to social groups, and how and why the figure of the teenager is variously positioned as a liminal figure with varying degrees of attachment to cultural institutions. To what extent is liberation from these groups desirable, and to what extent does it provoke anxiety?

An early depiction in cinema of the wanderer is found in the *matatabimono* (wandering *yakuza* gangster) subgenre of *jidaigeki* (historical film) of the late 1920s and early 1930s, including *The Serpent* (*Orochi*, Futagawa Buntarō,1925).[55] The wanderers of *matatabimono* are gallant outsiders, typically gamblers and outlaws who are loyal, according to Alan Tansman, 'not to a lord, an emperor or a state, but to the weak.'[56] These figures existed outside of Japanese society and were self-governed according to personal moral principles and codes of conduct, responding to 'situations of distress and to the discovery of their own selves in those situations.'[57]

Studies of classical Japanese cinema have addressed the ways in which the wanderer archetype plays a significant role in many *jidaigeki* in the form of the figure of the *rōnin* (lit. 'wave man' or masterless *samurai*) in films set during the *Edo/Tokugawa* period 1603-1868.[58] After the reunification of Japan under the Tokugawa clan, many of the *samurai* warrior class of military retainers found themselves unattached to a clan and without employment after the defeat of their *daimyō* (feudal territorial lord). In Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (1961), for example, the *rōnin* is positioned as an individual with unwavering principles of honour and loyalty to the code of *bushidō* ('way of the warrior') despite answering to no distinct individual authority. Again, the figure of the wanderer, or outsider, forms the basis for a consideration of the relationship between the individual and society.

In Kobayashi's *Seppuku* (1962), the *rōnin* Tsugumo is pitted as a lone voice of resistance to the corrupt and hypocritical Iyi clan who make an outward show of adherence to the *bushidō* code but whose principles are in fact corrupt and their actions

---

[54] Barrett, *Archetypes,* p. 77.
[55] See Standish in Martinez, p. 72.; Richie, *100 Years of Japanese Film*, pp. 68-69.
[56] Alan Tansman 'Where's Mama? The Sobbing *Yakuza* of Hasegawa Shin' in Dennis Washburn and Carole Cavanaugh (eds.), *Word and Image in Japanese Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 149-173 (p. 150).
[57] Alan Tansman 'Where's Mama?' in Washburn and Cavanaugh (eds.), *Word and Image in Japanese Cinema*, pp. 149-173. (p. 150).
[58] Standish, *New History*, pp. 85-107; Richie, *100 Years of Japanese Film*, pp. 64-66.

self-serving and brutal.[59] Tsugumo is seen in flashback in a new enterprise diligently constructing parasols – a significant debasement of his former social position as working with bamboo was seen to be a peasant activity and beneath the standing of the *samurai*. The outsider *rōnin* is here a symbol of adaptability to significant social change and embodies the need to respond with dignity to the speed of cultural development in Japan. While the film ends with Tsugumo's death at the hands of a mass of clan warriors, his assault on the clan's ornamental suit of armour that symbolises their security and heritage indicates the democratic potential for the individual to rise up against corrupt systems and expose authoritarian hypocrisy.

The term *rōnin* has come into use in contemporary Japan to refer to a young man who has progressed from middle school to high school but has not yet passed entrance exams in order to attend university. The young *rōnin* must otherwise occupy himself while waiting for another chance a year later to resit the exams. The *anime* series *Chobits* and *Love Hina* (*Rabu Hina,* Xebec, TV Tokyo, 2000) represent the adolescent as an outsider in these terms, and the protagonist of these two series is frequently referred to as a *rōnin* by other characters - a source of shame and embarrassment from which comedy is derived.

Descended from the *matatabimono* are the wandering male outsider protagonists of the contemporary *yakuza* gangster-focused *nagaremono* ('drifter') films of the 1950s and 1960s exemplified by the long-running *Abashiri Prison* (*Abashiri Bangaichi*) films.[60] In the *Abashiri* series, protagonist Tachibana Shinichi is forced to escape the titular prison and negotiate the bleak landscape of Hokkaido. Despite his wandering for each film's duration, he inevitably winds up back in his cell at the climax, characterizing the wanderer in terms of a temporary freedom of movement followed by an inevitable return to a familiar local environment.[61] The *nagaremono* genre is pastiched by the lurid *Tokyo Drifter* (*Tokyo no Nagaremono,* Suzuki Seijun, 1966).[62] In *Tokyo Drifter*, protagonist Tetsuya is a *Yakuza* gang member in Tokyo forced to become a drifter, travelling the country pursued by a hitman in the employ of a gang boss who has turned on him. The film's climax sees Tetsuya returning to Tokyo to confront the leader. After killing him, Tetsuya leaves to begin wandering once again.

Helping to parse the connection between these cinematic depictions of the

---

[59] See Standish, *New History*, pp. 287-293.
[60] Standish, *Myth and Masculinity*, pp. 158-159.
[61] Standish, *Myth and Masculinity*, p. 158.
[62] See Standish, *New History*, p. 33; p. See Standish in Martinez, *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture,* p. 62.

wanderer and the representations of the adolescent in *anime,* Isolde Standish, who has written extensively on representations of masculinity in Japanese cinema, argues convincingly that 1988 *anime* film *Akira*'s teenage biker youths are direct descendants of the *nagaremono* drifter/wanderer, who 'always exists on the margins of society'.[63] While the teenagers of *Akira* do not venture beyond the immediate urban sprawl of Neo Tokyo, they exist like the *nagaremono* at the film's outset as free-spirited negotiators of the city's streets, unfettered by societal expectations and codes. Standish finds that the 'tragic hero' of the *nagaremono* is positioned within 'a fundamental structuring opposition, manifested between the *yakuza* moral code of *jingi* ['humanity and justice'] … and the restraints to spontaneous male freedom imposed by culture and the law'.[64] 'Law' here refers both to 'coercive juridical institutions' and 'social institutions, such as the family'.[65] *Akira*'s protagonist Kaneda 'displays all the positive attributes of the outsider… physically strong, but, above all else, he remains loyal to the code of brotherhood, regardless of personal cost.'[66] Standish states that the *anime* echoes the *nagaremono* genre's interest in 'the clash between male codes of brotherhood and the constraints imposed on male freedom by the law and social institutions'.[67] These observations are particularly valuable when considering the depiction of the outsider protagonist in later *anime*. In this thesis, I am interested in examining the adolescent protagonist of *anime* television and videogames within these terms of self-governed autonomy, and in analysing the extent to which he or she is limited by or free from social restrictions and authority figures or institutions.

Standish goes on to connects the popularity of both *Akira* and the *nagaremono* film during the 1950s and 1960s to the discursive frame of strict Japanese work codes of conduct and the life of the *salaryman* office-worker who was expected to work for a single company for life. She argues that their success can be traced to the 'compensatory function' performed by a '"nostalgic" portrayal of the outsider, free from the social constraints which force individuals to compromise.'[68] In considering the spatial negotiations of the adolescent in *anime* and videogames and the extent to which they are afforded autonomy of action in their surrounding environments, my analyses are particularly interested in their relationship between discourse around the circumstances of the contemporary Japanese adolescent. To what extent do they operate

---

[63] Standish in Martinez, *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture*, p. 63.
[64] Standish, *Myth and Masculinity*, p. 195.
[65] Standish, *Myth and Masculinity*, p. 195.
[66] Standish in Martinez, *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture,* pp. 62-62.
[67] Standish in Martinez, *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture,* p. 63.
[68] Standish in Martinez, *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture,* p. 69.

outside the parameters of social systems and hierarchies such as the family and High School? To what extent might this detachment be considered liberating and 'compensatory', and in what ways is the loss of traditional institutions presented in terms that provoke anxiety?

Considering Urban Space and the Wanderer in Contemporary Japan

I intend to interrogate the strategies involved in the representation of wandering, and the ways in which the adolescent interacts with the spaces within which they are seen to wander. This condition of 'wandering' I identify in *anime* and videogames takes a range of forms and will be defined at the outset of each chapter before being considered in the analysis of case studies. I use to term to describe particularly the varying degrees of autonomy of movement and spatial negotiation afforded to the teenager, usually in conjunction with a relative level of detachment from social institutions (e.g. family or school systems) that allows self-governance and devolves key decision-making responsibilities onto the individual. The shifting state of wandering is couched variously in terms of a pleasurable liberation facilitating maturation, self-reliance and social development, and as an expression of anomie and social alienation brought about within the industrial/technological/psychosocial peculiarities of a specific text.

Literature scholar Margaret Fuller and prominent digital media scholar Henry Jenkins discuss de Certeau's concept of 'spatial stories' as a means of accounting for the focus on the mastery of space in Nintendo videogames.[69] Videogame scholar James Newman summarises the theoretical outcome of their dialogue, which is that the player is 'not engaged in a struggle to rescue the captive princess so much as they are engaged in a battle against the landscape of the gameworld they have to traverse.'[70] I want to ask in what ways *anime* and videogames might be understood in these terms as 'spatial

---

[69] Margaret Fuller and Henry Jenkins, 'Nintendo and New World Travel Writing: A Dialogue', in S.G. Jones (ed.) *Cybersociety: Computer-Mediated Communication and Community* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), pp. 57-72.
[70] James Newman, *Videogames* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p. 113.

stories', in which progress is seen to be made via the mapping out of space and the adolescent interaction with the environment, allowing for the exploration of themes of entrapment and the possibility for individual agency within a variety of topographies.

I want to question the extent to which themes relating to impermanence, transition and the shifting nature of space are integral to representations of adolescence. Environmental volatility is etched into Japanese cultural history, and goes some way to accounting for the emphasis on spatial integrity and mutability found in *anime* and videogames. Tokyo, and Japan at large, has experienced radical geographical changes and population-altering disasters throughout its history, including the Great Fire of Meireki in 1657 (100,000 killed; 60% of the city destroyed); the 1872 fire that destroyed the Ginza and Tsukiji districts; The Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 (140,000 killed; 50% buildings destroyed by fire); the WWII destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and allied fire bombings (1.8 million dead; 680,000 missing/wounded); the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995 (5,500 killed; 26,000 injured); the Great Eastern Earthquake in March 2011 (15,885 killed; 6,148 injured). In addition, most buildings in Japan are torn down and rebuilt around every 30 years.[71]

The commercial and social centre of Japan and in recent times the area that is the perceived cultural hub of Tokyo itself, has shifted location many times over the last millennium.[72] Japan's capital from the late 12th century until the 14th was the city of Kamakura on Tokyo's border, before shifting to Kyoto until the 17th when the capital became Tokyo (at the time Edo). While the seat of parliamentary power, the National Diet Building, has remained fixed during the 20th century, Tokyo's perceived cultural centre has shifted according to sociocultural, economic and industrial determining factors, moving from Asakusa in the late 19th century to Ginza in the early 20th century with the advent of electricity and cinema, to business district Shinjuku in the post-WWII period, to commercial and youth trend-centric Shibuya in the 1970s and 1980s, then to the technology, *anime* and *manga*-oriented Akihabara in the 1990s and beyond.[73]

Within this context of the mutable nature and perception of space in Japan, and the individual's relationship to their environment, Walter Benjamin's *flâneur* provides a

---

[71] Information available in *Tokyo: City and Architecture* by Livio Sacchi (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004) has been compiled by Colette Balmain, 'Inside the Well of Loneliness' in *EJCJS* (*Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies*) (2005) <www.japanesestudies.org.uk/discussionpapers/2006/Balmain.html> [accessed 8.7.2013].
[72] Tatsumi Takayuki, 'The Advent of Meguro Empress: Decoding the Avant-Pop Anime *TAMALA 2010'*, in *Cinema Anime*, ed. by Stephen T. Brown (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 65-77, (p. 67).
[73] Tatsumi, 'Meguro Empress', in *Cinema Anime*, ed. by Brown, p.68.

useful framework for considering the excursions of the adolescent wanderer in *anime* and videogames. As described in *The Arcades Project (Das Passagen-Werk)*, the *flâneur* is a wandering walker of the modern city who contemplates its construction without destination in mind.[74] Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson describes the conception of the *flâneur* as 'an emblematic representative of modernity and personification of contemporary urbanity'.[75] Evelyn Schulz, in her work on the urban spectator in writing about Tokyo, explains that Benjamin has been translated in Japan, with the Japanese translation of *flâneur* appearing as *toshi yuhosha* ('somebody who walks for pleasure in the city') and confirms that the 'urban stroller has become a steady element of urban writing in Japan'.[76] In recent scholarship, the *flâneur* provides a means of 'analysing both the perception as well as the appropriation of urban space from the point of view of the individual'.[77]

The wide, open and easily accessed main roads of urban Japan, *omotedori*, are contrasted with the traditional winding, narrow residential and commercial alleyways, *roji,* that are accessible only on foot or by bicycle. Essential to the growth of Tokyo from the Edo period onwards, the *roji* defined the dense development of the city and has a close relationship with the *flâneur* in Japan.[78] While the *roji* are disappearing from Japan's urban centres, initiatives have emerged with the agenda of preserving and revitalizing them as sites of historic importance. According to Schulz, the 'democratic' *roji* offer 'alternative spaces to the globalized zones of Japan's big cities' in which the individual can investigate and experience the space freely and without being steered towards a particular 'reading' of the environment.[79]

On the pedestrian experience of urban Japan, Stephanie DeBoer asserts the longstanding association between the strolling, directionless *flâneur* and the commercial districts of Tokyo (e.g. Ginza in the 1930s; Shibuya in the 1970s) and how this connects to the depiction in live-action TV drama of 'chance encounters before a busy train

---

[74] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project (Das Passagen-Werk),* trans. by Rolf Tiedemann, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999) pp. 416-455.

[75] Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, 'The *Flâneur* On and Off the Streets of Paris', in *The Flâneur*, ed by Keith Tester (Abingdon, Routledge, 1994), pp. 22-42 (p.22).

[76] Evelyn Schulz, 'Walking the City: Spatial and Temporal Configurations of the Urban Spectator in Writings on Tokyo', in *Urban Spaces in Japan: Cultural and Social Perspectives,* ed. by Christoph Brumann and Evelyn Schultz (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012) pp. 184-202, (p. 185).

[77] Schulz, 'Walking the City', in *Urban Spaces*, ed. by Brumann and Schultz, p. 185.

[78] Schulz, 'Walking the City', in *Urban Spaces*, ed. by Brumann and Schultz, pp. 196-197.

[79] Schulz, 'Walking the City', in *Urban Spaces*, ed. by Brumann and Schultz, p. 196.

station, office building episodes set against windowed views of a wide cityscape, and strolls over nighttime street overpasses'.[80]

De Certeau's concept of 'spatial tactics' also provides us with a useful means of addressing the spatial interactions of the wandering adolescent protagonist. He observed opposition between 'strategies' and 'tactics' in the city, where the former describes the functionalist organisation of the urban environment by architects and government officials working with a rationalist, institutional and political agenda, while the latter to the means through which any passerby might perform unpredictable and individualistic acts which appropriate the space to create a spontaneous new level of meaning.[81] These appropriations are achieved through walking and need not be antisocial, illegal and antiestablishment, but are informed by the pedestrian's own whims and agency, where 'walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects'.[82] Richard Koeck demonstrates the usefulness of this in relation to film, describing the importance in cinematic representations of 'protagonists' decision-making in response to space and the situation in which they are presented.'[83] His connection between the viewpoint of de Certeau's tactical walker, who is at street level and casting his eyes around in search of provocative opportunities for investigation and action, and the use of POV in cinematic perspective is a useful one to the consideration of perspective and the negotiation of space in visual media.

Overlapping with de Certeau, the wandering *flâneur* takes on a specifically antiestablishment significance in Guy Debord's Psychogeographical concept of *dérive* (drifting) in which the aimless pedestrian who frees himself of work- and leisure-related motivations can allow a city to subtly and unconsciously guide him on a unique path determined by the individual's own psyche[84]. With Psychogeography, Debord aimed to explore means of exposing the ways in which the construction of the urban environment manipulates the subject into a set of routine performances, and how the playful acting agent might resist these predetermined pathways and experience enlightening and pleasurable experiences.

---

[80] Stephanie DeBoer, 'Scaling the TV Station: Fuji Television, Digital Development, and Fictions of a Global Tokyo' in *Television, Japan and Globalisation* ed. by Yoshimoto, Tsai and Choi (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2010), pp. 73-92, (p. 86).
[81] Michel De Certeau, 'Walking in the City' in *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. by Steven Rendall (California; London: University of California Press, 1988) pp. 91-110 (p. 94)
[82] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* p. 99.
[83] Richard Koeck, *Cine-Scapes: Cinematic Spaces in Architecture and Cities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 94-95.
[84] Guy Debord, 'Theory of the *Dérive*' in Les Levres Nues, No. 9 (November, 1956), available at: < http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html> [Accessed 15.8.2013].

Anna Gwendoline Jackson contrasts the iconography of New York's Manhattan skyline (as discussed by de Certeau in terms of 'seeing the whole' of the city from the observation platform of the World Trade Center) with the representation in the popular imaginary of Tokyo as from ground-level, looking up at the mosaics of neon hoardings that hang suspended above the teeming mass of pedestrians. The most familiar imagery of Tokyo and, by extension, urban Japan is 'at street level of the great intersections crowded with people where the buildings appear to have no windows, only giant plasma screen frontages.'[85]

Stephanie DeBoer comments on the use of Tokyo as a setting for *flâneur*-esque walking, alone and in conversation, in popular live-action TV 'trendy drama' (*torendii dorama*), noting that while 1970s youth dramas 'certainly imagined the metropolis as a place of potential monetary gain against the hometowns from which its protagonists had often recently moved', in the 1990s the urban space becomes a space for the existential pursuit of love and communication.[86] In the conventions of later *dorama*, the realisation of individual potential in the metropolis will be inextricably linked to heteronormative romantic coupling.[87]

In TV *dorama,* the landmark buildings and locales of Tokyo become inscribed with the potential for sexual desire and interpersonal connection owing to their appropriation as sites for heterosexual romantic development. Gabrielle Lukàcs writes that in Taiwanese package tour guides of Tokyo, Tokyo Tower is introduced as a romantic location that was the site of a significant first kiss between characters in the *dorama Tokyo Love Story* (Fuji TV, 1991). The tower became a fashionable dating spot owing to its use in further *dorama*, owing to the proximity of Fuji TV's headquarters at the time, before the station moved to Odaiba in Tokyo Bay, which in turn featured heavily in TV series and became a romantic hotspot through association.[88] This type of strategy constitutes Tokyo's landmarks as sites of interrelated desire, emotional frisson and commerce, where each apparently grants access to the other.

---

[85] Anna Gwendoline Jackson, 'Outside in Tokyo: the *gaijin* gaze in Chris Marker's *San Soleil* and Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*' in *Cities and Eyes: Bronnenboek* ed. by Nienke Schachtschabel (Amsterbam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), pp. 154-164 (p. 158).
[86] Stephanie DeBoer, 'Scaling the TV Station', in *Television, Japan and Globalisation*, ed. by Yoshimoto, Tsai and Choi, p. 85.
[87] DeBoer, 'Scaling the TV Station', in *Television, Japan and Globalisation*, ed. by Yoshimoto, Tsai and Choi, p. 85.
[88] Gabriella Lukàcs, *Scripted Affects, Branded Selves: Television, Subjectivity and Capitalism in 1990s Japan* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 125.

Thesis Structure and Rationale

My study of the representation of the wandering adolescent in contemporary Japanese television *anime* and videogames aims to discriminate between the different media, and to describe the way in which they severally deal with the issue of adolescence. The study's principal aim is to assess the extent to which the figure of the wandering adolescent shifts across the media of *anime* and videogames in contemporary Japan, and to investigate the relationship these characters share with contemporary Japanese culture.

Videogames and television, as well as film, are 'cultural artefacts with their own formal properties and aesthetics, including visual style and aural qualities'.[89] With this in mind, the thesis will be divided into two sections that deal individually with the separate media, subdivided into discrete chapters that seek to investigate the central research question through focused secondary questions that will enable texts to be analysed at particular contextual conjunctions. As I will be carrying out analysis of discourse that takes into consideration constructional principles unique to each form, I will at each section's outset present an introductory chapter that will map the field generally, introduce pertinent scholarship and assert trends and commonalities as well as noting some significant deviations and shifts within the specific medium. I will then go on in the following chapters to perform close analysis of a smaller number of texts as case studies. The thesis is divided into nine chapters plus this Introduction and a Conclusion.

Chapter One will explore the cultural situation of adolescence in contemporary Japan through a survey of contemporary Japanese media reportage and sociological, anthropological and cultural studies literature that contributes to the key debates around the life of the teenager in the period. This chapter will provide explanation and rationale for the core specific contextual conjunctions that will form the discursive surround for my analysis of *anime* and videogame texts in the thesis. I intend the thesis to be wide-ranging in its treatment of multiple problematic arenas debated in relation to the adolescent and as such a careful, discrete outlining of the discursive parameters is required to ensure clarity and that analysis is staged in relation to precise contexts.

Chapter Two is the first chapter in the section on *anime* and will introduce scholarship in the field, define the medium as it will be discussed in the thesis, discuss

---

[89] Chapman, Glancy, Harper, *The New Film History,* p. 8.

pertinent circumstances of production and distribution and take into account a variety of genres that represent the wandering adolescent and assess representational trends, in relation to which case studies in the following chapters will be situated.

Chapter Three will investigate the relationship between representations of the wandering adolescent boy (*shōnen*) in *anime* and contemporary Japanese debates about problematic youth culture 'panics' created and circulated by the Japanese media. Taking a diachronic approach to the analysis of case studies, I will consider the shifting representation of the wandering male adolescent in case studies covering the period between 1995 and the present. The specificities of these panics will be introduced in Chapter One, but of principle import to the first section of the chapter are the phenomena of the *otaku* and the *hikikomori* shut-in, and in the second section the perceived crisis of the Japanese high school and the murders committed by a number of teenage boys including the high profile *Shōnen A* in 1997. In the chapter's first section I will begin with analysis of the pivotal *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1996), I will then investigate the more recent *Welcome to the NHK* (*N.H.K ni Yōkoso!,* Gonzo: AT-X, 2006)). In the second section of the chapter I will examine *Death Note* (*Desu Nōto,* Madhouse: NTV, 2006-2007) and *Natsume's Book of Friends* (*Natsume Yūjin-chō,* Brain's Base: TV Tokyo, 2008-2012).

Chapter Four addresses the fact that there are clear demarcations visible between media discourses surrounding male and female teenagers in the period. In this chapter, wandering female protagonists in contemporary *anime* will be examined in relation to discourses of youth panics regarding the teenage girl (*shōjo*) in contemporary Japan. Of prime significance here is the panic around *enjo kōsai* ('compensated dating' or teenage prostitution) and the rebellious fashionable teenage subsection the *kogyaru*. Again, with a diachronic approach in mind I will investigate shifting representations of the wandering female teenager as they developed qualitatively over time in relation to media circulated discourses, through analysis of case studies from the late 1990s to the present day. In the first section of this chapter I will examine the representation of the teenage girl in urban fantasy dramas *Serial Experiments Lain* (*Shiriaru Ekusuperimentsu Lein*, Triangle Staff: TV Tokyo, 1998), *Witchhunter Robin* (*Wicchi Hantā Robin*, Sunrise: Animax & TV Tokyo, 2002) and *Boogiepop Phantom* (Warawanai Boogiepop Phantom, Madhouse: TV Tokyo, 2000). In the second section I will analyse the depiction of the high school girl in the slice-of-life genre exemplified by the influential *Azumanga Daioh!* (J.C.Staff: TV Tokyo, 2002), and the recent *K-On!* (*Keion!,* Kyoto Animation: TBS, 2009-2010).

Chapter Five will examine the representation of the wandering adolescent of *anime* in relation to debates about the lack of space and perceived changes to the family in contemporary Japan. The chapter will investigate the conjunction between the wandering adolescent, issues of environmental flux and impermanence, and debates around children's abandonment and the perceived breakdown of the Japanese *ie* familial system. The relationship between these contextual conjunctions will be explained in Chapter One. I will first return to analysis of *Evangelion* within this alternate discursive framework, moving on to discussion of the series *Initial D* (Inisharu Dī, Pastel & Studio Gallop; Animax & Fuji TV, 1998) and *Last Exile* (*Rasuto Eguzairu*, Gonzo: TV Tokyo, 2003).

Chapter Six is the first chapter in the section on Japanese videogames and will introduce scholarship in the field of game studies and the parameters within which the videogame can be approached as an object of study. The videogame industry in Japan and the most popular Japanese videogame genres will be briefly introduced in order to provide appropriate context and establish rationale for the selection of individual case studies in the following chapters.

In Chapter Seven, I will interrogate the ways in which the wandering adolescent avatars of videogames relate to concerns about the growing commodification of childhood in contemporary Japan. Sociological and anthropological investigations have debated the serious impact on the adolescent of the consumerism and materialism that developed in the postwar period and reached excessive levels during the 1980s bubble economy boom years. In this chapter I will discuss the action-adventure game genre exemplified by a case study of *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* (Nintendo, 2002), and the 'open-world' games series *Animal Crossing* (Nintendo, 2001) and *Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town* (Marvellous Interactive, 2003).

Chapter Eight will investigate the wandering adolescent of Japanese videogames' relationship to the figure of the contemporary Japanese *otaku*, with a particular focus on the representation of female adolescents and the ideal of *moe* ('budding') as it is expressed in videogame texts. I will first discuss the crucial *anime* figure Ayanami Rei of *Evangelion* as a progenitor of the *moe* female teenager. I will then analyse the representation of the male-female adolescent relationship depicted in the games *Ico* (Sony Computer Entertainment, 2001) and *Lost in Blue* (Konami, 2005).

Chapter Nine, the last chapter in the section, will focus specifically on analysis of a single videogame franchise, the *Final Fantasy* series of Role Playing Games, and examines the representation of the wandering adolescent's representation as trapped and

liberated in the series, developing enquiries made through the section thus far using the pivotal *Final Fantasy VII* (Square, 1997) as a case study. Here I am interested in the significance of animated video cutscenes to the interactive dynamic of play.

I now need to deal with the reasons behind my selection of texts for close study. Potentially this is a minefield, as my criteria for selection need to be principled despite the extensive body of work available. With regards to *anime* selection, I will argue in Chapter Two that, in the vast field of *anime* production, there are a variety of discernible fault-lines and patterns in the representation of adolescents. For culturally specific reasons, the categories of adolescent behaviour appear in qualitatively distinct ways in Japanese *anime* and videogames. I want to choose my case studies, therefore, for two reasons. Firstly, I will select some which are typical and which are important and clear examples of extant paradigms. Secondly, I will select some which are innovatory and push against the limitations of adolescent representation. Thus I hope to show the complexities of the full range, and offer an interpretation of some of the crucial breaks and changes within it. I intend to be detailed in my rationale for the selection of each text, placing each within a context of prominent representational trends.

The issue of time-scale for this study is a vexed one. It can be straightforwardly argued that 1995 is a justifiable starting point for the study, since it is widely recognized as a key year in Japanese cultural history, and there is a clear sense that the *anime* and videogame industries were in a process of transformation at that time. Ideally, with a study as contemporary as this one, it is helpful to cast an eye forward to the present day, to see how early concepts are transformed over longer periods of time. I shall, therefore, try to be fairly pragmatic about the 'finishing line' of my work. Many of the themes and tropes I will investigate are of greater longevity, and persist up to the present day, and I will attempt to indicate where, and why, this is the case.

I argue that the massively circulated representation of the adolescent as a wanderer, though not without antecedents, boomed in the period following 1995 and the trend shows no signs of abating at the time of writing. While there have been shifts in the contextual and discursive environment of adolescence in Japan, many of the representational strategies that I aim to examine and interpret persist and several have adapted in interesting ways over time, and I would like to demonstrate this with commentary on more recent textual examples.

I am particularly interested in this thesis in considering the relationship between the social circumstances of the post-bubble recession period and the perhaps

surprisingly explosive productivity and innovation of these visual media industries in the period. Emphasising the speed and productivity of the Japanese fashion and consumer industries in response to commercially successful trend items, Japanese film historian and social commentator Donald Richie makes the crucial point that after a fad catches on in Japan, manufacturers will 'churn out novelty in mass- at which point it ceases to be novelty'.[90] This is borne out wholly by the cases of *anime* and videogames in the 1990s. While it would be misleading to insist upon the total innovation of particularly seminal texts within each field, defining instances suggest themselves in the evolution of each medium in which a text announced via its novelty changed the landscape definitively and invigorated the industry.

While national cinema might produce and promote a 'standardised national identity' through the proliferation of cliches, for example, the case of *anime* and videogames is a complex one given the self-evident exagerrated otherness of the majority of representations of the human face and physique found in texts.[91] Skin tone often more closely resembles white Western complexions, and the lurid artificial pinks, greens and blues of female hair have no real-world analogue except perhaps the counter-culture of punk. The excessive largeness of eyes, perpetually glistening with moisture, is often regarded as in some way representative of the ideal of Western facial attributes, but this does not adequately explain the phenomenon. *Anime* director Oshii Mamoru refers to anime as 'stateless' (*mukokuseki*).[92] However, scholarship by Rayna Denison on the popular film *Spirited Away* (Miyazaki Hayao, 2001) has suggested that in fact the 'Japaneseness' of the film is a crucial aspect of the text, 'an inherent part of its global identity' as it is translated, distributed and received transnationally.[93]

Representations of real-world Japan, particularly urban environments and particularly Tokyo, are to be found in many *anime*, but imaginary worlds are just as common. The ways in which these abstractions correspond to contemporary Japan must therefore be carefully negotiated. In what ways are the figures of *anime* and videogames perceived through difference, and in what ways are they perceived via their sameness by Japanese audiences? The appearance of characters in the texts I am going to be examining does not necessarily connote Japaneseness, but nor does it expressly connote

---

[90] Donald Richie, *The Image Factory* (London: Reaktion, 2003), p. 9.
[91] Jill Forbes and Sarah Street, *European Cinema: An Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 41.
[92] Susan Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 25.
[93] Rayna Denison 'The Global Markets for Anime' in *Japanese Cinema,* ed. by Phillips, and Stringer, p. 319.

Westernness. It is an obvious remark, but for a Japanese audience, the spoken dialogue is certainly Japanese and national character is arguably indicated linguistically. Despite any otherness that may be remarked on in anime and videogame representation, both media have undergone a hegemonic process has seen adolescent character types standardised to the extent that only a certain range of characteristics and emotional responses were, and indeed still are, visible across the breadth of both industries. As I will investigate in Chapter Two, the *anime* and videogame industries respond to audience demand for specific character types, particularly those female characters who embody *moe* traits that might include childlike vulnerability, clumsiness and lack of guile.[94]

The theme of the wandering adolescent is so rich, and so crucial to Japanese culture as a whole, that it appears in a whole range of genres and media. The horror film is a case in point. Shortly after the *anime* and videogame industries began to mobilise so prolifically, the Japanese film industry was reinvigorated at home and overseas by the extraordinary success of the horror films *Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, 1998) and *Ju-On,* (Takashi Shimizu, 2003) leading to prolific production of horror cinema, with many texts featuring an adolescent protagonist or antagonist. This boom period, and the place of the teenager within the horror film in these terms, has been discussed thoroughly by Jay McRoy and Colette Balmain. Balmain writes of 'techno-horror and urban alienation' in which the adolescent is caught in a cycle of isolation and despair brought about by consumer capitalism.[95] Concurrently, the horror videogame enjoyed success in Japan through the *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill* series. These examples do not on the whole feature an adolescent protagonist, though a teenage girl is subjected to traumatic supernatural encounters in *Silent Hill 3* (Konami, 2003) and the game series *Clock Tower* (Human Entertainment, 1995) and *Project Zero* (Tecmo, 2001). While the teenager is evidently of some significance within the horror film and videogame, it has been covered substantively. However, I have decided that it is not possible, within the parameters of this thesis, to do justice to the complexity of the horror mode. The genre possesses its own distinct body of literature and paradigms, and these would require a closer investigation than is feasible here.

As I will discuss further in Chapter Two, while the main categories of *shōjo* and

---

[94] Michael R. Bowman, 'Beyond Maids and *Meganekko*: Examining the *Moe* Phenomenon', in *Cinephile: The University of British Columbia's Film Journal*, Vol.7, No.1 (Spring, 2011), 14-18 (pp. 14-15). Available at: <http://cinephile.ca/files/Vol7No1-PDF-forweb.pdf> accessed 13.6.2014.

[95] Colette Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*, pp. 168-187.

shōnen have historically indicated the content and stylistic parameters of a text, and their production with a gendered audience in mind, without concrete information on audiences, it is problematic to assume their reception circumstances. I am focusing in this thesis principally on examples of shōnen *anime*. It is the most popular and lucrative mode, and *shōnen manga* has been argued to be the most widely consumed by female readers.[96] While the gendered modes of *manga* and anime are still largely adhered to stylistically and thematically, there is substantial slippage. My study operates with awareness of the parameters of *shōjo* style and representation, and is interested in the ways in which my case studies intersect with *shōjo* texts and reinterpret and reorient their discourses. With this remit in mind, in Chapter Two I will take note of some of the principle adolescent figures of popular *shōjo anime* and *manga,* and take account of scholarship in the field of Japanese girls' culture as part of the discursive surround for my investigations. The videogame industry is similar - the games I discuss are played by both male and female players in Japan, where despite dominant preconceptions that it is a male-dominated industry, at least 40% of Japanese game players are believed to be female, and games designers often include elements believed to be popular with female players in order to ensure 'crossover' success[97].

In the case of television *anime* a key text is the massively-popular teenage *mecha* (giant robot) existential drama *Evangelion*, acknowledged to be the series which brought *anime* television to the attention of the wider public, and around which circulated concerns over the rise of the *otaku* and later the *hikikomori* shut-in, so devoted were its fans to the inner workings of the complex narrative and, in particular, the images of the adolescent female cast members as objects of desire.[99] The series, which ran on television for 26 weekly episodes in 1995 and whose story was given an alternate conclusion with a cinema-released *anime* film, is a defining moment in the representation of the life of the adolescent as fraught with traumatic psychological and physical change, and existential and sexual anxiety. The series also crucially saw the merchandising industry mobilise with spectacular, previously unseen productivity, as a vast line of figurines, scale models and guide books sold in unprecedented numbers,

---

[96] Angela Drummond-Mathews, 'What Boys Will be: A Study of *Shōnen Manga*' in *Manga: An Anthology*, ed. by Johnson-Woods, pp. 62-76 (p.94).
[97] Rebecca L. Eisenberg, 'Girl Games: Adventures in Lip-Gloss', (1998), available at: <http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/3252/girl_games_adventures_in_lip_gloss.php> [accessed 15.8.13].
[99] Gilles Poitras, 'Contemporary Anime in Japanese Pop Culture' in *Japanese Visual Culture* ed. by Mark MacWilliams, pp.48-67, (p.63); Azuma Hiroki, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, trans. by Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 37.

especially those which depicted the teenage female characters taken out of the gloomy, wartime context of the series and, scantily clad, placed with no small amount of flexibility into a variety of costumes signifying a steady stream of improbable discourses (e.g. sunbathing, French maid, Father Christmas).[100]

The 1990s saw an unprecedented technological shift in Japan in the field of consumer electronics. The Japanese-developed Sony Playstation home console represented a massive leap in the representational capabilities of the videogame. The game which most dramatically announced the possibility for videogames to carry a narrative closer to that of cinema with lengthy dialogue exchanges and extensive full motion video sequences, a sprawling plot and a large cast of characters with emotional motivations described with a certain amount of detail and complexity was *Final Fantasy VII* (Square, 1997). Then the most successful game of all time in Japan, the game established a number of formulae that were repeated and reconfigured within videogames with varying degrees of familiarity and innovation.

Having now set out my principle and secondary research questions, I will now go on to explore the variety of contextual conjunctions that form part of the 'discursive surround' for the production, marketing and reception of *anime* and videogames in contemporary Japan.

---

[100] For the series' domestic impact, see Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine*, p. 205; Azuma, *Otaku*, pp. 36-38. For the range of figurines manufactured between 1996 and 2004, including those in the highly sexualised likenesses of the female cast, see *Replicant Evangelion Figure Archive* (Tokyo: Takeshobo, 2004).

Chapter One

Discursive Surround: Adolescence and Contemporary Japan

1995 as a Cultural Milestone: The *Aum Shinryko* Sarin Gas Attack and the Kobe Earthquake

The twin disasters of 1995 - the Great Hanshin-Awaji earthquake which devastated the Kobe prefecture in January and the *Aum Shinryko* cult's Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway on March 20th – became entwined in public discourse as conjoined assaults on the fabric of Japan, and now dominate cultural memory of the immediately post-bubble period. The prominent novelist and social critic Haruki Murakami writes in his bestselling account, *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche*, that a marked change occurred in the Japanese consciousness after the events, asserting that they 'will remain embedded in our psyche as two milestones in our life as a people'.[135] He denigrates the 'rampant excess' of the 1980s and notes the significance of the gas attack and earthquake occurring in the immediately post-bubble period, culturally perceived as a punishment for the preceding years, 'lying in wait to ambush us'.[136] Allison states that the *Aum* attack disrupted a Japanese 'illusion of security', and emphasises the significance of the assault on the subway system as an attack on a fundamental aspect of everyday urban life, with very few people afforded the choice to not use it.[137]

Iida Yumiko argues that rather than emerging from an isolated cell, the *Aum* attack demonstrated wider contemporary Japan's identity crisis as an attempt to 'recover a lost integrity' felt to be culturally misplaced.[138] Members of the group, purportedly wracked with anxieties of self-identity and cultural belonging, were susceptible to a promised existence of stable meaning and 'a vision of an ideal worth living', free from existential doubt in subordination to the absolute will of leader Shoko Asahara.[139] Daniel Metraux writes that the teachings of the charismatic Asahara unsurprisingly attracted Japanese youth who, with 'no real ideology or vision to cling to', were

---

[135] Murakami, *Underground*, p. 206.
[136] Murakami, *Underground,* p. 206.
[137] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* pp. 76-77.
[138] Iida Yumiko, *Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. 243.
[139] Iida, *Rethinking Identity*, pp. 243-244.

searching for existential meaning promised to them by *Aum*, prioritised over a culturally-perpetuated norm of desire for 'a successful career in a materialistic world'.[140]

Aum positioned itself in opposition to that which it deemed 'mass-media' and put forward the view that this media manipulates Japan through subliminal messages.[141] The contradiction here is that *Aum* leader Asahara Shoko admired popular fantasy *manga* and *anime*, drawing inspiration from these 'valuable prophetic works' for his manifesto.[142] He compared the popular *anime* series *Space Battleship Yamato* (*Uchū Senkan Yamato*, Academy Productions: Yomiuri TV, 1974-1975)
 to *Aum*, with several *Aum* buildings possessing air-purifying systems called 'cosmos cleaners' in reference to the device in the storyline that is ultimately used to save the Earth.[143] This quaint device would, it was hoped, appeal to the *anime* enthusiast wishing to feel a sense of belonging to a community of like-minded peers.

As *Aum* used *manga* and *anime* in their recruitment literature and video (probably to appeal to withdrawn, suggestible *otaku*) media coverage of the attacks emphasised the negative implications of popular fantasy media. Richard Gardner's assessment identifies national concern over the damaging effects of 'virtual reality', finding the term conceptualised by commentators as the inability of the *Aum*'s heads and members to distinguish between reality and fantasy.[144] The principle behavioural indicator of living in such a 'virtual reality' appeared to them to be immersion in videogames, *manga* and *anime*. Media reportage, including an article in the *Asahi Shimbun*, cited violent teenagers who admitted seeking to emulate actions seen in videogames.[145] Reports appropriated the term 'virtual reality' with elasticity as they sought to express the view that members of *Aum* and violent youth criminals had become disconnected from actual reality. Gardner finds that debates in Japan frequently linked *Aum* to videogames and *anime* but were able to propose little conclusively.

---

[140] Daniel Metraux, 'Religious Terrorism in Japan: The Fatal Appeal of *Aum Shinrikyō*', in *Asian Survey*, 35:12 (December 1995), pp. 1140-1154

[141] Richard A. Gardner, '*Aum Shinrikyō* and a Panic about *Manga* and *Anime*', in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, ed. by Mark MacWilliams (Armonk, New York; London: M.E.Sharper, 2008), pp. 200-218 (p. 204).

[142] Gardner, *Japanese Visual Culture*, p.207. See also Susan Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 251.

[143] Gardner, '*Aum*', in *Japanese Visual Culture*, ed. by MacWilliams, p. 209.

[144] Gardner, '*Aum*' in *Japanese Visual Culture*, ed. by MacWilliams, p. 216.

[145] Gardner, '*Aum*' in *Japanese Visual Culture*, ed. by MacWilliams, p. 210.

The Contemporary Japanese Media Landscape

There are precise circumstances governing the circulation of discourse by the print and broadcast media in contemporary Japan. While a comprehensive investigation into the exact production circumstances of the case studies I will be considering including financing, planning and marketing are not the principal focus of my research, an overview of the domestic peculiarities and overarching structure of the Japanese media provides some relevant industrial context.

Japanese business and media corporations are closely tied to each other as part of the *keiretsu* business model that dominated Japan in the post-war years, in which companies ally themselves to one another financially and strategically as part of a group of businesses.[146] Published in 2000, Laurie Anne Freeman's *Closing the Shop* provides a detailed insight into the centralisation of power and information in the Japanese media by 'information cartels' that oversee homogenous delivery of news reportage.[147] She notes the irony in the fact that 'Japan's "information society" with its high levels of newspaper readership and television viewership, is so lacking in diverse viewpoints'.[148] Owing to the mass circulation of each paper and the drive towards maintaining a broad readership and avoiding alienating potential audience bases, the Japanese press has the characteristic of being 'sober-minded rather than sensational' and reports are handled with a 'neutrality' akin to 'the closely linked insider who rarely challenges the status quo, rather than that of the independent outsider'.[149]

The five national newspapers of Japan are the daily *Yomiuri, Asahi, Mainichi, Nikkei* and *Sankei,* all of which are included in the ten most widely-circulated newspapers in the world (3 to 14 million per paper daily) alongside 4 regional papers (*Hokkaido, Tokyo, Chunichi and Nishi Nihon*) and 98 local papers found within individual prefectures.[150] Zielenziger notes that at the millennium, the circulation of the conservative *Yomiuri Shinbun* and the comparatively liberal *Asahi Shinbun* was eight to ten times greater than papers of their equivalent size in the USA.[151] In 1993, 2341 monthly magazines were published (2.8 million circulation per month) alongside 83

---

[146] For a history of media *keiretsu* in Japan following WWII, see Laurie Anne Freeman, *Closing the Shop: Information Cartels and Japan's Mass Media* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[147] Freeman, *Closing the Shop,* pp. 142-159.

[148] Freeman, *Closing the Shop,* p. 178.

[149] Freeman, *Closing the Shop*, p. 19.

[150] Freeman, *Closing the Shop*, p. 17.

[151] Michael Zielenziger, *Shutting Out The Sun: How Japan Created its Own Lost Generation* (New York; London: Nan A. Talese, 2006) p. 117.

weekly magazines (1.9 million copies per week), where around half of all magazines are 'tied by financial relationships' to one of the five major newspapers.[152]

American foreign correspondent Michael Zielenziger writes about his experience of the Japanese press and the phenomenon of *kisha curabu* ('Press Clubs'), which are made up of the largest newspaper and television groups and 'regulate the flow of information between important government ministries and the general public'.[153] The power held by these press clubs, according to Zielenziger, serves to streamline and homogenise the majority of reportage in the Japanese media, as members 'often sit together to jointly determine how news events should be portrayed', and are courted socially by high level politicians, assuring that little truly investigative journalism or unearthing of scandal can appear in the mainstream press.[154] This phenomenon accounts for a lack of variation in accounts of particular issues covered in the media, and the extent to which a majority of broadcasters and newspapers contribute to dominant, monolithic discourses around subjects that are consumed by the public at large. Zielenziger writes that sources are not often cited adequately, and the evasive language of newspaper reporting 'serves as a soporific: rather than illuminating its readers, it seeks to calm them, to deflect responsibility, and to obfuscate'.[155] Freeman describes the Japanese daily newspapers as being 'high quality', possessing 'large and broad-based readerships', having a 'lack of political affiliation' and most significantly, 'considerable homogeneity'.[156] Greater debate and alternative opinions are to be found in weekly magazines that are not invited to join Press Clubs, but these tend to be less highly regarded in terms of quality and accuracy than the large-circulation newspapers.[157]

Japan's major television stations are closely financially allied to the major newspapers, and use the same sources for information. NHK is Japan's one national public service channel, and at the millennium there were 123 commercial channels broadcasting from various locations nationwide, including the five major commercial national channels: Nippon Television Network (allied to the *Yomiuri*); Asahi National Broadcasting (*Asahi)*; Tokyo Broadcasting System (*Mainichi*); Television Tokyo (*Nikkei)*; and Fuji Television Network (*Sankei*). The regional channels are almost all part of one of the five *keiretsu*.

---

[152] Freeman, *Closing the Shop*, p. 17.
[153] Zielenziger, *Shutting Out the Sun*, p. 115.
[154] Zielenziger, *Shutting Out the Sun*, p. 116.
[155] Zielenziger, *Shutting Out the Sun*, p. 117.
[156] Freeman, *Closing the Shop*, pp. 20-21.
[157] Zielenziger, *Shutting Out the Sun*, p. 117.

Yoshio Sugimoto stresses the homogenising effect exerted by this highly-centralised Japanese mass media, and berates the sensationalist nature of domestic television, with high-rated shows featuring 'social commentators making moralising comments', and newscasters making 'evaluative' remarks between items.[158] With an apparent 90% of Japanese people watching for an average of 207 minutes per weekday in 2005, he argues its programmes are the most significant contributor to the 'formation of homogenous social views'.[159] This figure increased to 245 minutes per day in a survey made in 2007.[160] In order to demonstrate his view of the predilection of the Japanese towards mass consumer behaviours, Sugimoto cites the uniquely domestic examples of *manga* (accounting for 14% of published titles sold in 2007); *pachinko* games parlours (played by over 10% of the population); 'proliferating' *karaoke* booths; and 'love hotels'.[161] Each of these mass behaviours, he writes, is pursued as an escape from the 'stringent realities of Japanese work and community life'.[162]

This study does not set out to assess the level of control exerted by the media *keiretsu* on the programming of television channels or on the content found in *anime* programmes. However, the close financial and informational links between the outlets that have reported on youth problems at the millennium and the television channels that have broadcast teenager-centric *anime* programmes should be noted for future investigation into *keiretsu* influence on the production choices made by commercial networks. We can speculate that these industrial circumstances, in which productions are carefully scrutinized for appropriate content and maximum profit attached via *media mix* product lines, give rise to the homogeneity of *anime* content.

Many *anime* are adaptations of successful *manga* that have enjoyed a wide circulation and readership, and will often be adapted into videogames, while other 'original' videogames will spawn *manga* and *anime* adaptations of the story, or further excursions taking place within their narrative worlds. Again, it is not always wise to assume or privilege an 'original' version however, as in many cases the *media mix* will have been pre-planned and iterations in each medium strategically released for maximum impact and financial success.

---

[158] Sugimoto Yoshio, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 251.
[159] Sugimoto, *An Introduction to Japanese Society,* p. 251.
[160] Takahashi Toshie, *Audience Studies: A Japanese Perspective* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p. 198.
[161] Sugimoto, *An Introduction to Japanese Society*, pp. 254-259.
[162] Sugimoto, *An Introduction to Japanese Society*, p. 259.

In Denison, Joo and Furukawa's 2013 '*Manga* into Movies Project' report on 'Transmedia Japanese Franchising Practices,' the authors emphasise the industrial uniqueness of the Japanese *media mix* and move beyond simply identifying the mutability of texts across media forms towards a thorough account of their planning, financing and production. Far from operating in isolation, they show that individual companies responsible for a particular medium's take on an intellectual property can form collectives at an early stage in order to streamline planning, financing, production and distribution, with a view to maximising potential profit. These *seisakuiinkai* production conglomerates coordinate and jointly determine representational factors to ensure levels of parity and consistency across media.[163]

The authors of the report note that over the course of TV *anime* broadcasting in the 2000s, *manga* adaptations increased and 'original scripts' diminished, with the creation of numerous spaces in schedules for post-11pm *shinya anime* (from '*shinyawaku',* 'late night frames') highly significant to the dramatic growth of the *anime* TV industry. These *shinya anime*, with a less mainstream audience in mind, were 'regulated by less strict production codes than earlier time slots' and are 'targeted towards new adult audiences and have more liberal styles of expression'.[164] More original scripts have been produced and broadcast as *shinya* occurring over the last three years as a result of broadcasters' announced intentions to produce 'quality' programmes and reinvigorate the industry through the pronouncement of *anime'*s potential to be groundbreaking. It will be interesting in due course to look at some of these more recent examples of *shinya anime* to observe representational deviations from and consistencies with earlier texts.

A significant and definitive assertion of the *Manga into Movies* reports is that 'the Japanese TV *anime* market *would not exist* without the potential profits they can make from being involved in franchising' – with principle profits derived from DVD releases and merchandising that can be marketed long after the series has ceased regular serialised broadcasting.[165]

---

[163] Rayna Denison, Woojeong Joo and Furukawa Hiroko, 'Transmedia Japanese Franchising Practices: Understanding Japanese Media Industries and their Products in Domestic and Transnational Frames' (First Report of 'Manga to Movies' project, 2013) available online at <http://www.mangamoviesproject.com/publications.html> [accessed 5.6.2013].
[164] Rayna Denison, Woojeong Joo and Furukawa Hiroko, 'Japan's Manga, Anime and Film Industries' (Second Report of 'Manga to Movies' project, 2013) available online at <http://www.mangamoviesproject.com/publications.html> [accessed 17.6.2013]
[165] Rayna Denison, Woojeong Joo and Furukawa Hiroko, 'Transmedia Japanese Franchising Practices', p. 17.

Methodology and 'Discursive Surround'

I begin my exploration of Japanese visual media in relation to its cultural contextual frames with the term 'discursive surround' as discussed by Barbara Klinger in the article 'Film History Teminable and Interminable.'[166] When discussing the deployment of a film's 'discursive surround' in analysis, Barbara Klinger writes that scholars might explore the film's 'connection to a particular discursive frame' and thereby reveal 'different historical "truths" about a film as she/he analyses how it has been deployed within past social relations.[167] Categorising the variety of phenomena that might be considered by scholars to comprise a film's discursive surround, Klinger summarises the breadth of 'social and historical contexts' with which a film interacts and which 'suggest aspects of the social formation involved in the complex negotiation of what films mean publicly'.[168] In mapping out what might constitute the discursive surround for the media texts I analyse in this thesis I take the contextual frames suggested by Klinger as a stable starting point for categorisation. These categories cannot of course be treated entirely discretely as they inevitably intersect and influence one another in ways that are impossible to monitor, but broadly the individual elements of the discursive surround will be grouped under specific headings in the mapping-out in this chapter of the Japanese contexts for the representation of the adolescent.

Of particular significance within this thesis and, as I will argue in Chapter One, central to the 'social formation' of contemporary Japan in the period in question, are the social 'terrains' Klinger introduces as 'The Economy', 'Gender and Sexual Difference', 'Family' and 'Ideology'.[169] She highlights that analysis of visual media's relationship to the economic situation at a given historical/cultural instance has explored 'a series of connections between historical era emphasizing consumerism, the fashion and advertising industries, film style (including décor and costumes), exhibition practices and the female consumer'.[170]

On issues of gender and sexual difference, which this thesis intends to explore, Klinger asserts that scholarship of Hollywood cinema has 'amply chronicled the relationship between social developments constituting definitions of femininity, masculinity and sexuality' and that 'In any era, representations of gender and sexuality

---

[166] Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable' in *Screen*, 38:2, 107-128.
[167] Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable', p. 110.
[168] Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable', p.119.
[169] Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable', pp. 119-121.
[170] Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable', p. 119.

respond to such social developments and discourses as they attempt to establish standards of deviant and normal sexuality and appropriate sex roles'.[171] On the family, Klinger asserts that scholars might investigate 'the social forces affecting the family's definition during specific historical moments'.[172]

I will shortly go on to map out and describe the variety of discursive contexts I explore in this study of Japanese *anime* television and videogame texts, which are: cultural conceptions of the adolescent as circulated and debated in the Japanese media; social panics around the adolescent in the 1990s and at the millennium; gender and the ways in which masculinity and femininity impact upon the focus of media discourses; changes to the traditional Japanese family structure; perceived changes to the Japanese social framework, especially the generational divide between parents and teenagers; the conception and experience of space in Japan and the perceived changes to 'traditional' spaces; the Japanese economic situation, particularly the rise of consumerism and materialism, and the socio-cultural impact of the post-bubble recession.

I will now outline the analytical approach of discourse analysis I undertake in relation to Japanese *anime* television and videogames, and its theoretical underpinnings. Jason Mittell's analysis of television genres is a pivotal work in the field of television studies for its consideration of the relationship between culture and televisual texts. Mittell is concerned with 'discursive formations' and deploys discourse analysis to reveal textual meanings at conjunctions with contemporary cultural phenomena. I am interested in a similar form of cultural analysis, and the analyses of media texts in this thesis are subdivided by genre, style and type (will I will expound upon in Chapter Two on *anime* and Chapter Six on videogames) and Mittell's approach provides an initial framework for my investigations.

Mittell approaches analysis of genre following Foucault's argument that 'discursive formations such as sexuality, insanity, and criminality' are 'historically specific systems of thought, conceptual categories that work to define a culture's experiences within a larger system of power.' [173] Further, 'discourse is a practice, and as such, we must analyze discourses in action as they are culturally operative, not in abstract isolation.'[174] In describing his method of analyzing television genre, Mittell states that 'discursive formations of genres should be studied not through interpretative

---

[171] Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable', p.121.
[172] Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable', p.121.
[173] Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p. 13.
[174] Mittell, *Genre and Television*, p. 13.

readings or deep structural analysis, but in their surface manifestations and common articulations.' [175] In my analysis of depictions of adolescence, like Mittell I am certainly concerned in this thesis with highlighting 'common articulations' and observing consonances between texts and emergent patterns of representation. My work is consistent with his approach in as far as I am observing motifs and trends across a breadth of texts (and across media) to note surface patterns and representational similarities and divergences in the depiction of teenagers in the Japanese media.

However, while Mittell's approach to analysis is concerned with the cultural operations of genres and the multifarious ways 'genre' might be constituted and understood, I seek to understand the specific textual operations of *anime* and videogames in relation to discourses around the cultural category of adolescence. Therefore in order to address my central thesis questions, close reading of the particularities of a range of texts is most useful when attempting to comprehend the range of meanings produced at the variety of conjunctions between texts and their discursive surround.

In order to arrive at a satisfying account of the textual operations of these media, I am concerned principally with the *representation* of adolescents by Japanese visual media, alongside a range of other textual formations (including the Japanese family, the home, urban and rural spaces, technology). My understanding of representation is in line with Richard Dyer, who describes the deployment of the term in relation to social or cultural groups in these terms:

'How a group is re-presented, presented over again in cultural forms, how an image of a member of a group is taken as representative of that group, how that group is represented in the sense of spoken for and on behalf of.'[176]

Further, Westwell and Kuhn, defining representation as it relates to Film Studies, state that 'the thing depicted is presented to us again, with distance, and mediated via cultural codes and conventions.'[177] I will closely examine specific instances in the representation of adolescents, employing the term as it is articulated through the audio-visual properties of the text. Representation is articulated in *anime*

---

[175] Mittell, *Genre and Television*, p. 13.
[176] Richard Dyer, 'Introduction' to *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations*, ed. by Richard Dyer (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1-5 (p. 1).
[177] Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 348.

and videogames through visual and aural properties including, but not limited to, proportion, subject framing, lighting, location, colour, and the construction of *mise-en-scène* (including for example costume, character and object position). My analyses of Japanese media texts seek to evaluate the representation of adolescents within the contextual framework of contemporary Japanese discourses on the country's teenage population.

In order to explore these representations I will employ 'multimodal' discourse analysis in line with Jason Mittell's view that 'Just as we might look at how various cultural practices circulate media meanings… media texts themselves are clearly important sites where meanings are articulated and potentially activated into larger cultural circulation.'[178] 'Multimodal' discourse analysis, as it has been expounded upon by Theo van Leeuwen, recognizes that 'discourse' should be understood not purely at the level of linguistics, but that 'discourses are often multimodally realized, not only through text and talk, but also through other modes of communication such as images.'[179] Kress and van Leeuwen's influential approach to the multimodal discourse analysis of visual composition is significant and useful for the way it acknowledges 'the way images represent the relations between the people, places and the things they depict, and the complex set of relations that can exist between images and their viewers.'[180] I will be concerned with such relations in my analyses of Japanese visual media texts, as well as their emphasis on 'the composition of the whole, the way in which the representational and interactive elements are made to relate to each other, the way they are integrated into a meaningful whole.'[181]

In the introduction to their 2005 edited collection *Style and Meaning: Studies in the Detailed Analysis of Film*, John Gibbs and Douglas Pye present a case for the usefulness and relevance of methods of close textual analysis of visual media that attend to an 'examination of textual detail as the shareable basis for critical dialogue.'[182] In my close textual readings throughout this thesis, I follow their assertion that:

---

[178] Mittell, *Genre and Television*, p. 123.

[179] Theo van Leeuwen, 'Critical Discourse Analysis' in K. Brown (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. 2nd edn. (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006), pp. 290-294 (p. 292). See also Gunther R. Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), pp. 181-229.

[180] Gunther R. Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, p. 181.

[181] Gunther R. Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, p. 181.

[182] John Gibbs and Douglas Pye, 'Introduction' in *Style and Meaning: Studies in the Detailed Analysis of Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 1-15 (p. 6).

'interpretation has to be rooted in the concrete details of the text (its style) because it is only through these that we gain access to the film's subjects. Style constitutes the medium of expression, giving access to the story and simultaneously shaping in a variety of complex ways the film's relationship to its material, its audience and its traditions.'[183]

Returning to Mittell, he states that 'Texts are *sites of articulation*, in which certain cultural assumptions of definition, interpretation, and evaluation are linked to larger generic categories in a dynamic process.'[184] Following this assumption, by focusing analysis in detail on specific textual examples from a range of *anime* and videogame genres representing the adolescent, I hope to present a case for the value of comprehending contemporary Japanese visual media within the historical contextual parameters, or discursive surround, as will be laid out in the remainder of this chapter.

'Youth problems' in Contemporary Japanese Media

While studies find it difficult to commit to the view that 'youth problems' definitively increased in Japan in the 1990s, authors agree that the media devoted a considerably increased amount of coverage to a variety of issues involving adolescents. While I am principally interested in media discourses surrounding the adolescent and analysis is couched within the 'moral panics' that arose in the print media in relation to perceived 'youth problems', it should be made clear that while some statistics employed by the media for arguably sensationalist goals are dubious, there are quantifiable, appalling cases of murder, violence, suicide and abuse that were brought to police and law courts.

There is a substantive body of critical material on Japan in English and translated from Japanese scholarship from sociological, anthropological, psychological and cultural studies perspectives, as well as translations of newspaper and magazine articles. A wide range of articles that were written in Japanese and published in major newspapers and magazines in Japan during the 1990s and at the millennium are available in translation as part of book-length compilations and edited collections. Several translated studies of Japanese culture in the period use print media as both primary and secondary sources, and make a wealth of references and quotations

---

[183] John Gibbs and Douglas Pye, Introduction to *Style and Meaning: Studies in the Detailed Analysis of Film*, p. 10.
[184] Mittell, *Genre and Television,* p. 124.

available to the non-Japanese reader. These works provide a framework for consideration of the representation of the adolescent in Japan through both quantitative description of empirical facts around the experiences of adolescents in Japan around the millennium, as well as investigations into the variety of representations of adolescence found in the Japanese media and the exploding of popularly-circulated myths and the misuse of statistics in the interests of sensationalism. Before describing the discursive surround for my study in detail, I will highlight some of the works that have provided significant contextual coverage and analysis.

A range of key texts informs discussion in this chapter of youth violence and the problems facing adolescents as they were discussed and debated in the period. *Years of Trial*, edited by Masuzoe Yoichi, presents a collection of translated opinion pieces and 'expert' group discussions written by education professionals and social commentators that appeared in various magazine publications and newspaper supplements through the 1990s.[185] The selected articles range from the sensationalist and reactionary to the objectively empirical, and I will refer to the collection during the course of this chapter as I identify the perceived 'social crises' and 'youth problems' of the period that were privileged in the media, particularly those relating to antisocial behaviour in schools including bullying, disobedience and *enjo kōsai* ('compensated dating' or teenage prostitution), as the articles signpost helpfully a range of contemporaneous values, opinions and approaches.

The interdisciplinary collection of essays on Japan in the post-bubble period, *Japan After Japan*, edited by Yoda Tomiko and Harry Harootunian, provides Yoda's 'Roadmap to Millennial Japan', in which she evaluates commonly-held perceptions of the origins of crisis in contemporary Japan, as well as Andrea Arai and Marilyn Ivy's analyses of the media treatment of real and fictional adolescents.[186] Arai points to the rise in discourses surrounding the 'wild child' rebellious teenager, while Ivy connects the *anime* film *Princess Mononoke* (Miyazaki Hayao, 1997) to discourses circulating widely in the Japanese media around the child killer Miyazaki Tsutomu. Sociologist Yoneyama Shoko's influential investigation into pre-millennial youth problems, *The Japanese High School,* features extensive summary, quotation and discussion of the representation of adolescents in the print media. Useful to developing an understanding of the subject of *ijime* bullying, psychiatrist Miyamoto Masao's influential collection of articles that featured in the *Monthly Asahi* magazine is published as the edited collection

---

[185] Masuzoe, *Years of Trial*.
[186] Harry Harootunian and Yoda Tomiko, eds., *Japan After Japan* (Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 2006).

Straitjacket Society.[188] Adrienne Hurley's contextual study of literature and youth problems in America and Japan *Revolutionary Suicide* contains lengthy discussion and explanation of the media's treatment of adolescent killers and abused teenage girls.[189] Yoda, Arai, Ivy, Yoneyama, Hurley, and Miyamoto's work is valuable in this chapter when mapping out the landscape of 'youth panics' and establishing the discursive parameters explored in the Japanese media.

On the workings of the Japanese consumer industries as they target children and adolescents, Anne Allison's exhaustive study of the period through the milieu of children's toys and games, *Millennial Monsters*, is heavily field-researched, rich in data, and contains a wealth of contextual information on the period, including considered interpretations of extant writing.[190] Similarly, Donald Richie's commentary on youth fashions and fad, *The Image Factory*, is replete with provocative insight and accessible facts.[191] In the intellectual historian Iida Yumiko's chapter on the identity crisis of post-bubble Japan, in *Rethinking Identity in Japan,* there is a particularly relevant discussion of videogames, linking national malaise and existential anxiety explicitly to the ideological implications of materialism, and to the incorporation of the virtual into the life of the everyday Japanese.[192] Iida's argument is that both Japanese individual and cultural identity and sense of self-hood became fragmented and beset by trauma in the post-bubble period, owing to a combination of accelerated levels of commerce and materialism; the privileging of the virtual over the real; social pressures; and the promotion of conformist ideology.[193] She identifies in Japan the impulse towards the recovery of identity, both in terms of self and culture at large, through fantasy and virtuality.[194] Allison, Iida and Richie are of particular value in this chapter when describing the impact of fashion industries on the Japanese teenager, and the consumer landscape of the country during the recessionary period.

Further, exploring the much-debated negative effect of modernization and technology on institutions such as the family, and influential to debates in Japanese Studies on the perceived loss of traditional social structures and practices in Japan, Marilyn Ivy identifies an identity crisis experienced by modern Japan as leading to a

---

[188] Miyamoto Masao, *Straitjacket Society: An Insider's Irreverent View of Bureaucratic Japan* (Tokyo, London: Kodansha International, 1994).
[189] Adrienne Hurley, *Revolutionary Suicide and Other Desperate Measures: Narratives of Youth and Violence from Japan and the United States* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011)
[190] Allison, *Millennial Monsters*.
[191] Donald Richie, *The Image Factory* (London: Reaktion, 2003).
[192] Iida, *Rethinking Identity,* pp. 209-258.
[193] Iida, *Rethinking Identity*, p. 226.
[194] Iida, *Rethinking Identity*, p. 226.

'"staging" of old customs, folklores and beliefs to paradoxically reinforce its own sense of identity and loss thereof'.[195] Her concept of the 'vanishing' in Japanese culture refers to the perceived disappearance of traditional culture and values owing to the rise and dominance of western capitalism. Ivy describes the seeking out by older generations of values and objects of the past, privileged as more authentically 'Japanese' as the 'destabilizations of capitalist modernity have decreed the loss of much of the past, a past sometimes troped as "traditional"'.[196]

Enhancing the discursive picture of consumer-oriented Japan, John Clammer and Michael Ashkenazi's edited collection of sociological essays centring on consumption and materialism in the period contains several informative pieces, especially Wim Lunsing's survey and comment on the commercial and material nature of relationships and sexuality; the editors' introductory commentary on consumerism and cultural definition; and Clammer's field research into consumption, community and public space.[199] Similarly invaluable to an account of the gender politics implications of materialism and consumerism as borne out by the mass media is Lise Skov and Brian Moeran's *Women, Media and Consumption*, and within that volume Merry White's setting-out of the parameters of adolescence as they evolved in Japan a defining account of the teenager's relationship to the consumer industries.[200] These texts will contribute to the mapping out of the relationship between materialism, consumption, gender and sexuality in contemporary Japan.

A range of literature has discussed the *otaku* phenomenon at length, including Lamarre and Iida, who offer their own definitions and contextual insights into the social type, but particularly significant and groundbreaking in the field of *otaku* studies is the work of Hiroki Azuma who thoroughly traces the evolution of the *otaku* from the 1980s to 2000s.[201] His work will form the keystone for discussion of definitions of the *otaku* as the type has been expounded upon in contemporary Japan.

Monstrous Adolescents in the Japanese Media

[195] Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 216.
[196] Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing*, p. 10.
[199] John Clammer and Michael Ashkenazi, eds., *Consumption and Material Culture in Contemporary Japan* (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000).
[200] Brian Moeran and Lise Skov, eds., *Women, Media and Consumption* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995).
[201] Azuma Hiroki, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, trans. by Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

Sociologists Toivonen and Imoto confirm that 'high-profile youth problems are a shared phenomenon across advanced societies with different histories, socio-economic characteristics, cultures and traditions'.[202] They identify the Japanese media's shifting focus on youth problems across the last few decades: from 'student apathy' in the 1970s; to *dokushin kizoku* ('single nobility', affluent single people) and *tokokyohi* ('school refusal') in the 1980s; to panics surrounding child murderers, the *otaku, enjo kōsai, parasaitu shinguru* ('parasite singles', working young Japanese who still live in the parental home in their 20s and 30s) and *furītā* ('freeters', referring to those not in full-time employment) and youngsters seen to be resisting the office life of the *salaryman* in the 1990s.[203] Toivonen and Imoto argue that 'almost as a rule' violent incidents were reported in the media with currently circulating panics employed unproblematically as explanation.[204]

Adolescents involved in violent antisocial behaviour became an increasing concern in the Japanese media in the latter part of the 1990s, including the national shock over the vicious child murders by the fourteen year-old boy *Shōnen A* ('Boy A' aka 'Sakikibara Seito') in 1997 and a significant number of violent crimes by teenage boys around the same time.[205] Youth crime (more specifically referred to as 'boy-crime', *shōnen hanzai*) in general was perceived as a relatively new phenomenon in the post-bubble period, and it evolved in the public consciousness as symptomatic of the times.[206] Iwao Sumiko states that in 1996, 14 to 19 year olds comprised 9% of the population but accounted for 34% of murders and theft, and 45% of cases of assault and battery.[207] In her discussion of *Shōnen A*'s murders, Marilyn Ivy states that the teenage killer became the 'apotheosis of societal fears about *ijime*, youth violence, perversity and confusion'.[208] Analysing the letters he left at crime scenes, in which he creates an imaginary 'monster god' who has commanded him to perform the acts, Ivy points out

---

[202] Tuuka Toivonen and Imoto Yuki, 'Making Sense of Youth Problems', in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth: From Returnees to NEETs*, ed. by Roger Goodman, Tuuka Toivonen and Imoto Yuki (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 1-29 (p. 1).
[203] Toivonen and Imoto, 'Making Sense of Youth Problems', in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et. al , p. 2.
[204] Toivonen and Imoto, 'Making Sense of Youth Problems' in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et. al, p. 3.
[205] Yoda, 'Roadmap', in *Japan After Japan*, ed. by Harootunian and Yoda, p. 21.
[206] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 76.
[207] Sumiko Iwao, 'Problems Among Japan's Young', in *Years of Trial*, ed. by Masuzoe, pp. 256-259 (p. 256).
[208] Marilyn Ivy, 'Revenge and Recapitation in Recessionary Japan', in *Japan After Japan*, ed. by Harootunian and Yoda, pp. 195-215 (p. 206).

the significance of identity definition and assertions of selfhood, as well as his emphasis on the acts as those of revenge against Japanese society.[209]

Yoneyama Shoko identifies a 'post-Kobe' period in public and governmental perceptions of the Japanese education system, after the May 1997 murder of a Kobe schoolboy by another boy (14), with the publication of several journal issues with titles like 'children are dangerous' (*kodomo ga abunai);* 'children beyond comprehension' (*kodomo ga wakaranai);* 'children are strange' (*kodomo ga henda).*[210] In 1999, it was widely reported that 207 minors had committed murder in Japan.[211]

In Adrienne Hurley's examination of media representations of the violent teenage boy in Japan at the millennium, she addresses the significance of the word '*kireru'* (the intransitive form of 'to cut') used in the live action film *Go* (Yukisada Isao, 2001) by its disenfranchised teenage protagonist to refer to a moment at which he finally and violently vents his pent-up frustration, as a 'response to cumulative stress'.[212] The term had become a 'buzzword' in the mainstream Japanese media, attributed to violent youths using the term to describe the instance at which they apparently 'snapped' and lashed out, not able to control their emotions within appropriate social boundaries.[213] Accounts of monstrous children highlighted their dual personalities and apparent normalcy leading up to their crimes. A discursive emphasis on the unpredictable, unexpected nature of these young killers and their apparent normalcy serves effectively to absolve their peers and adult authority figures from responsibility.

In May 2000, the Japanese media was heavily mobilised in its coverage of the stabbing in Hiroshima of a 65-year-old woman by a 17-year-old boy who claimed that he wanted to find out what it was like to kill someone.[214] Hurley points out that the key motifs running through the *Asahi Shimbun*'s three-part special series on the crime are the boy's 'broken home', his subsequent parental neglect and the supposedly related predilection of the boy for violent videogames. The boy's individuality and rejection of peer-group behaviour was described in one account of his personality leading up to the event, with his excessive daily videogame playing emphasised. As Hurley states, the apparent normalcy in the media representation of the teenage killer at the millennium

---

[209] Ivy, 'Revenge' in *Japan After Japan*, ed. by Harootunian and Yoda, pp. 205-206.
[210] Yoneyama Shoko, *The Japanese High School: Silence and Resistance* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 242.
[211] Hurley, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 159.
[212] Hurley, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 150.
[213] Hurley, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 150.
[214] Hurley, *Revolutionary Suicide,* p. 158.

helps to create the image of 'the young generation as a mass of time bombs waiting to explode where and when one least expects.'[215]

In his lengthy and later widely circulated letter to a Kobe local newspaper, Sakakibara/*Shōnen A* writes repeatedly of his 'transparent existence' and his isolation from Japanese society, claiming that he is a 'product of the compulsory education system and the society it creates'. Hurley notes that while Sakakibara's history of childhood beatings by his parents featured in press accounts after his incarceration, this line of discussion quickly ceased as 'the Japanese media… have found reporting on videogames, antisocial youth culture, and occasionally the school system to be more lucrative (and more acceptable)'.[216]

These debates around violent, antisocial teenagers will be explored in Chapter Three in relation to the representation of male adolescents with an affinity for the monstrous in the *anime Death Note* (where schoolboy Light is a serial murderer empowered by the supernatural artefact of the title) and *Natsume's Book of Friends* (where the teenage Takashi is shunned for his alignment with supernatural beings but is a redeemable, misunderstood figure). While coverage of these monstrous adolescent killers abounded in the media, so too did debates around the everyday physical and emotional violence taking place in High Schools, encapsulated by the term '*ijime*', which I will introduce next.

Ijime ('bullying')

Prevalent in the Japanese media around the millennium were accounts of *ijime* in schools, which is translated as 'bullying', but the Japanese word came to embody an excessive, single-minded hostility designed to inflict extraordinary psychological and physical trauma.[217] The most extreme media-documented case involved 13-year-old Okochi Kiyoteru, who committed suicide owing to guilt he experienced after being forced by bullies to steal large amounts of money from his parents.[218] Other reported *ijime* behaviours include: the hiding of essential personal property, violent assaults, forced slavery including ordered theft, social and verbal abuse and humiliation.[219] Lebra reports that interviewed *ijime* victims found the last category of abuse the most

---

[215] Hurley, *Revolutionary Suicide*, p. 159.
[216] Hurley, *Revolutionary Suicide,* p. 166.
[217] Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *The Japanese Self in Cultural Logic* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), p. 141.
[218] Lebra, *The Japanese Self*, p. 142.
[219] Lebra, *The Japanese Self*, p. 142.

significant and unbearable, as it made them feel excluded and alienated socially from peers.[220]

Toivonen and Imoto note that discussion of *ijime* has privileged cultural specificity, couching analysis of its causes as rooted in 'the supposedly homogenous, conformist group-oriented nature of Japanese society'.[221] They point to three waves of extensive coverage by the Japanese media: the first in 1986 initiated by the suicide of Shikagawa Hirofumi (13), followed by a more dramatic peak in the mid-1990s after the suicide of Okochi Kiyoteru in 1994 and a resurgence in the media of the mid-2000s.[222] Yoneyama's assessment of *ijime* discourse is that perpetrators are documented as motivated by a tendency towards uniformity and groupism, and single out those who are seen to exhibit individualism.[223] In a report on the *ijime*-motivated suicide of a 14 year-old boy in Asahikawa, Hokkaido in August 1997, the *Mainichi Shinbun* wrote that the boy left a letter to his friends telling them he killed himself before a bully was able to kill him, and that his peers did not want to come forward owing to fear that the bully would in turn target them.[224] The most popular weekly *shōnen manga* comics anthology, *Shōnen Jump*, was mobilized by the large number of reader letters on the subject of bullying, and published a special issue of readers' letters on the subject, the *Jump Ijime Report*, with one message by a 16 year-old boy expressing the opinion that 'these days, if you cannot think and behave in the same way as others, you are most definitely bullied'.[225]

Adults also reported their experiences of *ijime* in the workplace. In 1992 and 1993, the psychiatrist Miyamoto Masao wrote in a series of articles presented in the *Monthly Asahi* (a magazine published the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper) that he experienced *ijime* as an adult member of the Japanese Health Ministry, arguing that bullying is encouraged in Japanese society as a tool for behaviour modification and to ensure invididuals follow the dominant group viewpoint and behaviour pattern.[226] As a result of these articles, Miyamoto became a minor celebrity and spokesperson for adult *ijime* and the claim that it permeated Japanese society, appearing on NHK and Radio Japan to discuss his work, which reached a mass audience when quoted in a front-page

---

[220] Lebra, *The Japanese Self*, p. 143.
[221] Toivonen and Imoto, in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et al., p. 9.
[222] Toivonen and Imoto, in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et al., p. 10.
[223] Yoneyama, *Japanese High School,* p. 169.
[224] Yoneyama, *Japanese High School,* p. 243.
[225] Yoneyama, *Japanese High School,* p. 169.
[226] Miyamoto, *Straitjacket Society*, pp. 148-149.

column of the *Asahi Shinbun*.[227] Possibly demonstrating merely the perceived commercial viability of *ijime* accounts at the time, but perhaps indicating the *Monthly Asahi*'s willingness to expose deep-rooted social problem phenomena, the associate editor wrote to Miyamoto stating that while he had soiled his relationship with the Health Ministry, the magazine's readers were eager to read more of his experiences.[228]

On the subject of violence against children and adolescents, rather than committed by them, Aaron L. Miller's interpretation of the changing discourses in the Japanese media surrounding the use of *taibatsu* (corporal punishment) in schools finds that articles on the subject in the *Asahi Shimbun* dramatically increased between 1995 and 2000.[231] *Taibatsu* was first viewed as an, 'educational solution', to disobedience and struggling pupils in the 1970s and 1980s, before becoming seen as an 'educational problem' in the late 1980s and 1990s, and then marginalized in favour of other perceived youth problems in the 2000s.[232] He finds that in media accounts of *taibatsu*, the youth 'victims' are voiceless and unrepresented, the focus being on the debates of teachers, parents and scholars.[233]

Accounts of monstrous, violent adolescents and the traumatic experience of High School will provide a discursive framework for considering the representation of adolescence and the Japanese High School in *anime* as fraught with anxiety, conflict and challenge in Chapters Three (*Evangelion*, *Welcome to the NHK*, *Death Note*) and Four (*Serial Experiments Lain*, *Boogiepop Phantom*). Additionally in Chapter Three, discussion will focus on the Japanese High School as it has been more recently represented in the period as the debates around the crisis in the schools began to subside - as an idealised, safe and nurturing space (*K-On!*, *Azumanga*). *Ijime*, physical punishment and extortion are among the phenomena that have fed into media speculation over the rise in inclination among Japanese adolescents towards school absenteeism, referred to with the terms *tokokyohi* ('school refusal') and *futoko* ('school non-attendance'), the subject of the next sub-section of this chapter.

Tokokyohi ('school refusal') vs. *futoko* ('school non-attendance')

[227] Miyamoto, *Straitjacket Society*, p. 189.
[228] Miyamoto, *Straitjacket Society*, pp. 194-195.
[231] Aaron Miller, '*Taibatsu*: From Educational Solution to Social problem to Marginalised non-issue', in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et al., p. 84.
[232] Miller, '*Taibatsu*' in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et al., p. 89.
[233] Miller, '*Taibatsu*' in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et al., p. 93.

The dramatic increase in *tokokyohi*, or 'school refusal', became a fiercely debated issue in the Japanese media during the 1990s. Accounts of absentee pupils feeling nauseous and anxious at the thought of attending school circulated in the press, and a variety of interpretations from scholars and specialists seeking explanation at the cultural, familial and individual level were put forward. The definition of *tokokyohi* changed statistically in 1991, where previously a problem case was identified via 50 days of school absence, now 30 days of absence warranted use of the term.[234] Educational and healthcare professionals ceased using the term later in the 1990s in favour of the word *futoko* (the more neutral 'nonattendance at school'), which was deemed to be less harsh and villifying as a descriptor of the individual concerned.[235] In 1990 the *Asahi Shinbun* reported the view of *Monbukagakusho* (the Japanese ministry for Education, Science, Sports and Culture) that 'it can happen to anyone', which represented a dramatic shift away from their previously-advertised view that the phenomenon was specifically related to individual attributes, for example 'flaws in character or problems at home.'[236]

Yoneyama writes that the phenomenon has been 'vigorously discussed'; indeed, 200 books had been written on the subject of *tokokyohi* in Japan by 1993.[237] She summarises discourses surrounding the *tokokyohi* phenomenon, variously referred to as 'school phobia' (*gakko-kyofu-sho*); 'school refusal' (*tokokyohi-sho*) and 'apathy syndrome' (*mukiryoku-sho*), with sociologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors and paediatricians broadly occupying positions from which the phenomenon is seen as a mental illness, straightforward laziness, a natural, understandable response to a failing school system, or chronic fatigue.[238] Yoneyama notes the 'diametrically opposite orientations' of *ijime* and *tokokyohi* couched in discourses of conformity and individualism: *ijime* seems motivated by groupist tendencies to stamp out idiosyncrasy, whereas *tokokyohi* appears to be a conscious decision on the part of the individual to resist conformity. In November 1997, newspapers reported the killing of an 83-year-old woman by her 16-year-old grandson, who repeatedly stabbed her with an ice-pick after

---

[234] Yoneyama, Japanese High School, pp. 186-187.
[235] Saitō Tamaki, *Hikikomori: Adolescence Without End* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, c2013)*, p. 35.
[236] Yoneyama, *Japanese High School*, p. 187.
[237] Yoneyama, *Japanese High School*, p. 190.
[238] Yoneyama, *Japanese High School*, pp. 192-193.

she had commented on the fact he had missed school - pointedly asserting a connection between school absenteeism, non-conformity and shocking violent tendencies.[239]

Issues around social non-participation, detachment from societal institutions and school absenteeism will further help to frame and account for the representation of adolescent trauma and isolation in Chapters Three and Four, and the focus on teenage male socialisation in *Evangelion*, *Welcome to the NHK*, *Natsume's Book of Friends* and female bond formation in *Serial Experiments Lain*, *Witch Hunter Robin* and *Boogiepop Phantom*. These considerations will also provide a contextual frame for considering the reorientation of High School discourse into the polar idealism attached to the adolescent educational experience in *K-On!* and *Azumanga*. Where school absenteeism was discussed in terms of an adolescent detachment from society, so the debates in the media at the millennium that I will introduce next are those that focused attention on the growing population of teenage *hikikomori* (severe, prolonged 'shut-in') emerging from this apparent widespread reluctance to participate in wider society.

Hikikomori ('acute social withdrawal')

Psychologist Saitō Tamaki became a 'media sensation' after the publication of his best-selling book on the phenomenon of adolescent social withdrawal *Hikikomori: Adolescence Without End* (*Shakaiteki Hikikomori: Owaranai Shishunki*) in 1998.[240] After coining the term, now normalised into the everyday Japanese lexicon, Saitō's work became inextricably linked to discussion of the phenomenon in the Japanese media. Media coverage of *hikikomori* saw a dramatic surge between 1997 and 2005, reaching a peak in 2004, and in the *Asahi Shinbun* and *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspapers the term was mentioned 794 times during 2005.[241]

Basing his research and analysis around what seemed a disturbing increase in the number of parents who consulted with him in the mid- to late-1990s about their children's tendencies to isolate themselves from the outside world, Saitō extends the definition to include 'skipping school, domestic violence, thoughts of suicide, fear of others, obsessive actions'.[242] In his original conception of the term, he is careful to note

---

[239] Yoneyama, *Japanese High School*, p. 243.
[240] Jeffrey Angles, Introduction to *Hikikomori: Adolescence Without End* by Saitō Tamaki (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
[241] Andy Furlong 'The Japanese Hikikomori Phenomenon: Acute social withdrawal among Young People', in *The Sociological Review,* vol. 56, no. 2 (May 2008), pp. 309-325 (p. 313).
[242] Saitō, *Hikikomori*, p. 11.

that *hikikomori* refers to a *symptom*, not the term for an illness.[243] The ways in which the Japanese media has stigmatised the condition in later years has pointed towards a general public conception that sees it as a label referring to a specific mental health disorder. In his survey of *hikikomori*, Saitō found that 90% of respondents had been school absentees and would have been classed in terms of *tohokyohi* or *futoko*.[244]

Saitō begins his influential treatise on *hikikomori* with reference to an article in the *Asahi Shinbun* in November 1996 that details the beating to death of a man by his teenage son. The coverage paid specific attention to the fact that the boy had been a school absentee for several months, and was repeatedly violent towards his family, thus connecting social withdrawal with the accounts of extreme violence perpetrated by adolescents that could be found throughout the Japanese media of the period. While at the time the article would have been couched in terms of *tokokyohi* – specifically school refusal - Saitō begins to reorient such accounts within the sphere of his new category of social withdrawal, which has a much wider societal significance.

Saitō's estimate of the numbers of *hikikomori* in Japan at the millennium – between 1 million and 1.2 million - became the standard figure used by the NHK in their television and radio coverage. Saitō refers to *hikikomori* in the implied context of *parasaitu shingeru* in interview with Michael Zielenziger, citing a dependence on parents engendered through adolescence and beyond.[245]
Sociologist Andy Furlong writes that 'while there is little agreement on the prevalence or the main characteristics of the *hikikomori* phenomenon, there is widespread acceptance of the idea that the last decade has seen a rapid increase in acute social withdrawal'.[246] Furlong has asserted the need to acknowledge the diversity of the *hikikomori* and speculates at least five variations: the psychologically impaired or mentally ill; the *otaku* who is also a shut-in; the 'alternative scene' who actively resist current social frameworks; the 'lonely' who seek social bonds; 'anxious travellers' who are 'undergoing difficult transitions'.[247] Media commentary in Japan has tended to assert the dominance of males within the *hikikomori* population, and representations of sufferers of the condition tend to take male form. Regarding the gender stratification of *hikikomori*, Furlong notes the statistical discrepancies in a variety of studies, noting that the majority of coverage and commentary *assumes* that males far outnumber females,

[243] Saitō, *HIkikomori,* p. 11.
[244] Saitō, *Hikikomori,* p. 36.
[245] Zielenziger, *Shutting Out The Sun,* p. 60.
[246] Furlong in 'The Japanese Hikikomori Phenomenon', in *The Sociological Review,* p. 313.
[247] Furlong in 'The Japanese Hikikomori Phenomenon', in *The Sociological Review,* pp. 321-322.

despite a survey by the NHK finding 53% of respondents to be male, on which he comments that 'it seems very likely that female withdrawal into the home seems so natural within Japanese society that they are largely hidden and unreported'.[248]

Discourse around the *hikikomori* and the detachment of the individual from wider society will be considered in relation to depictions of the initially reticent, naïve or isolated protagonists of *Evangelion*, *Welcome to the NHK*, *Death Note* and *Natsume's Book of Friends* in Chapter Three, and *Serial Experiments Lain*, *Witch Hunter Robin* in Chapter Four. These issues will also inform analysis of depictions of the adolescent socialisation process represented in these *anime* texts as well as *Initial D* in Chapter Five and the videogames *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon* in Chapter Seven, which focus on interpersonal interactions and bond formation. While *ijime*, violence and school absenteeism had been principally discussed as issues affecting male teenagers, female adolescents were debated in terms of *enjo kōsai* ('compensated dating') and the rebellious schoolgirl fashion of the *kōgyaru*, which I will now expound upon.

Enjo kōsai ('compensated dating') and *Kogyaru* Culture

While panics in the Japanese media about *otaku* and *hikikomori* refer principally to male adolescents, debates and media representation circulated around the teenage girl in relation to the phenomenon of *enjo kōsai* ('compensated dating').[249] *Enjo kōsai* is the practice of teenage girls accepting payment for spending social time with an older man, in some cases culminating in some form of sexual contact (but not exclusively). Statistically, the figure of 4% of Japanese adolescent girls having participated to some degree in *enjo kōsai*, sexual or otherwise, was circulated widely.[250] Sharon Kinsella, a leading scholar on contemporary Japanese *shōjo* culture, asserts that the image of the materially motivated high school girl engaging in *enjo kōsai* dominated the Japanese media between the years 1993 to 2000.[251] Photographs in magazines and footage in news reports were often shot from a low angle, emphasising the girls' legs and

---

[248] Furlong in 'The Japanese Hikikomori Phenomenon', in *The Sociological Review*, p. 312.

[249] Sharon Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics: How Compensated Dating Was Sold', in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et al., pp. 54-80 (p. 75).

[250] Rika Sakuma Sato, 'What Are Girls Made of?', in *Millennium Girls*: *Today's Girls Around the World*, ed. by Sherrie Inness (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998) p. 39.

[251] Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics' in *Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et al, p. 54.

ubiquitous white socks, and they focused particularly on the handful of banknotes the girl had earned.[252]

Demonstrating the rapid accelerative motion of media panics in millennial Japan, Kinsella explains the escalation of representations of *enjo kōsai*, which shifted through media forms 'from pornographic magazines and girls' lifestyle magazines to current affairs weekly magazines, from those to broadsheet newspapers and television news and documentaries' leading to reaction from government and NGOs.[253] The number of newspaper and magazine articles featuring the term '*enjo kōsai*' or referring to the associated fashionable teen female sub-sets of *kogyaru* ('*ko*-gal' or simply 'school gal' from *kokosei* meaning high school; identified by sailor uniform and loose, bunched white socks around the ankles) and *ganguro* (bleached hair, darkened skin) rose dramatically between 1995 and 2000, reaching a peak during 1996 and 1997.[254] Anthropologist and Japanese girls' culture scholar Christine Yano states that '*enjo kōsai* became associated with *kogyaru*, to the extent that elements of the *kogyaru* became visual codes for the business of paid socializing.'[255] As Kinsella puts it, 'looking like you might do compensated dating was in style.'[256]

While Kinsella calls seriously into question the validity of the statistics cited in media reportage in order to lend weight to claims of an increase in *enjo kōsai*, the dramatic figure of 4% (equivalent to 175,000 girls in Spring 1996) was used in numerous inflammatory publications.[257] On the so-called 'Four Percent Generation', Kinsella comments that 'numbers embedded in headlines became social facts.'[258] The *enjo kōsai* panic was not merely a product of sensationalist reportage, as Kinsella demonstrates that academic research directly fed into popular media discourse, lending

---

[252] Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics', in *Sociology of Japanese Youth,* ed. by Goodman et al, p. 54.
[253] Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics', in *Sociology of Japanese Youth,* ed. by Goodman et. al, p. 74
[254] Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics', in *Sociology of Japanese Youth,* ed. by Goodman et al, p. 56.
[255] Christine Yano, *Pink Globalisation: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 54.
[256] Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics', in *Sociology of Japanese Youth,* ed. by Goodman et. al, p. 62.
[257] Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics', in *Sociology of Japanese Youth,* ed. by Goodman et. al, p. 73.
[258] Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics' in *Sociology of Japanese Youth,* ed. by Goodman et. al, p. 62.

scholarly weight to claims made about these 'girls in trouble' through 'unearthing, expanding and validating social narratives'.[259]

Christine Yano states that the *kogyaru* is 'a highly transgressive version of the *shōjo*', whose cosmetic rebellion 'should be understood within the context of *kosoku* (school rules) that have long regulated details of dress, accessories, undergarments, hair, makeup and behaviour for students in Japan'.[260] Generally, *enjo kōsai* has not been couched in direct opposition to the strictures of the family, but the weakening of familial bonds was cited as a core issue that permitted the behaviour to develop unmonitored. For example, a 1997 article in the traditionally liberal magazine *Sekai,* by clinical psychologist Kawai Hayao, a prolific voice at the millennium on youth panics, articulated in a conservative manner the 'superficiality' or 'shallowness' of familial relations as causes of the girls' apparent lack of conscience.[261] His field research summary states that in several interviews the girl in question's relationship with her parents was 'notably distant', but that elsewhere a girl was grateful to her parents for her monthly allowance and that while it was more than other girls' received, she needed more money to buy desired items.[262] As Yano summarises, the central questions posed by media reportage on *enjo kōsai* in millennial Japan were 'had consumerism gone too far? Was this a sign of the moral turpitude of the time?'[263]

Similarly, Yoda Tomiko argues that the material motivations of the young prostitutes, 'seems to mirror the commodity fetishism of contemporary Japan'.[264] Masaaki Noda argues that *enjo kōsai* had arisen in a society with no 'cultural framework' for love and sexuality in which sex became commercialized, citing a lack of appropriate locales and situations in which adolescents could interact socially and romantically, and which might engender 'healthy relations' between the sexes.[265] Across several of the 'antisocial' behaviours debated in the Japanese media, both boys and girls are discussed as financially and materially motivated.[266]

---

[259] Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics' in *Sociology of Japanese Youth,* ed. by Goodman et. al, p. 75.
[260] Yano, *Pink Globalisation*, p. 53.
[261] Kawai Hayao 'The Message from Japan's Schoolgirl Prostitutes', in *Years of Trial*, ed. by Masuzoe, p. 242.
[262] Kawai Hayao, 'Japan's Schoolgirl Prostitutes', in *Years of Trial*, ed. by Masuzoe, p. 239.
[263] Yano, *Pink Globalisation*, p. 54.
[264] Yoda, 'Roadmap', in *Japan After Japan*, ed. by Harootunian and Yoda, p. 21.
[265] Masaaki Noda and Kaoru Takamura, 'Japanese Society and the Psychopath', in *Years of Trial*, ed. by Masuzoe, pp. 246-255 (p. 253).
[266] Yoda, 'Roadmap', in *Japan After Japan*, ed. by Harootunian and Yoda, p. 21. See also John McCreery, *Japanese Consumer Behaviour: From Worker Bees to Wary Shoppers* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), pp. 78-79.

Discourse around the teenage girl as rebellious, operating outside of established gender norms and threateningly counter-cultural will illuminate analysis in Chapter Four of the representation of troubled, reticent adolescent female protagonists in the *anime Serial Experiments Lain*, *Witch Hunter Robin* and *Boogiepop Phantom*, and more recently when considering how representations have shifted outside of the context of these social panics, with the idealised depiction of the High School girl as a redeemable, wholesome and inherently social figure in *K-On!* and *Azumanga*. The depiction of the female adolescent as a materially motivated, fashionable rebel is one representation of femininity circulated in the Japanese media at the millennium. Also highly significant are representations of the teenage girl in *anime* and videogame texts produced for and marketed towards the *otaku*, exhibiting a range of idealised, infantile and fetishistic *moe* characteristics (to be discussed in detail in Chapter Two). The figure of the *otaku*, to which I now turn discussion, has been one of the most debated adolescent male types in the Japanese media, initially as antisocial shut-in and later as active, social contributor to wider Japanese culture.

Approaches to the *Otaku* in Contemporary Japan

The significance of the figure of the *otaku* has been debated in Japan since the late 1980s. The term '*otaku*', purportedly popularised by journalist Nakamori Akio in 1983, came into usage in the 1980s to refer to aficionados and enthusiasts of *anime* and *manga*.[267] Originally a polite form of address, the term was used among *anime* and *manga* fans to denote respect for extensive collections of material or impressive information retention.[268] The *otaku* became conceptually entwined in the early 1990s with the kidnapping, rape and murder of young girls committed in 1988 and 1989 by the 26 year-old Miyazaki Tsutomu, whose extensive collection of *anime*, *manga* and horror films was focused on in media coverage.[269] Newly referring to an antisocial subsection possessing perverse personality traits, the *Yomiuri* newspaper characterised the *otaku* in 1989 as people 'without basic human communication skills who often withdraw into their own world'.[270] *Otaku* has proven to be a flexible term that has shifted meaning and significance over the last 20 years, and several scholars have devoted lengthy studies to

---

[267] Azuma, *Otaku,* p. 123.
[268] Frederick L. Schodt, *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga* (Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press, 1996), p. 44.
[269] Azuma, *Otaku,* p.4.
[270] *Shukan Yomiuri* (*Daily Yomiuri*) *Newspaper* (Sept 10, 1989), trans. and quoted in Hiroki Azuma, *Otaku*, p. 4.

the subject. Surveying the variety of conceptual accounts and definitions of the *otaku* now will provide an overview of the diachronic development of debates in Japan and in global scholarship on the subject in response to constructions found in those debates.

On the one hand, Japanese visual culture scholar Frederik Shodt defined the *otaku* of the 1990s, usually teens but also older males, as individuals no longer able to competently relate to people in the real world, who use fantasy texts, particularly pornographic ones, as a masturbatory escape from anxieties of social integration.[271] In more recent scholarship, however, particularly in the work of Ito Mizuko, the *otaku* is reconsidered and reconfigured from passive, antisocial consumer to an active producer of discourses, contributing to the wider circulation of *media mix* texts through activities such as *doujinshi* (amateur 'fan comics'), fan fiction and *kospure/cosplay* ('costume play').[272]

Iida Yumiko argued that the *otaku* narcissistically withdraws into the imaginary in response to the pressures of everyday social and romantic expectations, cocooned in a safe haven inspired by fantasy media, avoiding the anxieties surrounding potential romance with living women and any embarrassment of rejection.[273] Iida thus views the *otaku* as a problematic indicator of the nationwide Japanese inversion of virtual and real images, and of 'fantasy and real human relations'.[274] Similarly, Anne Allison argues that the *otaku*'s supposed reclusiveness would not necessarily be socially notable owing to the prevalence of 'normal people entrenched in [a] personal bubble anyway'.[275]

Otaku came to refer common-sensically in the 1990s to anyone who might be seen to have an excessive interest in *manga, anime* and their *media mix* product lines, but the term also became entwined with the violent, anti-establishment actions of the *Aum*. Jolyon Baraka Thomas notes the conflation of religious violence and the two media that occurred in the Japanese consciousness after *Aum*'s Sarin attack of 1995, asserting the importance of *anime* and *manga* texts to the doctrines of the organization, well-documented by the Japanese media, and states that after the event they 'came to the fore in discussions of religion and public life, briefly and negatively'.[276]

---

[271] Schodt, *Dreamland Japan*, p. 46.
[272] Ito Mizuko, Okabe Daisuke and Tsuji Izumi, *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected Age* (Yale University Press, 2012).
[273] Iida, *Rethinking Identity,* p. 228.
[274] Iida, *Rethinking Identity,* p. 228.
[275] Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, p. 84.
[276] Jolyon Baraka Thomas, *Drawing on Tradition: Manga, Anime, and Religion in Contemporary Japan* (Honolulu, T.H.: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012)*, p. 2.

Writing in 1994, Karl Taro Greenfeld emphasised the early-1990s *otaku*'s prioritisation of data absorption, where the accumulation and memorising of detailed information relating to the intricate specificities of *anime*, *manga* and videogames' narrative worlds is prized above all else.[277] *Otaku* in this context are principally data consumers, and for Greenfeld they are 'more comfortable with data than analysis'.[278] The *otaku*, able to consume and process large amounts of information, became not a counter-culture but, according to Volker Grassmuck, a mainstream 'ideal workforce for contemporary capitalism'.[279] Ito Mizuko notes that during the 1990s, interaction with technological apparatus through extensive videogame play came to define the *otaku* perhaps more than the original focus on *anime*.[280] Lamarre summarises that the *otaku* plays games excessively and 'without interacting in ways traditionally deemed sociable'.[281]

Initially positioned socially outside of Japanese norms, Thomas Lamarre argues that the success of *Evangelion* in 1995 brought the *otaku* into the national consciousness as a far more visible presence, and increased interest in *anime* more generally.[282] Azuma makes the distinction between viewers/fans of two *mecha anime* television series from separate decades, *Mobile Suit Gundam* (*Kidō Senshi Gandamu*, Sunrise; Nagoya Broadcasting, 1979-1980) and *Evangelion*.[284] *Gundam's* fans prioritised the amassing of information relating to the setting of the series, focusing on the factual minutiae that comprise the narrative world. In contrast, fans of *Evangelion* in the 1990s, a 'third generation' of *otaku*, did not concern themselves with the details of the narrative's world but with the imagery, character designs and generic setup, needing 'settings to empathise with the story's protagonist, to draw erotic illustrations of the heroine, and to build enormous robotic figures'.[285]

Discussing the importance of appealing character design in *anime* when budgetary restrictions limit expressions and movements, Lamarre uses the example of

---

[277] Karl Taro Greenfeld, *Speed Tribes: Children of the Japanese Bubble* (London: Boxtree, 1994), p. 234.

[278] Greenfeld, *Speed Tribes*, p. 234.

[279] Volker Grassmuck, '"I'm Alone, but not Lonely" Japanese Otaku-Kids colonize the Realm of Information and Media: A Tale of Sex and Crime from a Faraway Place' (1990) Available at: <waste.informatik.hu-berlin.de/Grassmuck/Texts/otaku.e.html> [Accessed 4.9.2013].

[280] Ito Mizuko, 'Gender Dynamics of the Japanese *Media Mix*' in Kafai, Yasmin, Carrie Heeter and Jill Denner, eds., *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2008), pp. 97-110 (p. 101).

[281] Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 152.

[282] Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 153.

[284] Azuma, *Otaku*, p. 38.

[285] Azuma, *Otaku,* p. 38.

Evangelion's Ayanami Rei, as figurines in her likeness sold in 'unprecedented' numbers.[286] His conclusion is that owing to the visual, emotional and sensory impact of a character's design, it is not a requirement that the consumer likes, identifies with or feels empathy towards a character for it to capture the imagination and enjoy wide circulation.[287] Jonathan Clements notes the popularity of an *Evangelion* slot machine in 2007 with slender ties to its source narrative: as the machine is operated, a female character cheerily shouts slogans about angels attacking Tokyo.[288] Azuma finds that many *Evangelion* fans do not in fact privilege the television *anime* as the 'original', but interact with the breadth of media that are seen to comprise the phenomenon.[289]

Azuma asserts that the Japanese *otaku* privileges emotional ideals communicated within visual representation over storyline complexity.[290] Enthusiasts employ the term *moe* (from *moeru*, 'budding'), referring to emotional affect and attraction they feel towards characters and scenarios.[291] Huber summarises *moe* as the adolescent feminine ideal, 'energetic, perky, yet innocent and vulnerable'.[292] The *otaku* fan relationship is one of 'ambiguously chaste infatuation... for the characters that embody those ideals'.[293]

Jeffery Deitch described the *otaku* as a 'person-as-information', who is 'defined by their possessions more than by their inherent character'.[294] The privileging of material objects and of fantasy over reality is embodied potently by the lucrative business of dolls and plastic figurines based on *anime* and videogame character designs.[295] Figurines exist principally in limited runs of boxed figures sold in specialist stores, particularly in commercial areas like Akihabara, and the prevalent *gashapon* coin-operated vending machines which randomly dispense a plastic ball containing a figure from a particular series.[296] In Napier's commentary on Japanese figurines, doll collecting compensates for social atomisation and eases the subject's separation from

---

[286] Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 205.
[287] Lamarre, *Anime Machine,* p. 206.
[288] Jonathan Clements, *Schoolgirl Milky Crisis: Adventures in the Anime and Manga Trade* (London: Titan, 2009), p. 201.
[289] Azuma, *Otaku*, p. 38.
[290] Azuma, *Otaku*, pp. 35-36.
[291] Azuma, *Otaku*, p. 36.
[292] Huber, 'Some Notes on Aesthetics' in *Videogames and Art*, ed. by Andy Clarke and Mitchell Grethe (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), p. 212.
[293] Huber, 'Some Notes on Aesthetics' in *Videogames and Art*, ed. by Clarke and Grethe, p. 212.
[294] Jeffrey Deitch, *Post Human Exhibit Catalog Essay* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 1992) Available at: <www.artic.edu/~pcarroll/PostHuman.html> [Accessed: 8.7.2013] Para. 29.
[295] Susan Napier, 'Lost in Transition: Train Men and Dolls in Millennial Japan', in *Mechademia 3*, ed. by Lunning (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2008), pp. 259-261 (p. 260).
[296] See Chris Kohler, *Power Up: How Japanese Games Gave the World an Extra Life* (Indianapolis, Ind.: BradyGames, 2004), p. 200. The name is derived from the noise made by the machine's vending handle as it is cranked.

other people.[297] Dolls provide a 'defense against the emptiness ('*kyomu*') that seems to swirl around much of modern Japanese life'.[298] She sees the collection of dolls as a primary indicator of the dissolution of the perceived borders between everyday Japanese existence and the realm of the fantastic and imaginary.[299]

Thomas Lamarre notes that after the huge popularity of *Evangelion* and other *anime*, there began in the late 1990s a reorientation of public perception of the *otaku* into a 'fundamentally good and redeemable young man who had buried himself in *anime* and games'.[300] Most recently it is the strategies of the 'Cool Japan' government initiative that constitute an attempt to reorient local and global perception of the *otaku* and their place within Japanese society.[301] A special 2011 issue of the *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* focuses on the strategies inherent in the branding of 'Cool Japan' by the Japanese government. Aimed at overseas expansion of the Japanese 'creative industries' (including *manga, anime*, film, fashion, art) the brand saw the attempted reorienting of public and global perceptions of Japanese phenomena including the *otaku*.[302] The *otaku* as hyperactive consumer and aficionado of creative industries (announced as a culturally-specific figure) is positioned at the fore of promotional advertisements, including a Japan Travel Bureau guidebook titled *Cool Japan: Otaku Japan Guide* (2008) which capitalizes on Western interest in the areas of technology and commerce exemplified by Tokyo's Akihabara.[303] When Laura Miller addresses the reorientation of *otaku* discourse by the 'Cool Japan' initiative, she notes the absence of representation of girl fans and enthusiasts. Miller's article finds that this newly reified active and productive *otaku* is exclusively male, with female agency removed from discourse.[304] In 'Cool Japan', she argues, women are represented not through activity but through infantile *kawaii* cuteness, which like the *otaku* and the

---

[297] Napier, 'Lost in Transition', in *Mechademia 3*, ed. by Lunning, p. 260.

[298] Napier, 'Lost in Transition', in *Mechademia 3*, ed. by Lunning, p. 260.

[299] Napier, 'Lost in Transition', in *Mechademia 3*, ed. by Lunning, p. 261.

[300] Lamarre, *Anime Machine,* p. 152.

[301] The phrase was coined by Douglas McGray in 2002, identifying the export potential of popular culture seen to be intrinsically Japanese, including *manga, anime* and other *otaku*-associated phenomena. It was taken up by the Japanese government in 2010. See Douglas McGray, 'Japan's Gross National Cool', in *Foreign Policy*, May 2002. Available at: <http://www.douglasmcgray.com/cool-japan.html> [accessed 9.6.13].

[302] Jonathan Abel, 'Can Cool Japan save Post-Disaster Japan? On the Possibilities and Impossibilities of a Cool Japanology', in *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, Vol. 20, Issue 1 (Nov. 2011), pp. 59-72.

[303] See Patrick Galbraith, 'Akihabara: Conditioning a Public '*Otaku*' image' in *Mechademia 5*, ed. by Frenchy Lunning (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), pp. 210-230.

[304] Laura J. Miller, 'Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan', in *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, Vol. 20, Issue 1 (Nov. 2011), pp. 18-29

Akibakei ('Akihabara type', someone who frequents the district and its shops) is announced as a culturally specific Japanese phenomenon.

As translator J. Keith Vincent notes of psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki's conception of the *otaku:* 'as their fantasies lead them to proliferate multiple fictional worlds, the effect is to dehierarchise the relation between fantasy and reality'.[305] For Saitō, this 'dehierarchisation' is neither problematic nor pathological. A 2002 conversation between Saitō Tamaki, Azuma Hiroki and feminist critic Kitano Mari demonstrates their different psychoanalytical conceptions of the *otaku* in relation to sexuality. For Azuma, desire for an imaginary character expression through masturbation is pure auto-eroticism and does not constitute sexuality; for Saitō, the act is sexual and indistinguishable from 'real' experiences with human partners; similarly for Kotani, *otaku* can define a subject's sexuality and the preference for the 'fictional' is a valid one.[306] While Azuma maintains that the *otaku* have 'given up on sexuality as an intersubjective experience', Saitō conversely sees the *otaku*'s placement on an equal stage of the fictional and the real as representative of the equivalent value given to the imaginary and the real by Japanese society at large in a media-saturated age.

Locating the *otaku* in contemporary Japan is a vexed task, but these diachronic viewpoints on the shifting cultural understanding of the *otaku* in Japan provide valuable insights into the representation of male adolescents in *anime* and videogames. In Chapter Three, I will consider the evolution of debates and representations of the *otaku* in relation to adolescent male *anime* protagonists, particularly in connection with discourse around the *hikikomori* and how the two types have been discriminated between as discussion has evolved over time. I will then return to discussion of the *otaku* in Chapter Eight in order to ascertain connections between the *otaku* and the wandering adolescent explorer and collector represented in Japanese videogames.

In Chapter Three, I will consider the *otaku*'s relationship to teenage male protagonist within the context of other youth panics including *hikikomori, ijime* and the monstrous adolescent embodied by the child killer *Shōnen A*. In Chapter Eight I will return to the figure of the *otaku* in relation to the male protagonist of action-adventure videogames, considering particularly the emphasis on the acquisition of objects, the negotiation of space and the dynamic of gender as they interact with representations of the *shōjo*. The *otaku* has arguably emerged within a cultural setting that has embraced consumer culture and has been debated in terms of materialism and the excessive

---

[305] J. Keith Vincent, Introduction to Saitō Tamaki, *Beautiful Fighting Girl*, trans. by Keith Vincent and Dawn Lawson (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. xx.
[306] J. Keith Vincent, Introduction to Saitō Tamaki, *Beautiful Fighting Girl*, p. xxiii.

freighting of value onto desirable objects. Discussion of these phenenomena has formed the basis for the debates I will now examine around the increasing commodification of childhood in contemporary Japan.

Materialism and the Commodification of Childhood in Contemporary Japan

Anne Allison characterises Japan at the millennium through the discussion of a 'national obsession with material things'.[316] Japanese national identity has been shaped by a capitalist work-drive to achieve a high level of business growth and financial success, with material consumption figuring as both a reward and an incentive to performance.[317] Moreover, fad culture dominates modern Japan, with children and teenagers eagerly purchasing and consuming the latest trends. Owing to the high level of importance placed on image in contemporary Japan, those relating to visible fashions and self-image, including style accessories, accoutrements and gadgets are most popular.[318] Merry White asserts that the consumer industries and media in Japan 'directly market teen communication and acceptability'.[319] Similarly, Millie Creighton identifies in representations of younger children in the media in the early 1990s a convergence of images of 'humanness', children and consumerism, 'such that consumerism becomes the operator connecting the young child to greater participation in the public social world'.[320]

Richie notes the significance of the phrase *imeji cheinji* ('image change') enthusiastically used by the young to express approval at some change in a peer's appearance.[321] Paradoxically, he finds novelty and groupist tendencies to be celebrated apparently equally. He argues that the Japanese trend and image industry is in continual flux, with originality a concurrent requirement to appearing appropriately fashionable, and he flippantly summarises that the appearance of an exciting new style will 'indicate merely how to be different in a manner everyone else will shortly be'.[322] With

---

[316] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 67.
[317] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 69.
[318] Richie, *The Image Factory,* pp. 7-9.
[319] Merry White, *The Material Child: Coming of Age in Japan and America* (CA: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 103-104.
[320] Millie Creighton, 'The Shifting Imagery of Childhood Amidst Japan's Consumer Affluence: The Birth of the "5 Pocket Child"', in *Images of the Child*, ed. by Harry Eiss (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994), pp. 77-102 (p. 97).
[321] Richie, *The Image Factory,* p. 7.
[322] Richie, *The Image Factory,* p. 7.

production and consumption speeds in Japan at high levels, the consumer industries 'churn out novelty in mass- at which point it ceases to be novelty'.[323] This fad culture, and the transient nature of desirable objects, leads to the inevitable discarding and arbitrary devaluation of artefacts.[324]

Allison notes the ubiquity of expensive, luxury artefacts sported by young Japanese (e.g. clothing and objects designed by Gucci, Prada, Louis Vuitton), with the commonality of such apparently exclusive products striking: the 'excessive and mundane signs of material abundance'.[325] She demonstrates the deep significance of materialism and consumer culture on the Japanese psyche as she cites the psychiatric phenomenon diagnosed with regularity in the 1990s of the *mono no katari no hitobito* ('person who talks about things').[326] In psychotherapy sessions, a large number of patients focus their attentions on material details and the relationship of the self to objects rather than to others, exhibiting a materialistic 'propensity to classify everything'.[327]

Sociological studies have investigated contemporary Japan's tendency towards materialism and trend as a manifestation of social conformity that is partly rooted in Japanese society's cultural assumptions about itself. *Shudan ishiki* ('group consciousness') strongly influences the circulation of cultural values and opinion, as do the concepts of *uchi* ('inside' and/or 'insiders') and *soto* ('outside' and/or 'outsiders') referring to those within and without particular social circle.[328] While those who are *soto*, most notably foreigners, are treated with formal cordiality and courtesy, agreement within the perceived bounds of the sphere is privileged and sought-after. This culturally embedded desire for 'harmony' and agreement results, according to Davies and Ikeno, in the individual's inability to resist conforming to dominant beliefs, aims and opinions, following trend at the expense of personal viewpoints.[329]

Japanese cultural and class diversity is concealed, Chris Burgess states, through 'ideological tools' that maintain a self-perception as 'mono-cultural, homogenous, and

---

[323] Richie, *The Image Factory*, p. 9.

[324] Richie, *The Image Factory*, p. 12.

[325] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 67.

[326] Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, p. 87.

[327] Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, p. 87.

[328] Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle, 2002), pp. 195-196.

[329] Davies and Ikeno, *The Japanese Mind,* p. 196.

unique'.[330] He argues the persistence through the 1990s in Japan of what Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* calls 'official nationalism', which is the 'instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations'.[331] A significant indicator of this view is the discursive strategy to be found within *Nihonjinron*, the heavily government-funded, nationalistic academic discipline prevalent in the post-war years that privileges the 'study' of Japanese culture based upon the ideological tenets that Japanese society is unique on the world stage, and that group orientation is the dominant cultural pattern which positively shapes behaviour.[332] Burgess finds that 'a central premise of *Nihonjinron* is that the Japanese are a homogenous people (*tan'itsu minzoku*) which constitute a racially unified nation (*tan'itsu minzoka kokka*).'[333]

Japan has only recently come to demarcate the teenage years separately to the blanket term 'child' within the life cycle, and can be understood to emerge from these contexts of conformity and materialism.[334] There is no Japanese word to denote adolescence, with the term *chīnēja* ('teenager') borrowed from English since the 1960s.[335] The distinction between adolescent and child in Japan was made initially by marketing analysts in order to pinpoint a 'new market-driven population segment', at whom consumer products could be targeted.[336] White states that *chīnēja* relates to the economic power of adolescents, referring in Japanese understanding to 'styles, aspirations, a way of thinking and behaving', with consumer product choices demonstrative of those values. [337] Behaviours and cultural practices exhibited by teenagers are quickly fed back into market and media definitions of adolescence and

---

[330] Chris Burgess, 'Maintaining Identities: Discourses of Homogeneity in a Rapidly Globalizing Japan', in *EJCJS* (Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies) (April, 2004) <www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/Burgess.html> [accessed 8.8.2013] p. 1.

[331] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 104.

[332] Sugimoto Yoshio and Ross Mouer, *Images of Japanese Society: A Study on the Structure of Social Reality* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1986), p. 406.

[333] Chris Burgess, 'Maintaining Identities', in *EJCJS,* p. 7.

[334] Merry White, 'The Marketing of Adolescence in Japan: Buying and Dreaming', in *Women, Media and Consumption*, ed. by Moeran and Skov, pp. 255-273 (p. 255).

[335] Words derived from English abound in the modern Japanese lexicon, with bold slogans littering advertisements and fashionable clothing. This derives partly from an acknowledgement of English as a global language as Japan entered the world stage more forcibly in the 1980s and opened channels of communication with the West. For an exhaustive recent account of Japan's incorporation of English vocabulary, see Philip Seargeant, *The Idea of English in Japan: Ideology and the Evolution of a Global Language* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2009).

[336] Merry White, 'Marketing of Adolescence', in *Women, Media and Consumption*, ed. by Moeran and Skov, p. 256.

[337] White, *Material Child*, p. 113.

consumer artefacts are constructed and marketed accordingly.[338] Japan's introduction to the notion of the teenager was experienced concurrently to the rise of strict business and work ethics and the emergence of a pronounced materialism.

Norma Field argues that a 'disappearance' of childhood has occurred in Japan, the child and adolescent caught in a mentally and physically punishing system of *juku* cram schooling and excessive work demands, leading to their perception as objects for labour and consumption, ensuring Japan's secure future development.[339] Aoyogi Hiroshi states that the perception of the Japanese adolescent is as 'current consumer, future labour-force'.[340] Andrea Arai states that onto the child has been placed the burden of social reconstruction as a 'site of national investment', and hence in the media a site around which fears of societal and individual futures can circulate.[341]

White acknowledges that there is a relationship to be found between media and consumer elsewhere in the modern world but that Japanese youth were distinguished in the 1990s with greater relative affluence than their average western counterpart; they are highly literate and information-oriented; they experience a unique compression of time (regimented routine) and space (restriction); and the relationship between consumer industry, the media and adolescents is highly interactive.[342] In America, White argues, marketing to adolescents established the idea that a sense of individualism through commerce and consumption is achieved and one is accepted socially if a particular brand or item is purchased. In the groupist milieu of fad-oriented Japan, teenagers 'can all be free spirits together, without concern for the contradiction'.[343] While Richie notes that consumer conformity in the age of modern capitalism is a global phenomenon, the discriminating factor in Japan is that nobody denies the fact. Conformity is articulated through the term *wa*, the 'circle of agreement within which a

---

[338] White, *Material Child*, p. 113.

[339] Norma Field, 'The Child as Labourer and Consumer', in *Children and the Politics of Culture*, ed. by Sharon Stephens (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 51-78 (pp. 51-54).

[340] Aoyogi Hiroshi, 'Pop Idols and Gender Contestation', in *Japan at the Millennium: Joining Past and Future*, ed. by David W. Edgington (Canada: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), pp. 144-167.

[341] Andrea Arai, 'The "Wild Child" of 1990s Japan', in *Japan After Japan*, ed. by Harootunian and Yoda, pp. 216-238 (p. 219).

[342] White, 'Marketing of Adolescence', in *Women, Media and Consumption*, ed. by Moeran and Skov, p. 255.

[343] White, 'Marketing of Adolescence', in *Women, Media and Consumption*, ed. by Moeran and Skov, p. 257.

desirable social consensus is possible and without which an irregularity bordering on anarchy is threatened'.[344]

Merry White asserts an emphasis on appropriateness of consumer behaviour and knowledge of contemporary fashions. With a focus on 'appropriate' behaviour and style, the female adolescent 'discovers who she is by what her friends like to wear, to hear, to buy', including pop music and performers; places to buy particular fashionable artefacts; special offers at CD rental shops.[345] White notes the term *infomaniakku* ('info maniacs'), a term exchanged by peers in recognition of their prodigious ability to consume material goods and interact with media. Consumer knowledge is socially important, with equal emphasis placed on fashionable places to purchase and consume.[346] With a skilful negotiation of Japan's commercial environments as significant as material objects, the fashionable teenager will navigate an optimum pathway through the consumer landscape.

Contributing to this commercial framework, the Japanese media construct adolescent film and television stars and pop music performers or *idoru* ('idols') who are, according to Aoyagi Hiroshi, 'marketable role models' whose image, apparent lifestyle choices and consumer preferences will be followed by teen enthusiasts.[347] *Idoru* producers simultaneously observe fashionable teen behaviour and shape it through the marketing of personalities and 'socialising rituals' demonstrating what are viewed to be 'appropriate personal appearances and qualities'.[348]

Given the continual circulation of discourses around cultural homogeneity and adolescent conformity, and the posited negative outcomes of individualism, I am interested in observing the extent to which *anime* and videogames promote and celebrate teenage idiosyncracy or affirm conformity as an essential social trait. In what ways do *anime* and videogames around the millennium engage with the well-known Japanese maxim '*deru kui wa utareru*' ('the nail that sticks up gets hammered down')?

Materialism and consumerism have become intrinsic factors in the organisation of Japanese sex and love lives, according to Lunsing.[349] While 'romantic love' exists as

[344] Richie, *The Image Factory,* p. 167.
[345] Merry White, *The Material Child*, p. 14.
[346] Merry White, 'Marketing of Adolescence', in *Women, Media and Consumption*, ed. by Moeran and Skov, p. 254.
[347] Aoyagi Hiroshi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles: Idol Performance and Symbolic Production in Contemporary Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 66.
[348] Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles*, p. 10.
[349] Wim Lunsing, 'Prostitution, Dating, Mating and Marriage: Love, Sex and Materialism in Contemporary Japan', in *Consumption and Material Culture in Contemporary Japan*, ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, pp. 163-190 (p. 164).

a cultural ideal, material factors strongly influence choice of prospective partners.[350] As unmarried people in their twenties often live with their parents owing to financial limitations, spatial restrictions of the family home may make intimacy impossible.[351] Relationships must therefore be mediated in public places or in commercially rented spaces, necessitating expenditure.[352] The commercialisation of sexuality is embodied by ubiquitous 'love hotels' (3,000 in Tokyo alone; 35,000 nationwide in 2003), borne out of necessity but reaching high levels of extravagance and luxury as they offer a commercialised private space for spatially-restricted couples seeking privacy.[353]

Discourse around the material factors governing socialisation in contemporary Japan will form the framework for discussion of the acquisition-oriented adolescent avatar of the videogames *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon* in Chapter Seven, and of representations of the adolescent in relation to the machine as presented in the *anime Evangelion, Initial D* and *Last Exile* in Chapter Five. As I will discuss in the next section, the impact on the institution of the traditional Japanese family - and the spaces that Japanese families inhabit - of the socio-cultural phenomena I have outlined here has been felt dramatically and debated at length.

The Family in Contemporary Japan

In Chapter Five I will investigate the relationship between representations of the wandering adolescent and debates around children's abandonment, changes to the Japanese family and the experience of space in contemporary Japan. As sociologists Rebick and Takenada assert in their rationale for the edited volume *The Changing Japanese Family*, the 1990s saw fundamental alterations to Japanese self-perception, especially in relation to issues surrounding the family system and social groups. They note the discourse attached to the family in print media, variously describing it in terms of 'crisis'; of 'transition'; or 'more diverse in its forms and definitions'.[354] The marriage rate became lower and the first-marriage age became the highest in the world, the

---

[350] Lunsing, 'Prostitution', in *Consumption and Material Culture*, ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, p. 188.
[351] Richie, *The Image Factory,* p. 64.
[352] Lunsing, 'Prostitution', in *Consumption and Material Culture*, ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, p. 179.
[353] Richie, *The Image Factory,* pp. 64-67.
[354] Marcus Rebick and Takenaka Ayumi, 'The Changing Japanese Family' in *The Changing Japanese Family,* ed. by Rebick and Takenaka (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006). pp. 3-16 (p. 3).

divorce rate higher, and instances of the traditional Japanese three-generation home significantly decreased alongside a rise in the number of single males and females still living at home. The country is also globally the most rapidly ageing. Rebick and Takenada conclude that comparative to other countries, Japan appears not to be unique in its transformation and that, while widespread, claims of a 'crisis' are disproportionate – while the notion of family might be more amorphous and adaptable than previously, it still forms a 'coping mechanism that adapts to, and also shapes, broader demographic, economic and social changes'.[355]

In a conversation published in *Japan Echo* in June 1998, a group of high school teachers note that the generational divide is highlighted by an adolescent unwillingness to engage in conflict with parents.[356] Despite the apparent attention-seeking, rebellious nature of antisocial behaviour and disobedience in schools, teenagers do not wish to involve their parents in the disciplinary procedure.[357] Yonekawa Shigenobu's 2003 study into the relationship between class and youth crime found a significant correlation between youth arrests/incarcerations and a low income, low social class background (e.g. 86% lower class youths arrested for Penal Code violations; 50% imprisioned were from single parent, lower class families).[358] Iwao Sumiko, however, in an essay for *Japan Echo* in June 1997, articulated the unlikely (and since disproven) view that teenagers involved in antisocial behaviours belong to comfortable middle-class families.[359] Identifying a generally experienced 'gulf of mistrust' between generations, she asserts that a lack of moral guidelines communicated by parents to children, shallow interpersonal relationships, and a desire for parental attention are the motivating factors in crimes such as shoplifting and assault.[360] Similarly, in a dialogue between novelist Takamura Kaoru and psychiatrist Noda Masaaki published in *Bungei Shunju* (August 1997), the speakers agree that parental neglect, as a result of preoccupation with earning money, resulted in a lack of children's absorption of information appropriate to their maturity level in terms of moral and social values.[361]

---

[355] Rebick and Takenaka in *Changing Japanese Family,* p. 14.

[356] Suwa Tetsuji, Kawakami Ryoichi, Fujita Toshiaki, Kitamura Noriyuki and Kiire Katsumi, 'Crisis in the Schools: A Colloquium of the Group of Pro Teachers', in *Years of Trial*, ed. by Masuzoe, pp. 260-267.

[357] Suwa et al., 'Crisis in the Schools', in *Years of Trial*, ed. by Masuzoe, pp. 264-265.

[358] Yonekawa Shigenobu, 'Inequality in Family Background as a Reason for Juvenile Deliquency' in Gesine Foljanty-Jost (ed.), *Juvenile Delinquency in Japan: Reconsidering the Crisis* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003), pp. 115-128 (pp. 118-20).

[359] Iwao, 'Problems Among Japan's Young', in *Years of Trial*, ed. by Masuzoe, p. 256.

[360] Iwao, 'Problems Among Japan's Young', in *Years of Trial*, ed. by Masuzoe, p. 258.

[361] Noda Masaaki and Takamura Kaoru, 'Japanese Society and the Psychopath', in *Years of Trial*, ed. by Masuzoe, pp. 246-255 (p. 252).

According to sociologist Wim Lunsing, normative gender roles evolve slowly in Japan, and marriage is still strongly viewed as a necessity to maintaining and reinforcing an intimate relationship.[362] He concludes through interviews and fieldwork that marriage sustains accepted views on gender, shaped by dominant ideologies about how men and women should behave.[363] However, Yoda discusses the significance of the circulation in the Japanese media in the 1990s of 'unsympathetic references' to *parasaitu shinguru* ('parasite singles').[364] Coined by sociologist Masahiro Yamada, the term refers to young working Japanese, particularly women, who continue to live in the parental home in their twenties and thirties, allegedly leading to the prolonging of childhood and childish impulses in the 1990s. Rika Sato writes that this, and other indicators of 'self-infantilisation' including *kawaii* fashion, forms both as a resistance to a dominant familial ideology prioritising motherhood and as a strategy to optimise freedom.[365] Many women refuse to adopt an expected female role characterised by 'sensible maturity', or to take up motherly responsibility in the domestic sphere.[366]

There are several terms relevant to discussion of the Japanese family. *Setai* refers to 'a household, officially defined in Japan as a group of people sharing a kitchen'; *ie* refers to a family lineage, in which the eldest son takes over as patriarch, his siblings either 'marrying out' or 'moving out' of the family home when he becomes head; *kazoku* is most commonly used by individuals to refer to that which constitutes their own family; *katei* indicates the specific place in which the family cohabit.[367]

The Japanese family was traditionally maintained through the *ie* ideological framework, enforced through a legal issue passed in the 19th century which ensures patriarchal hierarchy is continued through the passing of finances and responsibilities from father to eldest son.[368] While abolished in 1947, principles of the *ie* system still dominate cultural conception of the traditional family unit in which sons and sons-in-law are expected to assume a dominant role.[369] The increased responsibility and empowerment of women, as well as increased single-parent families, undermines

---

[362] Lunsing, 'Prostitution', in *Consumption and Material Culture*, ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, p. 180.
[363] Lunsing, 'Prostitution', in *Consumption and Material Culture*, ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, p. 187.
[364] Yoda, 'Roadmap', in *Japan After Japan*, ed. by Harootunian and Yoda, p. 42.
[365] Sato, 'What Are Girls Made of?', in *Millennium Girls*, ed. by Sherrie Inness, pp. 38-39.
[366] Sato, 'What Are Girls Made of?', in *Millennium Girls*, ed. by Sherrie Inness, p. 38.
[367] Rebick and Takenaka, *Changing Japanese Family*, p. 5.
[368] Takahashi, *Audience Studies: A Japanese Perspective,* p. 197.
[369] Takahashi, *Audience Studies: A Japanese Perspective,* p. 197.

dominant values surrounding the sanctity of the *ie* familial tradition, as does the fragmentation of individuals in the domestic sphere.

John McCreery finds that the Japanese family became fragmented not only socially but also in spatial and temporal terms.[370] A 1997 study found the life of the young teenager to be marked by solitude, with most 10-14 year olds eating dinner alone, 44% attending *juku* evening cram schools and on average returning home around 8pm.[371] Observing the daily behaviours of commuters, Allison states that the picture is one of a majority who quietly accept the situation and make little outward demonstrations of unease or malaise.[372]

Susan Napier adapts and collates some of her observations on the family in *anime* found in other essays in the paper 'From Spiritual Fathers to *Tokyo Godfathers*.' Prevalent themes she notes include absentee parents which 'underlines a vast number of *anime*' from *Space Battleship Yamato* in the 1970s to the film *Tokyo Godfathers* (Kon Satoshi, 2003) at the millennium, and the collapse of the family, often as a result of consumer technology, such as in *Serial Experiments Lain* and *Evangelion*. She also suggests the useful idea of the 'pseudo *ie*', seen in a range of *anime* as a 'kind of family that is not constituted by blood relations but by shared work and emotional bonds.'[373] Napier responds shrewdly to Isolde Standish's claim that the teenagers in *Akira* are 'without the emotional clutter of the traditional extended family' with the note that in their new 'pseudo-family' they are still very much subject to this 'emotional clutter', albeit within the extended environment of the sprawling city rather than confined within the *katei* family home.[374]

Anne Allison's research characterises urban Japan as spatially restrictive upon the child and teenager, with an extraordinarily high population density and concurrent lack of municipal areas designated for (free) leisure. She finds that people 'move as much as they stay in place' and that 'nomadicism ... is the trope of everyday life in Tokyo'.[375] Commuting can take up to three to five hours daily and the Japanese urban nomad's travel destinations (home; school; work; games and leisure centre/arcade; shopping centre) are each a significant distance apart from one another and require the

---

[370] McCreery, *Japanese Consumer Behaviour*, p. 255.
[371] Anne Allison, 'New Age Fetishes, Monsters and Friends: Pokemon Capitalism at the Millennium' in *Japan After Japan*, ed. by Harootunian and Yoda, pp. 331-357 (p. 334).
[372] Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, p. 72.
[373] Susan Napier, 'From Spiritual Fathers to *Tokyo Godfathers*: Representations of the Family in *anime*' in *Imagined Families, Lived Families* ed. by Hashimoto Akiko and John W. Traphagan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), pp. 33-50 (p. 48).
[374] Susan Napier, 'Spiritual Fathers', in *Imagined Families, Lived Families,* p. 48.
[375] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 67.

extensive use of public transport. Comparatively few people live in or around the commercial centres of Tokyo, and the rail travel time from the main suburbs to commercial areas exceeds 40-50 minutes for the majority.[376] This establishes the separateness of Tokyo's marketplace to the domestic suburban environs, with travellers alighting with the express purpose of working, purchasing, socialising and consuming. Allison explains that a prime cause of what is referred to as *kojin shugi* - social atomism or 'orphanism' - in the period and beyond has been the long commutes undertaken by each member of a family.[377]

Young people living outside the family home in Tokyo live predominantly in the so-called 'one-room mansions' whose single room doubles as sitting-room and bedroom.[378] DeBoer states that in live-action TV drama representations of these compact dwelling spaces, 'home here is a temporary site used only for sleeping and necessary domestic activities as its small size dictates that all social life must occur beyond its confines'.[379] These small homes are used to locate poignant scenes of isolation and yearning as single protagonists look out on the city with hopes of romance and success.[380]

Suzuki Akira writes nostalgically in his extended architectural essay on changing urban spaces in Japan on the reconfiguration of the *cha no ma*, the 'four-and-a-half mat room', so named for its regulated floor area based on the number of *tatami* mats employed. In previous centuries the Japanese family would gather around a fireplace sunken into the centre of the familial room, which was later replaced by a small circular table and then the *kotatsu*, the square, underheated table, around which members would kneel.[381] The *kotatsu* was placed on a half-sized mat at the centre, with four further mats arranged around it so that the table was at the exact centre of a perfectly square room.

While the *cha no ma* endured in the post-war period, Suzuki notes the significance of the 1964 Olympic Games held in Tokyo as a catalyst for an unprecedented number of families replacing the *kotatsu* with a television set on which to watch the events, and the rise of the Western style family room whose organizational principles revolve around the position of the TV. Suzuki writes about this development

---

[376] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 67.
[377] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* pp. 70-71.
[378] See Suzuki, *Do Android Crows fly over an Electronic Tokyo?*, p. 23.
[379] DeBoer in *Television, Japan and Globalisation*, p. 87.
[380] DeBoer in *Television, Japan and Globalisation*, p. 87.
[381] Suzuki Akira, *Do Android Crows fly over the Skies of an Electronic Tokyo?* (London: Architectural Association, 2001), p. 16.

of the traditional domestic space tellingly as a loss of 'centre' around which the family was oriented in space, time and by speculative extension socially and emotionally – it is common to discussions of the changing familial space to focus on a perceived loss of social bonds through the loss of 'traditional' configurations of space. Extending this trajectory further, in Takahashi Toshie's study of changing Japanese television audiences, he notes that the case subjects he is following conceive of the physical separation brought about by the presence of a television set in multiple rooms of the house, as well as divergent preferences among family members, in terms of 'fragmentation' and is accompanied by nostalgic reminiscences of the time when the whole family would sit together 'in a cosy pile on the floor' watching the same programme.[382]

It is against the backdrop of such perceptions of the changing nature of family and the domestic space in Japan that I will frame analysis of the representation of the family, autonomous teenagers and the negotiation of space in the *anime Evangelion*, *Initial D* and *Last Exile* in Chapter Five. I am particularly interested here in the depiction of surrogate social formations that replace the traditional family or imitate it. In Section Two I will go on to discuss the adolescent experience of space in contemporary Japan at conjunctions with the representation of spatial traversal and interpersonal bond formation by the self-governed teenage avatars of the videogames *The Legend of Zelda Animal Crossing*, *Harvest Moon* in Chapter Seven, *Ico* and *Lost in Blue* in Chapter Eight, and *Final Fantasy VII* in Chapter Nine.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have mapped out a variety of the discursive formations circulated by the Japanese media around the millennium regarding the adolescent as a problematic figure and the subject of social panics as both victim and perpetrator of antisocial behaviour. The issues I have isolated within the overall discursive picture I have drawn are of course not exhaustive but they represent some of the most prominently debated and thoroughly documented concerns, and I intend to deploy these discourses in order to draw out and investigate the variety of meanings generated by representations of the adolescent across *anime* and videogames at conjunctions with the Japanese cultural contexts outlined above.

---

[382] Takahashi, *Audience Studies*, pp. 95-97.

In the multimodal discourse analysis I undertake in this thesis I am particularly interested in exploring discursive consonances between media coverage of debates around the adolescent and the representation of teenagers in my case studies of *anime* and videogame texts, observing how these representations might be seen to variously emerge from, contribute to or break from and reorient circulated discourse. To recap more generally, panics around monstrous or violent adolescents, exemplified by *Shōnen A* and the perpetrators of *ijime*, provide a framework for analysing the representation of male adolescent protagonists in relation to the monstrous and supernatural. These concerns, in relation to the issue of school absenteeism, referred to as *tokokyohi* or *futoko*, and the wider context of a crisis in the Japanese school system provide the contextual parameters for a consideration of the representation of the teenage experience of High School in *anime*. Further, these debates in relation to accounts of the socially detached shut-in, the *hikikomori*, help to situate the representation in *anime* of teenage development and the male adolescent's participation in wider social groups. While these concerns circulated principally around male teenagers, regarding teenage girls at the millennium, the panic around *enjo kōsai* and the allegedly antisocial *kogyaru* sub-culture operates as a frame within which to place representations of the female teenager, the *shōjo*, and consider the extent to which she is depicted in *anime* as a figure provoking social anxiety or of optimism for cultural renewal.

Debates around the *otaku* and studies of *otaku* discourse including the *moe* phenomenon and industry targeting will provide a means of comprehending the representation of male protagonists and their development of social ties, of accounting for the drive towards object collecting in videogames and also the construction of the female adolescent as a figure for *otaku* consumption in both *anime* and videogames. I have argued that the *otaku* has been seen to exemplify the troubling dominance of materialism and signals the commodification of childhood, debates around which will be deployed in order to consider the emphasis on adolescent material acquisition in videogames. Completing the discursive picture I draw in this chapter, commentary on the loss of the traditional Japanese family and the changing experience of space in contemporary Japan will be deployed in order to account for depictions of the family, or the adolescent existing outside of the family, and to consider the depiction of a variety of spaces that the adolescent wanders within in *anime* and videogames.

It should be restated that while I have grouped these issues according to taxonomy and the ways in which they have been debated discretely, I recognize that the phenomenon closely relate to one another within the wider discursive picture of

contemporary Japan during the post-bubble recession period and at the millennium. There is inevitable overlap in media coverage where one might be speculated as leading into or provoking another – for example, the experience of *ijime* bullying on an individual may lead into *tokokyohi* school absenteeism, leading directly to the outcome that a child becomes a *hikikomori* shut-in.

To illustrate this further, of key importance is the fact that there is slippage between treatment of, for example, the *otaku* and the *hikikomori*, where the two categories were treated in very similar terms of a detachment from wider society. When looking in Chapter Three at the *anime* series *Evangelion* and *Welcome to the NHK,* I am particularly interested in considering the shift in debates over time and the strategies deployed in order to discriminate between the two cultural groupings. In Chapters Three and Four I have chosen to look at texts emerging contemporaneously to the debates outlined above followed by more recent examples to diachronically consider how representations have changed, developed or been reoriented in the period after the media coverage of particular panics has subsided.

Now that I have established the discursive parameters of my study of the adolescent in *anime* and videogames, I move on to a mapping out of the industrial factors governing the creation and circulation of *anime*. The next chapter will provide discussion of a variety of categories, genres and tropes found in the medium in order to situate the textual examples I analyse in Chapters Three, Four and Five within wider contexts of production and reception.

Section One

The Wandering Adolescent in Contemporary Japanese Anime from Panic to Abandonment

Chapter Two: Introduction and Scholarship on *Anime*

In this chapter on the specificities of Japanese *anime* I will first give an overview of the variety of scholarly approaches to *anime* that have thus far been undertaken. Following this I will give a contextual introduction to a range of the medium's technical, stylistic and industrial characteristics that can give us insights into the nuances of Japanese production and reception. The chapter will introduce relevant terminology and establish discursive parameters for the discussion of teenage boys (*shōnen*) and girls (*shōjo*) that will take place in the following analysis chapters on both *anime* and videogames. In the following section, I move onto a summary of some of the prominent trends and shifts in the field of *anime* TV series and the way they severally deal with adolescence. I intend here to demonstrate the variety and range of the medium and thereby provide generic and thematic context within which to situate the case studies of individual texts. As I draw attention to a variety of genres and tropes, I will concurrently introduce the findings of key scholarship on the specific issue of the adolescent within *anime* studies.

Anime's Industrial and Scholarly Contexts

The texts that I will refer to throughout this project as '*anime*' are principally serialised television programmes, and I am aware of some conceptual inadequacy inherent in the term. There are a variety of distribution methods for animation in Japan, including full-length cinema releases; the OVA (original video animation), which was released to VHS or DVD, later Blu-ray, without prior scheduled airing; and more recently animation made available in the first instance online. '*Anime*' has been employed by Western distributors, journalists and scholars to refer amorphously to a body of animated works produced in Japan that are seen as possessing stylistic, technical and thematic consistencies uniquely emerging from the Japanese cultural situation. While the word is used in common sense terms to signify through alterity,

isolating a range of texts in the context of the national, there is a range of animated work produced in Japan that bares little resemblance to animated features and TV appearing in the mainstream and problematises *anime* as a catch-all term.

It would not be productive within the confines of this project to present an exhaustive survey of *anime* TV series featuring adolescent protagonists, as the number produced is very large: from 80+ series per year in the mid-1990s to 250+ per year in the mid-2000s.[383] The vast majority of these series feature a principally adolescent cast of characters. To illustrate this, when examining the nationwide survey conducted by the TV Asahi network in 2006 of 'Japan's 100 favourite *anime* series', I found that 55 of the 83 programmes in the list from the 1990s and 2000s featured adolescent (13-18 years old) principal characters, 16 focused on children on the cusp of adolescence (mainly between 10-12), and only 12 featured an adult cast (19+). In the 17 series produced in the 1980s and earlier that appeared in the list, 6 featured a teenage hero while 4 featured a child and 7 focused on adults.[384] I refrain from making overarching conclusions based on this obviously limited source, but it nonetheless points in the direction of the frequency of adolescent protagonists in the 1990s and the popularity among contemporary Japanese *anime* audiences of texts featuring teenagers.

The principle production, marketing and reception categories for *manga* and *anime* are *shōjo* (girl) and *shōnen* (boy), indicating the target demographic, while other classifications include *seinen* (younger adult male readership) and *josei* (younger adult female readership). The majority of *manga* is circulated in periodical anthologies with titles that indicate the target demographic in terms of gender and age (e.g. *Shōnen Jump, Shōnen Sunday, Shōnen Magazine* for boys and *Princess, Margaret, LaLa, Ciao, Ribon* for girls). These definitions helped shape the market for *manga* and *anime* and are worth observing in an analysis of these media in order to observe industrial factors governing production and marketing as well as types of audiences and their preferences. There are a range of representations (particularly of the *shōjo* and *shōnen* characters they depict) as well as styles and aesthetic signifying practices within *manga* and *anime* that differentiate the main categories and demarcate intended audiences, and these are recognizable to consumers aware of context and enable them to identify the classification or intended readership. I will shortly go on to describe a range of these formations in my discussion of *anime* and show examples where particular representations began life in one category but have migrated to the other (especially the

---

[383] Denison et al., '*Manga* Movies Project Report 2', p. 19.
[384] List made available at: <www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2006-10-13/japan's-favorite-tv-anime> [accessed: 13.7.13].

mahō shōjo, the 'magical girl' who originated in *shōjo manga* but is now found in many *shōnen* texts).

There is a great deal of slippage in terms of both style and content in contemporary *anime*, and in terms of audiences (especially in the case of television *anime*) that limits the usefulness of rigid categorization. Many *shōnen manga* have broad female readerships of varying ages, and *shōjo manga* and *anime* are consumed by males; additionally there are 'crossover' texts which migrate style, aesthetic and content across generic boundaries which have proven popular with both sexes – though of course, as *manga* scholar Fujimoto Yukari has discussed, the ways of reading, enjoying and interpreting stories from each gendered category are multifarious.[385] To illustrate further by example, *Evangelion* was successful with a very broad audience across Japan despite its representational formations that situate it very clearly as a *shōnen* work (e.g. giant robots, apocalyptic setting, technological warfare, a male protagonist surrounded by attractive girls).

While the majority of TV *anime* are adapted from *manga* as their source, it is not necessarily always indicative of audience makeup. In the case of *Natsume's Book of Friends*, for example, which I discuss in Chapter Three, the original *manga* was serialised in the *shōjo* anthologies *LaLa* and *LaLa Dx*, though the aesthetic and style of the *anime* series differs somewhat from the source material. The series was produced by the comparatively small *anime* studio Brain's Base, which since 2002 have produced one or two series per year, all adapted from *shōnen manga* – *Natsume's Book of Friends'* closer stylistic and thematic resemblance to the *shōnen* mode is perhaps therefore understandable. While the *manga* is populated by ectomorphic, slender and sparkly-eyed *bishōnen* ('beautiful boy', a prominent feature of many *shōjo manga* I will discuss later in this chapter) the *anime*'s design has a softer, rounder-edged art style that might ordinarily signify it, to audiences familiar with context, as a *shōnen* series. There is also an absence of the romantic themes that are often present in *shōjo* texts. Similarly and conversely, the *shōnen manga* series *Inu x Boku SS* (David Production: MBS, 2012, *manga* serialised: *Gangan Joker*, 2009-) has an art style that closely resembles traditional *shōjo* works.

---

[385] Yukari Fujimoto, 'Women in *Naruto*, Women reading *Naruto*' in *Manga's Cultural Crossroads*, ed. by Jacqueline Berndt and Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 172-191 (p. 172); Jason Thompson, *The Complete Guide to Manga* (NY, NY: Del Ray, 2007), p. 336.

I therefore have been pragmatic when addressing the generic boundaries and target demographic for *anime* television, and my major enquiries into *anime*'s representations of adolescents will not be principally determined in this thesis by categorization as *shōjo* and *shōnen* texts (though I will note target demographic as appropriate or relevant). For example, in Chapter Three I compare the representation of male adolescence across series adapted from *shōnen manga* (*Death Note*), *shōjo manga* (*Natsume's Book of Friends*), *seinen manga* (*Welcome to the NHK*) and in *Evangelion* which was not adapted from a *manga* but most closely resembles a *shōnen* series and had a wide audience base as previously noted. In Chapter Four I then look at representations of female teenage adolescents in five *shōnen/seinen* series (*Serial Experiments Lain, Witch Hunter Robin, Boogiepop Phantom*, *K-On!* and *Azumanga*) that engage with and reconfigure representations that have their origins in *shōjo* stories, as I will discuss shortly.

Future lines of enquiry could usefully explore distinctive representational modes found in *shōnen*, *shōjo* and other categories of *manga* and *anime*, but my focus is on the dominant *shōnen* category. When discussing representations of female adolescents I am particularly interested in those produced for consumption by male audiences within the parameters of *shōnen* texts as I believe that these texts are where scholarly intervention is most urgently required, particularly regarding the troubling depiction of teenage girls within the wider context of their consumption in contemporary Japan as eroticised objects of sexual desire.

The Field of *Anime* and *Manga* Scholarship

The nascent arena of Western scholarship focused on *anime* and *manga* has developed dramatically in the last 15 years. Initial publications were tentative, journalistic surveys and review-oriented introductions to the field that sought to decode some of the themes and imagery in terms of their Japanese cultural origins for Western viewers new to *anime*.[386] The field-changing analysis of *anime* was Susan Napier's

---

[386] e.g. Antonia Levi, *Samurai from Outer Space* (Peru, Ill.: Open Court, 1996); Gilles Poitras, *The Anime Companion: What's Japanese about Japanese Animation?* (Berkeley, CA., Stone Bridge Press, 1998, updated 2005); Patrick Drazen, *Anime Explosion!: The What? Why? and Wow! of Japanese Animation* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2002); Helen McCarthy, *The Anime Movie Guide* (Overlook Press, 1997); Jonathan Clements, Helen McCarthy, *The Anime Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese Animation Since 1917* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press,

monograph *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke* (with a new updated edition published in 2005, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*).[387] Her treatment of dominant themes, motifs and the presentation of cultural explanation remains valuable but the book provides little solid contextual material (she does not distinguish between the modes of *shōjo* and *shōnen;* film and television etc.) and her texts have been selected owing to indistinct parameters of availability and popularity in the West. The book is often ahistorical and has little reference to contextual specificities of production and consumption, but it provides valuable detailed analysis of a range of themes and tropes.

Compared to *anime,* less has been written or compiled on *manga's* production and reception, though essays on the medium feature in the aforementioned collections. The recent, comprehensive *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives* edited by Toni Johnson-Woods addresses this and presents a range of invaluable essays which survey a variety of genres and assess the form's impact both domestically and globally.[388] On the subject of adolescent girls' culture and its relationship with *manga,* Deborah Shamoon gives a thorough tracing of girls' print media from the Meiji era to *shōjo manga* of the 1970s, accounting for the development of aesthetic, stylistic and thematic content in relation to the dissemination of fashionable girls' attire and behaviour.[389] This work on *manga* can give us vital context for and explanation of the figures, settings and themes of TV *anime*.

The last few years has seen the publication of increasingly sophisticated accounts that are grounded in awareness of the specificities of historical and industrial factors governing domestic production and global audience reception. The publication of a handful of essay collections, including those edited by Steven Brown, Dolores Martinez, Mark MacWilliams and Christopher Bolton et al., which address both *manga* and *anime* from a variety of methodological positions, contributed to cementing the seriousness of the two forms as objects of study.[390] Scholarship has become more

---

2001 revised 2006); Gilles Poitras, *Anime Essentials: Everything a Fan Needs to Know* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2001).

[387] Susan Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Susan Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

[388] Toni Johnson-Woods, *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 2010).

[389] Deborah Shamoon, *Passionate Friendships: The Aesthetics of Girl Culture in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), p. 2.

[390] Stephen T. Brown, ed., *Cinema Anime* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Dolores P. Martinez, ed., *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture: Gender, Shifting Boundaries and Global Cultures*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Mark W. MacWilliams, ed.,

engaged with the specificities of Japanese production and reception contexts. From an observation of the technological processes behind *anime,* Thomas Lamarre's *The Anime Machine* seeks to distinguish study of *anime* from cinema, providing a new set of terms within dense formalist commentary to refer to qualities he views as uniquely 'animetic' (as opposed to the cinematic), in which, for example, the limitations of the multiplanar cel-based construction of *anime* and the use of still images are unique to the medium.[391] For Lamarre, this technical situation is not merely industrial but provides a metaphor for theoretical interpretation of *anime*'s themes and representational strategies. Less theoretical but historically grounded, Tze-Yue G. Hu's *Frames of Anime* provides a historical overview of the evolution of *anime* production within a range of Japanese cultural contexts including the transition from traditional artforms and in relation to Japanese philosophical literature on the nature of identity.[392] The *anime* and *manga*-dedicated annual journal *Mechademia* (2006-) comprises essays, reviews and commentaries focused on theoretical and historical research that extends more broadly into areas such as Japanese fashion, consumer industries, fan cultures, *otaku* aesthetics and the production and reception of other Japanese popular cultural forms.[393]

Jolyon Baraka Thomas summarises the comparative and distinctive qualities of *anime* and *manga* in his study of the representation of religion in *anime* and *manga Drawing on Tradition*, and gives concrete technical and stylistic examples of medium-specific signifying practices.[394] Also published recently and demonstrative of this new level of historical and statistical integrity in the field are books by Ian Condry on the industrial specificities of *anime* production, and Marc Steinberg on the positioning of *anime* within the wider Japanese *media mix* framework.[395] The reception work of Ito Mizuko investigates the *media mix* and a variety of fan interactions, with a particular focus on the *otaku* as creator rather than consumer.[396] Invaluable are the rigorous initial

---

Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime (Armonk, New York; London: M.E.Sharpe, 2008); Christopher Bolton, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. and Takayuki Tatsumi, eds., *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007)

[391] Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine*, pp. 3-11.

[392] Tze-Yue G. Hu, *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image Building* (HK: Hong Kong University Press, 2010)

[393] Frenchy Lunning, ed., *Mechademia*, 8 vols. as of July 2013 (University of Minnesota Press).

[394] See Thomas, *Drawing on Tradition*, pp. 45-56.

[395] Ian Condry, *The Soul of Anime*; Marc Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

[396] See e.g. Ito Mizuko 'Migrating Media: *Anime* Media Mixes and the Childhood Imagination' in *Designing Modern Childhoods*, ed. by Marta Gutman and Ning De Coninck-Smith (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. press, 2008), pp. 301-315.; Ito, 'Gender Dynamics of the Japanese *Media Mix'*, in *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat*, ed. by Yasmin Kafai et al.

findings of the *Manga Into Movies* project group on the relationships between media and industrial factors governing the production of *anime*, *manga* and other popular cultural elements of the media mix.[397]

Thomas flags up his own lack of attention to *shōjo manga* and *anime*, which he apologetically attributes to personal preference, and I agree with his speculation that an 'apologetic rationalization' may have governed studies of Japanese popular culture in the early-mid 2000s, with authors seeking to define the idiosyncracies of *anime* and *manga* as culturally unique artforms in an attempt to legitimise their scholarly enquiries.[398] Adding to this, it seems natural that studies should focus on works available in translation in the West, particularly those that gained popularity or received wide-scale release, to appeal to a broad readership and be felt to have relevance to Western scholarship. As more *shōnen* works of science fiction with a focus on technology and urban dystopia were initially translated and made available, it is understandable that these were prominently discussed themes, whereas *shōjo* romance stories, for example, are perhaps less familiar to both audiences and scholars. Initial Western critical interest in *anime* focused on the representation of technology and modernity. This can easily be accounted for owing to the West's mainstream introduction to *manga* and *anime* through futuristic science fiction stories like *Akira* (Katsuhiro Otomo, 1988) and *Ghost in the Shell* (Mamoru Oshii, 1995) which received high profile cinema and VHS releases across Europe and North America.[399] Accordingly, the November 2002 issue of *Science Fiction Studies* focused on Japanese Science Fiction, with three articles addressing the giant robots of the *mecha anime* genre.[400] Jacqueline Berndt correctly asserts that scholars such as Susan Napier 'often fail to explain why particular examples of *manga* or *anime* are discussed and why the Japanese public and experts consider them important'.[401] In Napier's essay 'Four Faces of the Young Female', she discusses four representations of the *shōjo* in *manga* and their relationship with the fantastic and the occult, but does not ask if there is any

---

[397] See reports available at: <www.mangatomoviesproject.com>

[398] Thomas, *Drawing on Tradition,* p. 7.

[399] On the global reception, national significance of and scholarly interest in Japanese science fiction, see Bolton et al., 'Introduction' to *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams*, ed. by Bolton et al., pp. vii-xxii

[400] *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 29, No. 3, 'Japanese Science Fiction' (Nov., 2002).

[401] Jacqueline Berndt, 'Considering Manga Discourse' in *Japanese Visual Culture*, ed. by Mark MacWilliams, pp. 295-310, (p. 296).

distinction between, for example, *manga,* cinema, TV, *shōnen* or *shōjo* modes – instead she states the series she discusses are popular with both male and female readers.[402]

What is *Anime*?

Around 90% of *anime* television series originate as *manga* serialised comic books.[403] Jolyon Baraka Thomas adequately summarises:

> *Manga* are… illustrated serial novels that comprise juxtaposed panels that combine artwork and text. These panels are read sequentially from right to left and top to bottom, although artists occasionally mobilise other modes of composition and sequencing, such as superimposing one panel above another or breaking the frame of a single panel to emphasise dynamic movement. *Manga* are usually initially published in episodic form in large weekly or monthly magazines of several hundred pages, with a single episode by a particular author occupying only a fraction of an issue.[404]

As with '*anime*', there are problematic implications of homogeneity when referring amorphously to '*manga*' as any and all Japanese comic books, when the range of styles and subject matter is so large. Nonetheless both words function adequately as terms when used to orient discussion, as long as we remain aware of the risks of oversimplification and generalisation.

In the 1990s, the market for *manga* made up around 40% of print media sales in Japan, though there has been a decrease in recent years in line with a range of factors including the availability and popularity of media in electronic forms.[405] While the print industry is healthy in its own right, *manga* is a proving ground for stories and characters that if popular with readers will likely be adapted into *anime* TV series with branded merchandise simultaneously accompanying or swiftly following airing.[406] *Shōnen*

---

[402] Susan Napier, 'Vampires, Psychic Girls, Flying Women and Sailor Scouts: Four Faces of the Young Female in Japanese Popular Culture', in *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture*, ed. by Dolores P. Martinez, pp. 91-109.

[403] Thomas, *Drawing on Tradition*, p. 4.

[404] Thomas, *Drawing on Tradition*, p. 3.

[405] See Denison et al., '*Manga* Movies Project Report 2', pp. 11-12; Also Thomas, *Drawing on Tradition*, p. 3.

[406] Thomas, *Drawing on Tradition*, p. 4.; Also see Mark MacWilliams, Introduction to *Japanese Visual Culture* ed. By MacWilliams, pp. 3-25.

(boys) *manga* makes up a far larger percentage of the *manga* market than *shōjo* (girls) *manga* in terms of production and consumption.[407] Similarly, *shōnen anime* is the most widely produced and has the largest audience base in Japan.

Animation scholar Paul Wells defines animation as:

> the artificial creation of the illusion of movement in inanimate lines and forms. A working definition, therefore, of animation in practice, is that it is a film made by hand, frame-by-frame, providing an illusion of movement which has not been directly recorded in the conventional photographic sense.[408]

As Marc Steinberg points out, this definition privileges the simulation of fluid motion within the animated frame, but as both William Routt and Thomas Lamarre have argued, the 'stillness' of the *anime* image is vital to its construction, either intentionally or owing to budgetary constraints.[409] Steinberg notes broadly that the two principal *anime* modes in Japan are historically the financially restricted, time-saving 'limited' style common to TV series and the more fluid 'full animation' found in cinema releases with larger budgets and with longer production times and more staff.[410] This of course has evolved over the last few decades as TV series have had larger production budgets, though as a rule of thumb the animation found in theatrical releases tends to be of a superior quality, for example in terms of representing fluidity of motion, while TV *anime* seeks to cut corners through reuse of backdrops and lengthy still shots rather than frames containing a lot of busy movement. *Anime* historian Tsugata Nobuyuki's defining characteristics of *anime* are that it is constructed using cels with a production remit of saving time, work and costs (distinguishing it stylistically from other global animation industries); it contains character-based storylines with emotional complexity rather than 'simple gags or good versus evil story lines'.[411] Steinberg adds that *anime* is 'primarily organized around television' (and later VHS, DVD and online formats), it is 'inherently transmedial' and it is 'character-centric'.[412] With the final assertion,

---

[407] Jenifer Prough, '*Shōjo* Manga in Japan and Abroad' in *Manga: An Anthology,* ed. By Toni Johnson-Woods, pp. 93-106, (p. 94).
[408] Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998), p. 10.
[409] For technical accounts of *anime* production and the significance of limited animation, see Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix*, pp. 1-7; William D. Routt, 'Stillness and Style in *Neon Genesis Evangelion'* in *Animation Journal,* 8.2 (Spring 2000), pp. 28-43.; Lamarre, *The Anime Machine,* pp. 3-44.
[410] Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix*, pp. 7-8.
[411] Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix*, p. 8.
[412] Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix*, p. 8.

Steinberg refers to the singular importance of the design-work and ascribed emotional and behavioural traits of *anime* characters, where appealing characters are fundamentally important to the marketability of *anime* texts when they assume the form of figurines and adorn a variety of commercial artefacts.

In 2008 there were more than 400 *anime* production companies of varying scale, with a majority based in Tokyo.[413] Studios will make a wide variety of styles and genres of *anime* dependent on arrangements secured with the firms who own intellectual property rights, though some studios become associated with particular modes. For example, the Sunrise studio has produced a range of *mecha anime* including *The Vision of Escaflowne* (*Tenkū no Esukafurōne:* Sunrise; TV Tokyo, 1996), *Patlabor (Kidō Keisatsu Patoreibā,* Sunrise; NTV, 1989-1990) and *The Big O* (*Tha Biggu Ō,* Sunrise; Animax, 1999-2000), but also developed the supernatural period comedy *InuYasha ,* (*Sengoku Otogizōshi InuYasha,* Sunrise; NNS, 2000-2004). Studio Gainax, which became hugely successful with the *mecha* series *Evangelion*, followed it with the romantic high school comedy *His and Her Circumstances* (*Kareshi Kanojo no Jijō,* Gainax; TV Tokyo, 1998-1999). If an *anime* is based on a pre-existing *manga*, it is common for the print publisher to fund the production, even paying the television network for the time slot at which it will be shown. Sponsorship and deals with advertisers and production companies working in the different fields that will comprise the *media mix* are integral to TV *anime* funding, and sponsors will principally fund scheduled TV airtimes. The *Manga Into Movies Project* finds that while television remains integral to marketing, *anime* TV series in recent years are 'provided (near-)free to stations as a promotional tool, the cost of which is expected to be returned through the sales from secondary markets'.[419]

Japanese firms employ the amorphous industrial term *kontentsu* ('contents') to refer to the multiplicity of commercial opportunities a character brand will enable. Oyama Hidenori of the prolific *anime* firm Toei confirms the view that companies need 'to engage in the content-related product business or copyright business to make a profit' and that in fact future productions would simply not be possible without the

---

[413] Gilles Poitras, 'Contemporary Anime in Japanese Pop Culture' in *Japanese Visual Culture* ed. by Mark MacWilliams, pp.48-67, (p.63).
[419] Denison, et al., '*Manga* Movies Project Report 2', p.18.; See Denison, et al., '*Manga* Movies Project Report 1' for full investigation.

finances generated from character-branded merchandise and other uses of the intellectual property.[420]

While the *media mix* franchise is clearly prominent as a business model in the Japanese popular culture industries, it is especially important not to assume an equivalent value attributed by audiences to all variations of a character brand. Analysis that takes account of all permutations of a character franchise ranging from commercial products to the wide variety of fan-produced *manga* and pornography is at risk of assuming a consumer who is equally conversant with all variations, and that each 'version' of a property has a qualitative impact upon the reception of others. This would be very difficult to measure adequately. For example, the *Initial D* brand existed first as *manga* (serialised in *Young Magazine* 1995-2013), then as *anime* (*Inisharu Dī*, Pastel & Studio Gallop; Animax & Fuji TV, 1998), then as arcade videogame, then as live action film series, then as home console videogame: it is wholly plausible that a consumer has experience of all, some, none or just one of these products and this experience will inform their reception and interpretation. If we assume equal knowledge and prioritisation of elements of a *media mix* (and indeed move completely away from a discussion that only addresses one form such as an *anime* series) we are in danger of arriving at misleading conclusions that do not effectively represent any actual modes of consumption, but arrive at a hypothetical comprehension of a text's resonance in the event that a consumer must have experienced each and every permutation.[422] In short, my analysis of Japanese popular culture will bear in mind the wider *kontentsu*-driven production and reception context of character brands but will seek first and foremost to examine thematic, stylistic and narrative functions at work within the animated texts themselves, and to propose cultural explanation for a variety of representational strategies.

When explaining the idiosyncratic properties of *anime*, Western critics have tended to position themes and content in relation to an assumed but not demarcated measuring post, ostensibly Western animated film and television (but often the comparative parameters are not made clear). When asserting the characteristics we might consider distinctive to Japanese *anime,* Gilles Poitras observes that common

---

[420] Nagata Kazuaki, 'Exporting Culture via "Cool Japan"' in *The Japan Times* (online edition) (15 May 2012), available at: http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2012/05/15/news/exporting-culture-via-cool-japan/ [accessed 1.7.2013].
[422] See Azuma, *Otaku,* pp. 25-96, for discussion of *media mix* production and consumption, and pp. 37-38 for *Evangelion* as a specific example; see also Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix,* pp.142-149, on the development of *media mix* products and marketing strategies from *Astro Boy* in the 1950s to examples from the 2000s.

features are 'nonlinear tales, flashbacks, foreshadowing, slow pacing, character development'.[423] He also emphasizes the importance of emotional expression in *anime*, derived from the Japanese literary interest in the negotiation of feelings.

The depiction of heightened, exaggerated feelings is a crucial characteristic of *anime* TV. Many TV *anime* contain visual cues and abbreviations forming a lexicon that immediately communicates emotional state to audiences familiar with established conventions. This occurs mainly at the level of facial and bodily expression rather than within the *mise-en-scene*, which is often sparse. Prominently, the size of characters' eyes is often remarked upon in relation to the relative emotional expressiveness of an individual character, where the larger the eyes the more sensitive a character is understood to be. *Manga* author Tezuka Osamu is widely regarded as initiating this ubiquitous stylistic trait, basing his early drawing on the art style of Disney animation.[424] Owing to the level of abstraction in the facial features of *anime* characters, differentiation in order to avoid confusion occurs via hair style and colour, and the need to individuate within the frame, often cluttered if a series' cast is large, can account for the diversity of colours found particularly among female characters. In more recent years, the variation of colour and style of female hair is more specifically attached to the intention to create characters that inspire feelings of *moe* attachment in male *otaku* audience members. Abbreviations that quickly signal an emotional state might include a teardrop shape hovering slightly above the forehead to indicate, dependent on context, deflation or embarrassment; a small puff of white cloud emitted from the mouth to indicate a sigh; and overreactions or excessive displays of feeling are delivered for comic effect through the *chibi* ('little'; in the West referred to as 'superdeformed') style in which characters are suddenly shown as miniaturised caricatures with features accentuated according to the currently dominant emotion. There is a wide range of cues such as these that has accrued into a lexicon over time and might account for the well-documented initial Western audience response to *anime* as fast-paced, impenetrable or representationally baffling in its manic depiction of emotional states. These signifying phenomena are largely found within the limited animation of lower budget TV productions with tight production schedules as a means of quickly and cheaply displaying emotion, whereas higher budget film-length productions tend not to employ them – instead we find a greater number of fully-animated reaction shots and close-ups to communicate characters' responses.

---

[423] Gilles Poitras, 'Contemporary Anime in Japanese Pop Culture' in *Japanese Visual Culture*, ed. by MacWilliams, pp. 48-67, (p. 62).

[424] Noted repeatedly in *Manga: An Anthology*, ed. by Johnson-Woods, e.g. p. 5, p. 97, p. 243.

Japanese *anime* TV series clearly possess a range of characteristics that have historically distinguished it formally and thematically from live action film and TV, and from other global animation industries, but technical terminology derived from live-action film production and scholarship provides an adequate vocabulary that can inform and guide discussion and analysis. So, I will refer to types of 'shots' (e.g. medium, close-up, establishing) when discussing the framing of characters and locations; 'mise-en-scene' to refer to character position, props, costume, colour temperature and other contributing representational factors; 'editing' and 'cutting' to refer to the juxtaposition of two or more distinct individual shots; 'montage' to indicate a sequence of shots edited in quick succession with the intention of accruing conjunctive meaning; 'long take' to indicate a lengthy unbroken 'shot'. While the film camera performs a different recording function in animation and is used to photograph individual cels in succession in order to achieve the illusion of movement, we can still use the conceit of 'camera movement' in relation to *anime* to talk about changes in focus and subject prioritisation. Mainstream *anime* possesses a point-of-view from which the action is observed that mimics the attributes of the pro-filmic camera of live-action film and TV. Consequently, I will refer to 'panning', 'tracking', 'zooming' and so on when *anime*'s implied camera performs one of these actions that are the hallmarks of mainstream live-action film technique.

As mentioned previously, a defining stylistic feature of the 'limited' style of TV *anime* is the formation of montage through the editing of still frames without 'animated' elements in establishing location and character, even up to the present in series with advanced production means and greater budgets (where it has perhaps been chosen with aesthetic impact in mind). This limited style works to encourage audience generation of associations between separate images as they are juxtaposed. In my analyses I intend to look at some of the meanings created through overarching narrative developments and character progression in conjunction with focus on the accretion through editing of thematic associations between characters, locations and objects.

In my analyses I will place importance upon some of the opening and ending credits sequences of *anime* TV series. These sequences possess the features of contemporary pop music videos: they are lengthy, feature heavily-stylised, quick-paced abstract montages of characters, locations and objects from the series, and are scored with a pop or rock song that will be available to buy as an important commercial

element of the *media mix*.[425] The opening and ending sequences are formally important distinguishing features of TV *anime* and I argue that they contribute significantly to the discursive context for the series as an announcement of the content and themes viewers can expect, forming deeply suggestive associations between images that serve to influence audience reception of the narrative 'proper'.

As Ian Condry asserts through his observations of the prolific *anime* studio Gonzo, a developing storyline in an *anime* is often subordinate to 'the design of characters (*kyarakutaa*), the establishment of dramatic premises (*settai*) that link the characters, and the properties that define the worlds (*sekaikan*) in which the characters interact'.[426] I partly follow his proposition that analysis should be aware that overarching storyline and narrative development may be of arguably lesser importance to both producers and audiences, and that consideration of the interactions of *kyarakutaa-settai-sekaikan* can 'alter our understanding of what *anime* is about'.[427] This is a useful position to occupy, as long as we note that there are character types that hinge upon emotional alterations brought about by storyline developments over time. The female *tsundere* character type found in both *shōnen* and *shōjo* stories, for example, begins as aloof if not outwardly hostile to a male protagonist (*tsun-tsun*, recoiling or curt; icy) before events transpire that shift her personality towards the qualified expression of warmth and positivity towards him (*dere-dere*, to soften; to express affection; warm). In these cases the events themselves may be arbitrary or serendipitous, but nonetheless the phenomenon of time elapsing over the course of a number of episodes is vital to the character's construction. The presentation of the gradual socialisation process and the formation of a social group is integral to the setup and structure of many *anime* and *manga*, so looking at the development of a protagonist over the course of a series should also be fundamental to a discussion of how the wandering adolescent is shown to develop through interactions and experiences.

While we can appreciate that design and setup come first, it would be a mistake not to account for the particular changes that characters are shown to experience – even

---

[425] See Denison, et al., '*Manga* Into Movies Project Report 2', pp. 28-31 for statistics and interpretation of the market for *anime* music in contemporary Japan.

[426] In his experiences observing the series *Red Garden* during production, Condry finds that the attitude of the director to the series is that setting and specific conflicts and collaborations between characters took priority over coherence of plot – when production was underway, the progression of the storyline including the series' ending was not decided upon. See Ian Condry, *The Soul of Anime,* p. 56. Additionally, an interview with Studio Ghibli producer Suzuki Toshio reveals that in 2003 director Miyazaki Hayao prioritised *settai* when adapting the novel *Howl's Moving Castle*, whose plot he changed substantially, and 'as for the story, "really anything would be fine"', Condry, *Soul of Anime,* p. 149.

[427] Condry, *The Soul of Anime*, p. 56.

if these changes are so prolonged and gradual that the initial status quo of a series does not appear to alter too dramatically. It needs to be stated, though, that clearly the multi-episode TV series that will be discussed during the course of this thesis represent a large number of hours of primary material, and it is not sensible to attempt a thorough recounting and analysis of a series' entire narrative structure. Selection is an inevitable part of the critical process, both of texts and of the visual and aural properties within each text. With a view to avoiding being inductive in my reasoning, I will try to establish representational patterns and consonances, as well as significant dissonances, within particular genres and modes, then look to examples that exhibit these characteristics, or may break from them in interesting ways. In each case study I will pay particular attention to the specificities of the *kyarakutaa-settai-sekaikan* relationship, considering the audio-visual establishment of milieu, location and the introduction of, and key moments in, the character development of the adolescent protagonist of each series.

The Adolescent in *Shōjo* and *Shōnen Anime*

In this section I will introduce the representation of male and female teenagers in *shōnen* and *shōjo manga* and *anime*. Representational slippage between *manga* and *anime* genres is complex and difficult to monitor, and this summary will need to move back and forth between *shōjo* and *shōnen* subgenres when observing recurrent themes and motifs that tend to migrate across genre divisions. Additionally, as I have suggested, it is not straightforward to confidently assert the precise age and gender make-up of audiences. For instance, the boys' anthology *Weekly Shōnen Jump* was reported in 2007 as the bestselling *manga* among female readers.[428] Given that the contemporary industry is so extraordinarily mobilised and prolific, it is not my intention to provide an exhaustive survey of contemporary *anime* but to observe some of the trends in the *kyarakutaa-settai-sekaikan* dynamic.

Regarding the mechanisms of genre and Japanese products for adolescents, we might usefully apply film scholar Christine Gledhill's commentary on Western soap opera. Her cultural explanation of genre asserts that there is a balance to be achieved between the presentation of familiar elements that will be recognised by audiences, and

---

[428] Angela Drummond-Mathews, 'What Boys Will Be', in *Manga: An Anthology*, ed. by Johnson-Woods, pp. 62-76 (p.94).

novelty in theme and representation that diverges sufficiently from pre-existing examples to be invigorating and appealing.[429] As Jennifer Prough asserts, producers and audiences of *manga* (and *anime*, whose style and representational strategies grow principally out of print texts) are entwined in an agreement that a balance will be negotiated between the conventional and the original, where 'the pleasure of recognition and the delight in the new that ensures the success of the genre'.[430]

Susan Napier's initial foray into classifying *anime*'s dominant generic modes includes the 'apocalyptic', where cataclysmic science fiction and fantasy narratives of the end-of-the-world signify dramatic social change; the 'festival', found in slapstick and romantic comedies, which celebrates energetic physical exertion and playful performance, mistaken identity and gender transformations; and the 'elegiac', a nostalgic and contemplative mode characterised by slow paced narratives and wistful reminiscence of the past.[431] Of the increased interest in dystopia in the post-bubble period, Napier observes that 'apocalyptic imagery and themes tend to increase at times of social change and widespread uncertainty'.[432] These are useful groupings that can alert us to patterns emerging across the breadth of Japanese popular culture, but they are not exhaustive.

While we can observe different generic modes through sets of prominent tropes, some of which I will outline shortly, we might also group *manga* and *anime* according to the different milieu within which a variety of genres may take place. For example it is undeniable that the High School setting is ubiquitously common to science fiction, romantic comedy and slice-of-life modes in both *shōnen* and *shōjo manga* and *anime*. In series depicting adolescent wanderers, sometimes the location is fixed and the action takes place in a limited local topography while in other examples a journeying wanderer moves from place to place, each location possessing a set of defining geographical characteristics.

---

[429] Christine Gledhill, 'Genre and Gender: The Case of the Soap Opera', in *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices,* ed. by Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1998), pp. 337-386, (p. 355).

[430] Jennifer Prough, '*Shōjo* Manga in Japan and Abroad', in *Manga: An Anthology,* ed. by Toni Johnson-Woods, pp. 93-106, (p. 94).

[431] See Napier, Introduction to *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle,* pp. 12-14.

[432] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, p. 250.

Shōnen* (Boys) *Manga* and *Anime

The majority of published *manga* are in the *shōnen* mode, and among the longest-running and most popular *shōnen* stories are *One Piece* (*Wan Pisu, manga* serialised: *Weekly Shōnen Jump,* 1997-present; *anime:* Toei, Fuji TV, 1999-present), *Naruto* (*Manga* serialised 1997-present; *anime*: Studio Pierrot; Animax & TV Tokyo, 2002-2007), its sequel series *Naruto Shippuden* (Studio Pierrot: TV Tokyo, 2007-present)*, Dragon Ball* (*Doragon Bōru, manga* serialised 1984-1995; *anime*: Toei Animation: Fuji TV, 1986-1989) and its sequel *Dragon Ball Z* (*Doragon Bōru Zetto, anime*: Toei: Fuji TV, 1989-1996) and *Bleach* (*Burichi, manga* serialised 2001-present; *anime*: Studio Pierrot: TV Tokyo, 2004-2012), which have all been serialised in the number one-selling magazine anthology *Weekly Shōnen Jump.*[439] These series are all in a fantastic, journey-focused mode and feature as their protagonist a mid-teenage, male wanderer with a supporting cast of male and female adolescents enjoying varying degrees of autonomy as they make lengthy excursions into geographically diverse unfamiliar territories.[440] Similar quest narratives with male protagonists appear in publications other than *Shōnen Jump*, including the popular *Fullmetal Alchemist* (*Hagane no Renkinjutsushi, manga* serialised: *Monthly Shōnen Gangen,* 2001-2010; *anime*: Bones: Animax, Mainichi Broadcasting System & TBS, 2003-2004). All of these series have been adapted into successful TV *anime* and feature-length cinema releases. Goto Hiroki, editor of the magazine in 1991, stated that the ethos of their stories is that 'if you work hard you can accomplish anything'.[442] This manifests in the shared quality that the wandering adolescents of these series are ambitious and single-mindedly goal-oriented, or become so as the storyline progresses: *One Piece*'s Luffy is a teenage pirate with an adolescent crew who sail between diversely differentiated islands in search of treasure; *Dragonball*'s ninja warrior-in-training Goku is engaged in a quest to find magical artefacts called dragonballs; *Fullmetal Alchemist*'s brothers Edward and Alphonse are 'alchemists', empowered to alter the physical

---

[439] For an overview of significant developments, motifs and aesthetic qualities of *shōnen manga*, see Drummond-Mathews, 'What Boys Will be', in *Manga: An Anthology*, ed. by Johnson-Woods, pp. 62-76.

[440] There are a few notable exceptions to the adolescent protagonist in *shōnen manga* stories including the middle-aged policeman Ryotsu Kankichi in the long-running *Kochira Katsushika-ku Kameari Koen-mae Hashutsujo* (*The Police Station in front of Kameari Park, Katsushika Ward,* serialised in *Weekly Shōnen Jump,* 1976-present), and there are several young adult supporting characters in *One Piece*.

[442] Drummond-Mathews, 'What Boys Will Be', in *Manga: An Anthology*, ed. by Johnson-Woods, p. 75.

properties of objects, who travel across the world in search of the philosopher's stone that will restore their damaged bodies; *Naruto* and *Bleach'*s Ichigo train to become a warriors to defend their homeland from supernatural antagonists.

Despite differences in precise milieu and setting, a common feature of these *shōnen* series is the focus in opening sequences on the teenage protagonist as a wanderer within an expansive sunlit natural terrain, taking in a variety of undeveloped terrain ranging from grassy cliffs and stretches of open sea in *One Piece;* rolling desert in *Fullmetal Alchemist;* to dense woodland and rocky outcrops in *Naruto.*

Additionally I propose that common to these series is the monolithic value attributed to a singular pursuit or search for an artefact around which the action revolves – to excel in the eyes of others as a pirate, a ninja or alchemist or to possess objects that have value attributed to them within the series' narrative world. Given the emphasis on the negotiation of landscapes by the teenage protagonist, I intend in Chapter Five to explore the representation of the adolescent as a wanderer in relation to debates around space, and the lack thereof, in contemporary Japan. To what extent do the adolescents of *anime* experience autonomous traversal and to what extent are they restricted and by what factors? These are key questions I intend to investigate.

The Adolescent Male and Technology

Studies which consider male adolescence in *anime* have thus far tended to focus on the numerous techno-centric narratives which focus on the *shōnen*'s relationship with the mechanical and electronic. As childhood and robotics became intertwined thematically in *manga* and *anime* throughout the post-war period, observing background contextual information helps us to situate the wandering adolescent *shōnen* figure of the 1990s within a representational progression. Mark Gilson asserts that the Japanese public conception of robotics was informed and influenced by *anime*, and that the medium's depiction of a thrilling industrial modernity surrounded by futuristic technologies contributed significantly to the popularity of increasingly proliferate technological devices.[443] Tezuka Osamu's *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan Atomu, manga* serialised: *Shōnen Kobunsha,* 1952-1968), whose storyline follows the development of a weaponised robotic boy fighting military and alien threats while negotiating emotional relationships and prejudices, fundamentally influenced the Japanese willingness to

---

[443] Mark Gilson, 'A Brief History of Japanese Robophilia' in *Leonardo* Volume 31, Issue 5 (October/November 1998), 367-369.

embrace technology and robotics.[444] Tezuka explained of the conditions of *Astro Boy's* production that 'publishers wanted [him] to stress a peaceful future, where Japanese science and technology were advanced, and nuclear power was used for peaceful purposes'.[445] Frederik Schodt asserts that the iconic *Astro Boy*, and by extension robots in general, came to represent a 'wonderful future that science and technology could provide'.[446] This positive presentation of technological apparatus as beneficial, friendly and easily incorporated into everyday life, Gilson suggests, can be traced through to the reassuring 'anthropomorphic quality' afforded by the nomenclature of products like Nintendo's *Gameboy*, Sony's *PlayStation* and *DiscMan*.[447]

The influential and enduringly popular film adaptation of the *seinen manga Akira* is a forerunner to depictions of the wandering adolescent protagonist at the millennium, and studies have commented on the film's representation of the male teenager as a means of addressing social restriction and capitalist excess. Following a gang of disenfranchised anti-establishment adolescent bikers as they traverse a dystopian future Tokyo, the film was 1988's top-grossing Japanese cinema release, and is credited as generating significant interest in *anime* both domestically and worldwide.[448] Some early approaches to *anime* have looked to *Akira* to account for the relationship between the male teenager, modernity and Japanese society. Susan Napier asserts that the teenagers' high-speed motorcycle rides are in stark opposition to cultural stagnation.[449] The motorcycle is presented as 'an agent of change, a symbol of subversive flexibility against a monolithic and indifferent state' as it moves with fluidity through the rigidly fixed environment.[450] She identifies the adolescent body in *Akira* - which in the case of protagonist Tetsuo becomes a site of intense and violent transformation - as a site of contradictory emotions of hope and dread, and embodying despair and entrapment.[451] Freda Frieberg sees *Akira* as a post-industrial allegory of a 'bloated technocratic society out of control'.[452] She connects the film to Japan's accelerated work rates and rigid education and employment system, with urban teenage rebellion emerging from cramped, expensive housing and stifling social

[444] Schodt, *Inside the Robot Kingdom*, p. 76.
[445] Schodt, *Inside the Robot Kingdom*, p. 76.
[446] Schodt, *Inside the Robot Kingdom*, p. 76.
[447] Gilson, 'Japanese Robophilia', p. 369.
[448] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, p. 19.
[449] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, p. 61.
[450] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, p. 18.
[451] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, p. 39.
[452] Freda Freiberg, 'Akira and the Post-Nuclear Sublime' in *Hibakusha Cinema*, ed. by Mick Broderick (London: Kegan Paul International 1996) p .91-102 (p. 100).

predetermination.[453] Freiberg also notes the lack of mother, father and domestic space in the film.[454] For Freiberg, the film operates as wish fulfillment for teenage boys as a railing against authority figures out of mundane familial expectations and the pressure of conforming to societal requirements.[455] Japanese film historian Isolde Standish, in an analysis which contextualises the film through reference to the rebellious teenage *bōsōzoku* biker gangs of the 1980s, sees the key Japanese social factors influencing *Akira* as post-war changes in systems of work and education; changes to the family structure; the rise of mass media; material affluence and its effect on work and leisure time; adolescence as a socially-defined stage of the life cycle and the accompanying economic power of teenagers.[456] She argues in relation to accounts of the the real-world *bōsōzoku* that the film registers as a compensatory fantasy of rebellion against the status quo of a restrictive corporate society, the real-world Japanese teenager having little meaningful influence on societal structure. Writing on the film tends to agree that with *Akira*, *anime* fantasy found the adolescent subject an ideal vehicle for issues of identity instability (both individual and cultural) and concurrently traumatic and thrilling social change.[457]

The *mecha* genre classification refers principally to *anime* in which a giant humanoid robot (a '*mecha*') is piloted by a protagonist inside a cockpit built into the machine. *Mecha anime* were popular from the 1950s onwards, enjoyed enormous mainstream success during the 1970s with the genre-defining series *Mazinger Z* (*Mazjingā Zetto*, Toei Animation: Fuji Television,1972-1974) and *Mobile Suit Gundam* before gaining an even wider audience in the mid-1990s with the airing of *Evangelion*. Lamarre notes that the sheer number of *mecha anime* in the post-bubble period 'defy tabulation'.[458] Several scholars have focused their studies of *anime* on this genre, particularly *Evangelion,* and the title of the journal *Mechademia* reflects this interest. In the classic *Tetsujin 28-Go (Tetsujin Nijūhachi-gō,* Tele-Cartoon Japan: Fuji TV, 1963-1966)*,* giant military robots were radio-controlled by adult operators, while *Mazinger Z* introduced an adolescent human pilot. The genre-defining *Mobile Suit Gundam*

---

[453] Freiberg, 'Akira', in *Hibakusha Cinema*, ed. by Broderick, p. 92.
[454] Freiberg, 'Akira', in *Hibakusha Cinema*, ed. by Broderick, p. 97.
[455] Freiberg, 'Akira', in *Hibakusha Cinema*, ed. by Broderick, p. 100.
[456] Isolde Standish, '*Akira*, Postmodernism and Resistance' in *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture*, ed. by Martinez, pp. 56-74 (p. 58).
[457] E.g. Isolde Standish, '*Akira*, Postmodernism and Resistance' in *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture*, ed. by Martinez, pp. 56-74 (p. 57-58); Freiberg, '*Akira*', in *Hibakusha Cinema*, ed. by Broderick, pp. 91-102 (pp. 97-98); Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, pp. 40-41.
[458] Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 211.

emerged in its first iteration in 1979, with the majority of robot pilots adult males except for protagonist Amuro. In 1995's *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing* (*Shin Kidō Senki Gandamu Uingu,* Sunrise: TV Asahi, 1995-1996), all five of the pilots are 15-year-old boys. Other recent examples include *RahXephon* (*Razephon,* Bones, Fuji TV, 2002), *Gurrenn Lagann* (*Tengen Toppa Guren Ragan,* Gainax: TV Tokyo, 2007) and *Full Metal Panic!* (*Furumetaru Panikku!,* Gonzo: WOWOW, 2002).

Susan Napier argues that *mecha anime* present a complex metaphor for the relationship between man and technology, and the mediation of everyday life by the mechanical - while the robot suits may provide a magnification of bodily abilities, this is potentially at the cost of an intrinsic humanity.[466] Christopher Bolton develops a similar argument with reference to the *anime* film *Patlabor 2* (Oshii Mamoru, 1993), in which there are 'blind spots' and distortions in the viewing apparatus that limit the vision of the *mecha*'s pilot, comprising a series of 'trade-offs' that must be made between physical augmentation and a dehumanising, 'progressive alienation' from the original body.[467] Napier similarly maintains that *Evangelion* problematises the mediation of the adolescent human subject's experience by technology at every turn.[468] Napier feels that the series' narrative is 'unrelentingly grim'.[469] She argues that the three teenagers are not ultimately empowered by the *mecha* robots they operate (referred to as *Evas* in the series), and piloting them leads to physically damaged, emotionally weakened states.[470] William Routt, however, argues that nearly everything visible expressionistically constitutes characters' psychological states, and that the series moves towards a 'psycho-therapeutic ending'.[471] He notes also that the series becomes less concerned with *mecha* combat and, using still images in contemplative moments redolent of avant-garde cinema, focuses on Shinji's surmounting of personal problems.[472] Along these lines, Thomas Lamarre asserts that in the reticent, withdrawn Shinji, who undergoes a socialization process as the series progresses, series director Hideaki Anno presents his 'portrait of an *otaku*'.[473] With coverage of and commentary on the *Aum* gas attack, *ijime* bullying, the murders of Miyazaki Tsutomu, school refusal and the crisis of the Japanese school system circulating in the Japanese media, it makes

---

[466] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, p. 88.
[467] Bolton, 'The *Mecha*'s Blind-Spot', in *Robot Ghosts*, ed. by Bolton et al., pp. 123-147 (p. 123).
[468] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, p. 100.
[469] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, p. 97.
[470] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, p. 100.
[471] Routt 'Stillness and style', in *Animation Journal*, p. 37.
[472] Routt, 'Stillness and style' in *Animation Journal,* p. 35.
[473] Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 180.

sense to consider the series' depiction of adolescence in these terms. I am particularly interested in exploring the relationship the discourses surrounding the *otaku* and other youth panics share with the series, and I intend to investigate in Chapter Three the social values that Shinji is exposed to and how the series negotiates adolescence as a cultural symbol, a personal watershed and a combination of emotional catastrophe and rite of passage.

A number of *anime* in a variety of sub-genres including *mecha* feature the mundane environment of the High School as a principal setting. A large portion of *Evangelion* takes place in the local High School, which contrasts with the large-scale battles in the Tokyo cityscape and the procedural drama of the military base of operations. Criticism has tended to privilege these techno-centric elements of the series, and in my discussion of the series in Chapters Three and Five I will reorient discourse to consider the series' engagements with the everyday, and the causal links between the mundane and the fantastic.

Brian Ruh argues that the series *FLCL* (*Furi Kuri*, Gainax & Production I.G, OVA released 2000-2001) highlights *mecha anime*'s representation of adolescence in the technological age, citing Donna Haraway's claim that human beings have become 'cyborgs', 'theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism'.[475] Ruh argues that the identity formation of the cyborg describes the teenage maturation process in contemporary capitalist society, with adolescence a key period for the establishment of the individual's relationship to technology.[476] In *FLCL*, the temporary merging of teenage protagonist Naota with the robot Canti is 'symbolic of his relationship to both adulthood and media', and the series exemplifies the trope of *mecha* that engagement with a technological artefact temporarily completes the fragmentary adolescent persona on the way towards adulthood.[477]

Frenchy Lunning's analysis of the relationship between *mecha* robots and their 'child' (rather than adolescent) pilots focuses on *RahXephon* as a means of highlighting the significance in the genre of identity formation, and the 'desire that fuels their performance'.[478] Lunning describes a discrepancy between the pilot inside, the subject,

[475] Donna Harraway, 'Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s', in *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, ed. by Gillian Kirkup, (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 50.
[476] Ruh, 'Cyborg Adolescence', in *Cinema Anime*, ed. by Brown, p. 139.
[477] Ruh, 'Cyborg Adolescence', in *Cinema Anime*, ed. by Brown, p. 139.
[478] Frenchy Lunning, 'Between the Child and the *Mecha*' in *Mechademia 2: Networks of Desire* ed. by Frenchy Lunning (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) p. 268-282 (p. 269)

and the robot outside, which represents a '*mecha*-ideal image of power and agency'.[479] This gap dramatises the child's seeking-out of a 'secured identity'.[480]

These approaches can offer insights into the wandering adolescent's relationship to technology as explored in other generic modes, including the sports-car racing series *Initial D,* set among real world Japanese *togue* mountain roads, and the journey/adventure series *Last Exile*, in which the protagonist maintains and pilots a light aircraft. In both series the proficient *shōnen* navigates an expansive pastoral landscape with his vehicle. In relation to *Evangelion*, I am concerned with these series' focus on the teenager in relation to technology and the mechanical, and the impact of the machine on the adolescent's engagement with space. In Chapter Five I intend to explore the relationship between this terrain negotiation and debates around the lack of space in contemporary Japan.

I would like to propose and investigate the notion that although these *shōnen* stories possess superficially diverse subject matter, what they share is a quality of single-mindedness and monomania associated with fad and fashion. Whether a series revolves around the teenager's interaction with giant robots, basketball or racing cars, the fevered fandom of the *otaku* finds an analogue in the focused attention to a singular artefact that each series' characters exhibit. Through observation of the variety of outcomes of the teenager's engagement with the guiding elements of a series, It will be interesting to look at the extent to which this singular focus is ultimately legitimized, problematized or critiqued by *anime* narratives.

The *Shōjo* in *Manga* and *Anime*

While my principal focus is on analysis of *shōnen* texts, historical and contextual accounts of the conception and development of *shōjo* culture will help to situate the representation of the adolescent girl in contemporary *anime* within her wider discursive context. Deborah Shamoon explains that the term *shōjo* arose in the *Meiji* and *Taisho* periods (early 20th century) in recognition of a modern girl who attended single-sex high school and read magazines for girls that took in appropriate fashion, style and ways of behaving and speaking.[483] The term refers to 'girls in the liminal

---

[479] Lunning, 'Between the Child and the *Mecha*' in *Mechademia* 2, p. 268-282 (p. 269)
[480] Lunning, 'Between the Child and the *Mecha*' in *Mechademia* 2, p. 268-282 (p. 269)
[483] Shamoon, *Passionate Friendship*, p. 2.

space between childhood and adulthood, the end of which time was traditionally signaled by marriage and motherhood', and is closely 'tied to concepts of purity and chastity'.[484]

Watanabe Shuko, in her 2007 study of the emergence of *shōjo* culture explains that print media was essential to the circulation of fashionable behaviour and trends. She suggests that owing to the conflict between *shōjo bunka* ('girls' culture') and the idealised notion of the *ryōsai kenbo* ('good wife, wise mother') circulated in public schools, *shōjo* preferences and appropriateness was disseminated principally via magazines, and later in the form of fictional *manga*.[485] Shamoon reads *shōjo bunka* as 'a discrete discourse premised on a private, closed world of girls that not only embraced close female friendships but avoided heterosexual romance'.[486] She asserts that the *shōjo* figure evolved and became 'a locus of both hope and anxiety in discourses of modernization and Westernization'.[487] Further, observing the emergence and growth of *shōjo* culture in tandem with consumer capitalism in Japan, Susan Napier has asserted that the *shōjo* in *anime* is:

> typically linked with consumption, either as a body consumed by males whose dreams seem to revolve around non-threatening schoolgirls or as consuming subjects themselves.[488]

She discusses the *shōjo* as she evolved through the 1980s and beyond in terms of a 'disappearance' expressed in *manga* narratives that can either refer positively to the end of the adolescent maturation process and an entry into womanhood, or a subsuming of the girl's identity within an oppressive patriarchal arena, figured literally as a disappearance from sight.[489]

Alongside magazines and *manga, shōjo* discourse has been historically disseminated by *shōjo shosetsu* ('girls' literature'). Vera Mackie characterises *shōjo* novels as containing 'female protagonists who are either orphans or live in non-traditional family structures' who 'can be found in female communities such as boarding schools, or in other affective communities that sidestep the nuclear family

---

[484] Shamoon, *Passionate Friendship*, p. 2.
[485] Watanabe Shuko, *The Birth of the Shōjo Image* (*Shōjo-zo no Tanjo*, 2007) cited in Shamoon, *Passionate Friendship*, p. 5.
[486] Shamoon, 'Revolutionary Romance' in *Mechademia* 2, ed. by Lunning, p. 4.
[487] Shamoon, *Passionate Friendship*, p. 9.
[488] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, p. 170.
[489] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, p. 170.

system'.[490] Of girls' fiction, she notes the evasion of explicit sexuality, and that intimacy is expressed through mundane acts such as eating. We can observe strong links between this representation of female adolescence in historical *shōjo* discourse for consumption by young women, and the *moe* characteristics appropriated and idealised by male *otaku* audiences in more recent years.

An antecedent to the wandering adolescent *shōjo* is the extraordinarily domestically popular *Heidi of the Alps (Arupusu no Shōjo Haiji,* Zuiyo Eizo: Fuji TV, 1974)* adapted from Johanna Spyri's novel.[491] As Luca Raffaeli points out in an early piece on *anime* in 1997, 'its heroine is an orphan and characters without family are a typical feature of *anime*'.[492] Raffaeli makes the interesting point that it is 'inability to find anyone to whom they can recount their feelings that causes the children in Japanese serials to suffer'. [493] At the end of the series, Heidi has convinced the adults she has encountered through the story that the pastoral idyll of the mountains is 'where feelings can be expressed' in contrast to the restrictive, mannered urban life. When she reveals the ailing character Clara's condition to be psychosomatic, she shows that the adolescent has a unique perspective and enlightened viewpoint expressed specifically in relation to space – she becomes 'the liberator, the standard-bearer of adolescent revenge'.[494] Somewhat flippantly because it does not suit his agenda, Raffaeli speculates that *anime* could be assessed from the perspective of youth problems in Japan, accelerated work rates and rigid social structures: 'no wonder they recognize themselves in those cartoon characters, deprived of affection, misunderstood and without a family!'[495] In this early, tentative analysis of a formative *anime*, Raffaeli noted in the representation of the *shōjo* an important relationship between the travails of the girl, who is empowered through singular insight in comparison to the adult figures, and the shifting environment as restrictive or liberating.

Owing to the prevalence of girls dressing as boys and highly feminised males, 'gender fluidity' is a key trope of *shōjo manga*, according to Mark McClelland.[496]

---

[490] Vera Mackie, 'Reading *Lolita* in Japan' in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan,* ed. Aoyama Tomoko and Barbara Hartley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp.187-201, p.197.

[491] The series received very high ratings (30% viewership) when it first aired and sells well on DVD to date. Condry, *The Soul of Anime*, p. 148.

[492] Luca Raffaeli, 'Disney, Warner Bros. and Japanese Animation: Three World Views' in *A Reader in Animation Studies,* ed. by Jayne Pilling (Sydney: Libbey, 1997), pp. 112-136, (pp. 124-125).

[493] Raffaeli in *Animation Studies*, ed. by Pilling, p. 126.

[494] Raffaeli in *Animation Studies*, ed. by Pilling, p. 126.

[495] Raffaeli in *Animation Studies*, ed. by Pilling, p. 131.

[496] Mark McLelland, 'The "Beautiful Boy" in Japanese Girls' *Manga*' in *Manga: An Anthology,* ed. by Johnson-Woods, pp. 77-92. (p. 82).

Female performers playing male roles has been a phenomenon in Japan for centuries, particularly prominent with *Kabuki* theatre's inception in 1603 (before women were banned from its stage in 1629), to the well-known 20th century troupe the *Takarazuka Kagekidan* (Takarazuka Revue) – who have in more recent decades performed musical versions of several *shōjo manga* texts including *The Rose of Versailles* (*Berusaiyu no Bara, manga* serialised: *Margaret*, 1972-1973; *anime*: Tokyo Movie Shinsa, Animax, 1979-1980). This series is cited as a genre-defining moment for *shōjo* stories in this vein that established a number of stylistic and thematic tendencies.[498] The female teenage protagonist, Oscar, of this historical romance set during the French Revolution, has been raised as a man to become the leader of Marie Antoinette's palace guards. Accounting for the 'unprecedented and immediate' success of the story, Deborah Shamoon notes its 'epic scale, lush rococo setting and active main female character', and the depiction of heterosexual love in a more mature and frank manner than previously seen in *shōjo* works.[499] Additionally, with its gender blurring and active female identity performance, Sandra Buckley sees it as 'disrupting the myth of biology as destiny. Gender is mobile, not fixed in this story'.[500]

Similarly discussed in terms of gender mobility, the *bishōnen* ('pretty boy') figure is prevalent in *shōjo manga* as an object of desire for a female protagonist, but also in the wide range of homosexual love stories consumed by women and teenage girls.[501] McLelland concludes that the feminine, gay *bishōnen* facilitates cross-gender identification and wish-fulfilment beyond the restrictions of contemporary Japanese romantic relations by stating that the figure 'embodies all the most attractive features of female gender, while able to move through the world unencumbered by the burdens of the female sex'.[502] He argues convincingly that the gay *bishōnen* has less to say about the experiences of gay men in Japan and is a popular representation among female writers and readers owing to the fantasy evasion of the various restrictions upon women within heterosexual relationships.[503]

---

[498] See Shamoon, 'Revolutionary Romance' in *Mechademia* 2, ed. by Lunning, 3-17.

[499] Shamoon in *Mechademia* 2, ed. by Lunning, p. 3

[500] Sandra Buckley, 'Penguin in Bondage: A graphic tale of Japanese Comic Books' in *Technoculture,* ed by Constance Penley and Andrew Ross (Minneapolis: university of Minnesota, 1993) pp. 168-195 *(*p. 172).

[501] See Mark McClelland, 'The "Beautiful Boy"' in *Manga: An Anthology*, ed. by Johnson-Woods, for an account in which he traces the figure within the contextual frame of cross-dressing performance and gender politics in Japan.

[502] Mark McLelland, 'The "Beautiful Boy"' in *Manga: An Anthology,* ed. by Johnson-Woods, pp. 77-92. (p. 92).

[503] Mark McLelland, 'The "Beautiful Boy"' in *Manga: An Anthology,* ed.by Johnson-Woods, p. 77-92. (p. 92).

'Moe' and Slice-of-Life *Anime*

I will return now to *shōnen* stories and their representation of appealing female characters with an intended heterosexual male audience. For *otaku* fans, the word '*moe'*, now prevalent in fan communities such as Internet message boards, signifies intense feelings of attachment towards female fantasy characters, usually *shōjo*, that representationally exhibit youthfulness, playful innocence and *kawaii* cuteness.[504] Patrick Galbraith states that the 'euphoric response' of *moe* is 'affect in response to fantasy characters separated from narratives and even reality, or affect in response to virtual possibilities'.[505] He argues that 'affect' is the correct word to demarcate the heightened experience of *moe* as separate from the personal, emotional or social but still provoking delight and frisson for the viewer. Another key term used regarding the titillating, sexualised presentation of female characters in *shōnen anime* and *manga* is '*fan service'* (shortened in Japan to '*saabisu'*) which refers to usually incongruous, non-sequitur instances where exposed flesh and underwear are made prominent in the frame with little narrative justification (its purpose is to 'service the fans' by offering erotic spectacle designed to stimulate masturbatory fantasy).[506] In a retrospective *Mechademia* review of *Evangelion*, *anime* scholar Madeline Ashby lambasts the series, hitherto sacrosanct in scholarly circles, with particular reference to its high levels of *fan service*.[507] Alongside its provocative presentation of the teenage female body, the series is renowned for presenting in Ayanami Rei one of the first major *moe* figures that garnered widespread cultish adoration from male *otaku* fans.[508]

It should be noted here that while it is typical for *shōjo* stories to feature romantic themes but unusual for *shōnen manga* and *anime*, and even in 'magical

---

[504] Patrick Galbraith has produced an extensive enquiry into the types of character and situation that result in *moe* attachment. While *moe* is principally discussed in relation to male *otaku*'s feelings towards fantasy female characters, Galbraith reorients discussion to show how *moe* is experienced by female readers in relation to male characters of homosexual *manga*. See Patrick Galbraith, '*Moe* and the Potential of Fantasy in Post-Millennial Japan', *EJCJS,* available at <http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/2009/Galbraith.html>, [accessed 24.7.2013].

[505] Patrick Galbraith, '*Moe* and the Potential of Fantasy' in *EJCJS*.

[506] For a journalistic summary of the phenomenon, see Robin Brenner, *Understanding Manga and Anime* (Westport Conn.: Libraries Unlimited; Northam: Roundhouse dist., 2007), pp. 88-89

[507] Madeline Ashby, 'Epic Fail: Still Dreary After All These Years' in *Mechademia* 5, ed by Lunning, pp. 348-349.

[508] See Patrick Galbraith '*Moe* and the Potential of Fantasy', in *EJCJS*. Also Saito Tamaki throughout *Beautiful Fighting Girl* refers to the significance of the character in these terms, as does Azuma Hiroki in *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals.*

girlfriend' stories where, although the male protagonist is attached romantically to an empowered girl, the relationship itself remains platonic and is never consummated. Thomas Lamarre refers to this relationship in his discussion of *Chobits* with the term 'platonic sex' – Lamarre observes that the apparent devoted availability of the eroticised, suggestively displayed *shōjo* to the *shōnen* protagonist is fundamental to the *otaku'*s *moe* ideal of attractive, euphoria-inducing teenage femininity.[509] More pragmatically, Oda Eiichiro, author of *manga* series *One Piece,* in an interview for *Shōnen Jump* accounts for the lack of romance between the series' pirate crew with the assertion that the teenage male readership is unlikely to respond positively to its inclusion.[510] However, characteristics and aesthetics discussed and debated as *moe* feed directly into representations circulated in the market for *eroge* (erotic games) and pornographic *manga* and *anime,* whose fetishistic, eroticised treatment of the female adolescent body and the explicit depictions of sex acts between teenagers are anything but chaste – hence Lamarre's emphasis on the platonic nature of the *moe* attachment dynamic is problematic when deployed outside of certain examples of mainstream *anime.*[511] Michael Bowman has addressed the elusivity of defining *moe* adequately, stating that

> 'because of its nebulous nature, some have shoved sexuality into their definition of *moe*, but such definitions miss the point of what *moe* actually is. Sexual feelings should be seen only as a secondary response that sometimes is coupled with, but still separate from, the more authentic *moe* response'.[512]

Locating the precise workings of *moe* is therefore a complex task, but nonetheless the term provides a useful structuring principle around which to base analysis of the representation of a range of representations of the adolescent girl in *anime* and videogames.

Adolescent girls feature prominently in the 'slice-of-life' (*nichijō-kei,* or 'everyday style'*)* subgenre of *shōnen manga* and *anime* that have come to the fore over

---

[509] Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine*, pp. 234-241
[510] 'Fans Chat with Oda Sensei' in *Shōnen Jump* (VIZ media) #84. Volume 7, Issue 12. Dec 2009, p. 33.
[511] See Sharon Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion in Japan* (2013), p. 8; Jonathan Clements, *Schoolgirl Milky Crisis*, pp. 83-85;
[512] Michael R. Bowman, 'Beyond Maids and *Meganekko*: Examining the *Moe* Phenomenon', in *Cinephile: The University of British Columbia's Film Journal*, Vol.7, No.1 (Spring, 2011), 14-18 (p. 15). Available at: <http://cinephile.ca/files/Vol7No1-PDF-forweb.pdf> accessed 13.6.2014.

the last few years, defined through a light-hearted representation of mundane quotidian routine, low-intensity emotional palette and often languid pace. The representation of the teenage girl in the high school-set slice-of-life *shōnen* series *Azumanga Daioh!, K-On!, Lucky Star (Raki Suta,* Kyoto Animation: Chiba TV, 2007)*, A Summer-Coloured Miracle* (*Natsuiro Kiseki,* Sunrise: MBS, 2012) and *Everyday Life* (*Nichijō,* Kyoto Animation: TV Aichi, 2011) is especially designed to elicit this euphoric experience of *moe* and these series are replete with incongruous moments of fan service.[518] Male characters are removed almost entirely from the equation, as is the question of romance or sex, as I shall investigate in Chapter Four. The slice-of-life mode embodies the assertion by Anne Allison that:

> Japanese schoolgirls are the subject/object of constant interrogation, continually being reported on in stories that focus on the everydayness of their (material) lives: how they spend their days, what they buy and where, how much money they go through in a week, and what the contents of their handbags are.[519]

With their emphasis on the everyday minutiae of female experience, it would be understandable for these series to be mistaken for *shōjo anime*, but their art style and narrative characteristics – especially their high levels of eroticised *fan service* - signify their production for a principally male audience. Patrick Galbraith concludes his investigations into *moe* by locating the phenomenon as a valve for his interviewees for the release of work pressure and other circumstances of recessionary post-millennial Japan:

> With *moe* characters, men can experience love outside the confines of manhood (defined by work)… As the media and material culture that emerged in the 1980s continues to evolve, and the on-going recession alienates youth from work and home, accessing and exploring *moe* becomes increasingly important to a growing demographic of Japanese.[520]

---

[518] See *anime* site *Crunchyroll.com*'s report on a poll taken in Japan on '*moe* day' in October 2012 asking who the 'cutest' *anime* character is. With 16,000 respondents, three of the girls of *K-On!* feature in the top results. Available at: <http://www.crunchyroll.co.uk/anime-news/2012/10/10/in-honor-of-moe-day-16000-japanese-fans-pick-cutest-anime-character> [accessed 20.7.2013].
[519] Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, p. 140.
[520] Patrick Galbraith, '*Moe* and the Potential of Fantasy' in *EJCJS*

Examining the depiction of the *shōjo* in male-oriented, high school-set slice-of-life stories in Chapter Four, I propose to investigate through discussion of the series *Azumanga Daioh!* and *K-On!* the representational specificities of the female teenager in the genre, and to assess the figure's relationship to concerns around the teenage girl and the secondary school system in contemporary Japan. I will consider these male-oriented depictions of the high school girl that emerged in the years following the subsidence of media panics around *enjo kōsai* and antisocial teenage behaviour in terms of a representational shift and the *shōjo*'s recuperation, where the schoolgirl is no longer threatening or anti-establishment. In these series schoolgirls are still placed under scrutiny as a figure of intense fascination as they were during the late 1990s and at the millennium, but conversely are framed as optimistic, social, redeemable and conscientious.

The 'Magical Girls' of *Manga* and *Anime*

Representations of magically empowered teenage girls are found across the generic breadth of both *shōjo* and *shōnen manga* and *anime*. The *shōjo* incarnation of the 'magical girl' (*mahō shōjo*) figure has its origins in the series *Sally the Witch* (*Mahōtsukai Sarī*, Toei: NET (later TV Asahi), 1966-1968).[521] Later, director Miyazaki Hayao placed the *mahō shōjo* at the centre of the popular, high profile cinema release *Kiki's Delivery Service* (*Majō no Takkyūbin* lit. *Witch's Delivery Service*, Miyazaki Hayao, 1989). An antecedent of the wandering *shōjo*, the initially solitary protagonist Kiki learns self-reliance, forming friendships as she negotiates the space of the town where she establishes a delivery business via her flying broom. Susan Napier notes the positive sense of autonomy afforded here to the *shōjo* protagonist, with Kiki 'a heroine who is independent and active… whose fantastic powers are prosaically anchored in the need to survive in a modern money economy'.[522]

---

[521] Suggestive of the iconic, seminal character's continued resonance for male/*otaku* viewers is the uncovering in 1994 by Japanese police at the *Aum* base of operations of promotional material including a morbid reworking of the *anime*'s theme song called 'Sarin the Magician'. The connection of *Aum* doctrine to magical incarnations of the *shōjo* and other fantastical tropes of *anime* and *manga* might give us insight into the idealistic utopian thinking shared by the organisation and the texts to which they allude. See Robert Jay Lifton, *Destroying the World to Save it: Aum Shinrikyō, Apocalyptic Violence and the New Global Terrorism* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), p. 185.

[522] Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle,* p. 164.

Saitō Tamaki, who coined the term *hikikomori,* also presented a psychoanalytic deconstruction of the *bishōjo senshin* ('pretty girl soldier'; translated as 'beautiful fighting girl').[523] Couched as firmly associated with *otaku* fantasies, Saitō aimed in 2000 as a practicing therapist to reorient perceptions of the *otaku* from antisocial and passive to active consumers whose sophisticated behaviour patterns can be learned from.[524] When his thorough developmental history of the *bishōjo senshin* arrives in the 1990s, he states that '*anime* were released practically to the point of overproduction, including so many beautiful fighting girl works that it would be impossible to list them all.'[525] He alerts us to slippage between generic representations of the female adolescent, and reveals some of the difficulties in classification.[526]

The epitome of the 1990s *mahō shōjo,* and of Saitō's 'beautiful fighting girl', is *Sailor Moon* (*Bishōjo Senshi Seramun, manga* serialised *Nakayoshi,* 1991-1997; original *anime*: Toei: TV Asahi, 1992-1993) which enjoyed previously unparalleled success in its various *media mix* forms, moving from *manga* to *anime* series and a lucrative line of dolls and accessories.[528] A *shōjo* series that garnered male fans owing to its titillating depiction of magical high school girls, Napier argued in 1998 that the active, dynamic and empowered 'sailor scouts' of *Sailor Moon* were 'an impressive contrast to the stereotypical image of passive Japanese womanhood that has existed for so long'.[529] She qualifies this with the view that they also brought about 'a loss of interior complexity' from previous *manga* and *anime shōjo* figures which is bound up by a lack of nuance in characterisation and the emphasis on signification through cosmetic difference – this lack of nuance results from the market-driven construction of the franchise. The *Sailor Moon* cast each exhibit a defining, singular personality trait

---

[523] The girl as magical warrior figure in *shōnen manga* and *anime* can be traced to the progenitor women warriors of the *shōnen manga Saibōgu 009* (*Cyborg 009, manga* serialised in *Shōnen Sunday* 1964; *anime* TV series 1968) and to the battling pre-pubescent girl robot of *Rainbow Battleteam Robin* (*Reinbo Sentai Robin, anime* TV series 1966) leading up to the transforming adolescent fighting girl of influential *manga* writer-artist Go Nagai's *Cutie Honey* (first serial in *Weekly Shōnen Champion,* 1973-1974; first *anime* series aired TV Asahi 1973-1974).

[524] See the table presented in Saitō Tamaki, *Beautiful Fighting Girl*, pp. 128-129. In a comprehensive survey of key works, Saitō subdivides 'beautiful fighting girl' *manga* and *anime* into a variety of overlapping modes based on his own observations. His chart shows that while there were key examples of empowered teenage *shōjo* figures in *anime* during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the number visible in the 1990s is vast and too daunting to catalogue thoroughly.

[525] Saitō, *Beautiful Fighting Girl*, p. 118.

[526] Saitō, *Beautiful Fighting Girl,* pp. 83-133.

[528] Anne Allison provides an exhaustive, focused account and analysis of the transmedia marketing and transnational appeal of the franchise in *Millennial Monsters*, pp. 128-162.

[529] Susan Napier, 'Four Faces' in *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture*, ed. by Martinez, p. 104.

(clumsiness, humour, seriousness), and the product line of dolls 'subsume [these] differences of character into differences of hairstyle and fashion' thereby removing nuance from the representation of teenage female emotion and interiority.[530] Anne Allison investigates in detail through field research and interviews with child consumers the thematic content and marketing of the series, situating it within the context of the commodification of girls' culture at the millennium where, tied to fad and fashion, '"young schoolgirl" carries the connotation of carefree consumer and dreamer'.[531] Cross-gender appeal became inherent to *Sailor Moon*'s success, however, as Allison observes:

> With her leggy, slender body, long flowing blond hair, and the miniskirted version of her outfit she acquires after morphing, *Sērā Mūn* is also read as a sex icon – one that feeds and is fed by a general trend in Japan toward the infantalisation of female sex objects.[532]

Saitō similarly notes the importance of *Sailor Moon* to the *otaku,* the *moe*-inspiring character designs galvanising to a new breed of male audience who were increasingly more attracted to appealing, eroticised female figures than hypermasculine or homocentric narratives.[533]

Napier observes that as Japanese popular culture of the 1990s progressed, female characters became 'aligned with the dark side of modernity, representatives of a world which entraps and destroys the male'.[534] She sees this shift in the representation of the *shōjo* as indicative of both the easing of traditional expectations of women and a concurrent societal atomism – the *shōjo* here became a site of struggle between the stability provided by adherence to long-established gender roles and the inherent anxiety that revolves around dramatic social change. The negotiation by *shōjo* characters of an entrapping, mechanised urban environment is seen in the *shinya* (late-night-aired) series *Serial Experiments Lain*, *Witch Hunter Robin* and *Boogiepop Phantom*. Each of these series features an empowered female protagonist who is a reconfiguration of the *mahō shōjo* who experiences not thrilling transformations but

---

[530] Susan Napier, 'Four Faces' in *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture*, ed. by Martinez, p. 104.
[531] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 134.
[532] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 133.
[533] Saito, *Beautiful Fighting Girl,* p. 29.
[534] Susan Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), p. 224.

existential anxiety, and a cast of alienated, disenfranchised adolescents who are forced to wander through this atomised technological space. Of *Serial Experiments Lain,* Stephen Brown observes the adolescent's relationship to the urban environment and technology, stating that the Internet is not presented as liberating and progressive but a control tool in a culture of paranoia and surveillance.[538] I am particularly interested in exploring further this reconfigured representation of the extremely popular and prolific *mahō shōjo* female teenager as a wanderer in these terms of disconnection and entrapment rather than autonomy and liberation, and intend in Chapter Four to consider the relationship between the female adolescent, the urban environment and technology comparatively to the *shōnen*-focused series discussed in Chapter Three.

---

[538] Stephen T. Brown, 'Screening Anime', in *Cinema Anime*, ed. by Brown, pp. 1-22.

Chapter Three: The Wandering *Shōnen* in Contemporary Japanese *Anime*

This chapter will examine representations of the wandering *shōnen* protagonists of *anime* television and their relationship to 'youth panic' discourses circulating in the Japanese media around the millennium regarding male adolescence. I seek to develop understanding of the shifting attitude in Japan towards adolescence in the context of these widespread moral panics, and through the findings of analysis of popular cultural texts suggest strategies that are at work within *anime* series that are the product of, contribute to and reorient debates about the position of the teenager in Japanese society. I will explore how adolescence is represented as a stage in the life cycle by *anime* texts, and suggest a range of ways in which these representations engage with the topos of wandering.

As I discussed in Chapter One, over the last two decades the Japanese media has shifted in its approaches to the problematic figures of the male *otaku*, the *hikikomori*, the bully and the 'school refuser', around which panics concerning the adolescent male have circulated. High profile murder cases, including those committed by Miyazaki Tsutomu (1989) and *Shōnen A* (1997), debated in the contexts of *otaku* and *hikikomori* behavioural traits, have at times led to a conflation of these categorisations with one another and with discourses of antisocial monstrousness, while scholarship in Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology progressively sought to disentangle them.

This chapter will approach these issues through analysis focusing on four television *anime* texts. In the first section of the chapter I will examine the series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995), which I have established was a milestone in the development of TV *anime*, and a key text in mobilising both audiences and industry towards the medium. As I have previously suggested, *Evangelion* was an influential text that exemplifies the depiction of the teenage boy in relation to technology and the machine that became prominent during the late 1990s. The series follows the teenage protagonist's socialisation as he is forced to attend high school and negotiate everyday pressures and his anxiety around a number of subjects. It will be interesting to examine the relationship between these particular elements and observe consonance with the discourses surrounding the *otaku* and adolescence in contemporary Japan.

I will then analyse the series *Welcome to the NHK* (2008) for its explicit addressing of the real-world figures the *hikikomori* and the *otaku*. While the series is

thematically distinct for its tackling head-on of these issues, it exemplifies and typifies a discursive shift in accounts of *otaku* and *hikikomori* as borne out by, for example, the 'Cool Japan' initiative and the work of Saitō Tamaki. I will investigate the representational strategies it deploys in order to assert the distinction between the two definitions, considering the extent to which it pathologises them as psychological conditions, or proposes they are symptomatic of wider sociocultural phenomena. Saito Tamaki's original coining of the term *hikikomori* took place in his book with the subtitle '*owaranai shishunki*' – roughly, 'adolescence without end'.[540] While this series does not represent an adolescent wanderer in terms of actual *age*, it is interesting for the way it articulates *hikikomori* in terms of rootlessness and a prolonging of adolescence, and connects the condition explicitly with the education system in pre-millennial Japan.

In the second section of the chapter I will examine two series, *Death Note* and *Natsume's Book of Friends,* which exemplify the recent trend for the depiction of the *shōnen* in relation to the supernatural, magical and monstrous. Previously and principally the realm of the empowered *shōjo* (where male teenagers were more often depicted as empowered through technology), *manga* and *anime* television of the 2000s have presented the *shōnen* in a variety of positions within this milieu, particularly in narratives which make specific reference to phenomena derived from Buddhism and the mythology of the Japanese indigenous *Shintō* religion. *Death Note*, based on a *shōnen manga*, and *Natsume's Book of Friends*, based on a *shōjo manga*, are linked through a number of tropes which chime with debates around the *otaku,* the *hikikomori* and in particular the adolescent as monstrous killer exemplified by *Shōnen A*. Comparative analysis of the two tonally distinct series can give us insights into the shifts in the relationship between *anime* and the discourses circulating around the adolescent in Japan. The handwritten letters left by *Shōnen A* with the bodies of his victims and published nationwide in newspapers, railed against the Japanese school system and claimed that it had made him into a monster, leading to his 'invisible existence'.[543] *Death Note* and *Natsume's Book of Friends* resonate with this as part of their discursive surround, featuring at their centre a protagonist who is able to see monstrous supernatural entities invisible to others, and who is empowered through a handwritten notebook. I will investigate the depiction of the *shōnen* of these series and observe the ways in which their representation engages with the *otaku,* the *hikikomori*, and echoes or breaks from the male adolescent typified by *Evangelion*'s Shinji.

---

[540] Saito Tamaki, *Hikikomori: Adolesence Without End* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
[543] Yoneyama Shoko, *The Japanese High School*, p. 3.

Neon Genesis Evangelion

Produced by Studio Gainax and the director Anno Hideaki, who had achieved mainstream television success earlier in the decade with *Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water* (*Fushigi no Umi no Nadia,* Group TAC: NHK, 1990-1991), *Evangelion* is a hybrid of science fiction war story and coming-of-age high school drama centring on socially-awkward, withdrawn and neglected teenage protagonist Shinji. In the aftermath of a global war, giant alien creatures called Angels lay siege, one at a time and one per episode, to a dilapidated Tokyo that conceals beneath its surface a hyper-technological fortress. Shinji's mother has died in childbirth, and the boy is estranged from his neglectful father, a stern military general who leads the NERV defence initiative as they combat the Angels using teenagers to pilot giant *mecha* robots, the 'Eva', that have mysteriously appeared during the first Angel attack on Tokyo. These circumstances position Shinji outside the nuclear family setting and contribute to the teenager's presentation as an isolated, anxious and initially rootless adolescent wanderer.

Thomas Lamarre affirms that Shinji was specifically intended to be Anno Hideaki's 'portrait of an *otaku*', as the director had become outspoken in interview regarding his distaste for the scale of *manga* and *anime*'s nationwide popularity, referring to contemporary Japan scathingly as 'a country of children'.[545] Studio Gainax had previously depicted the life of the *otaku* as an *anime* and *manga* aficionado in the early 1990s in the OVA *Otaku no Video* (*Otaku's Video,* Takeshi Mori, 1991) in which a pair of *otaku* friends, inspired by their favourite *anime* programmes, make a transition from passive consumers to active producers as they found their own animation studio. *Evangelion*'s Shinji, however, does not demonstrate any particular affinity for or interest in fantasy media or videogames, and fictional texts are not discussed during the series.

As discussed in Chapter One, the *otaku* of the 1990s has also been defined in terms of a comfortable engagement with technology, a detachment from interpersonal contact and a propensity for accumulating detailed information. While the reticent Shinji's improving skill at piloting the technological *mecha* occurs concurrent to his social development and the overcoming of teenage anxieties and growing pains, and it is established that he has a unique ability with the machine, he does not exhibit a particular hunger for information or a drive towards the amassing of things or data.

---

[545] Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 180.

Where the *otaku* has been assessed in terms of Japan's material culture and the collection of objects, Shinji does not appear motivated by such concerns.

      Evangelion aired at a time when the *otaku* was arguably pathologised as mentally ill and harbouring potentially dangerous social tendencies. I will consider Shinji in terms of *recuperation*, in that his shyness and detachment is couched as a mental or psychological affliction and he undergoes a therapeutic process towards 'normal' health; and *rehabilitation*, where the rootless Shinji exists as a wanderer on the fringes of society and is socialised to become an active participant in his cultural environment. As Brian Routt puts it, the series' mise-en-scene functions as an expression of the internal states of characters, and the storyline moves towards a 'psychotherapeutic ending' for Shinji. [546] Despite the global ramifications of the overarching plot, *Evangelion* prioritises the mental wellbeing and identity formation of the teenage boy. The final two episodes, which eschew the *mecha* combat and place Shinji in an abstracted interrogation situation as he is made to answer questions about his own existence and motivations, serve the purpose, according to Lamarre, of 'highlighting [Shinji's] insecurities and childish vacillation'.[547] Noting Shinji's psychological and behavioural traits will guide us towards understanding what constitutes the teenage '*otaku*' according to the series, and the ways in which the series suggests the type should be rehabilitated and recuperated.

The *Otaku*, Consumerism and Adolescent Sexuality in *Evangelion*

      Shinji's solitude and detachment is emphasised by his introduction in the first episode, which establishes the basic interactions between *kyarakutaa-settai-sekaikan*, waiting alone for NERV commander Misato in the wrecked streets of Tokyo. A sequence of still shots show the dilapidated city and surrounding countryside marked with the detritus of urban life and littered with technologically advanced artillery. The adolescent boy is positioned helplessly at the centre of this symbolic expression of tensions between past and future, nature and the mechanised city. Straddling a cracked, unstable street, situating the *shōnen* within the post-apocalyptic milieu connotes the anxiety of cultural uncertainty. As an angel attacks, Shinji is picked up by Misato in her car and they flee, pausing to watch the ensuing conflict. Shinji is initially restricted and

---

[546] Routt, 'Stillness and Style', in *Animation Journal,* p. 37.
[547] Lamarre, *Anime Machine,* p. 180.

trapped within the car, powerless as the Angel lays siege to Tokyo. Underscoring his impotence for comic effect, Misato leans over him and sandwiches the boy uncomfortably between her breasts and the car. The farcical moment is the first of many to highlight Shinji's discomfort around the female body in relation to his awkwardness and feelings of entrapment. The view put forward by Iida Yumiko of *otaku* behaviour is that of a withdrawal into the self as a coping mechanism owing to social and romantic pressures, where imaginary girls substitute real women avoiding the anxiety of rejection.[548] The series continually forces the anxious Shinji into close proximity with teenage girls and women as an integral part of his socialisation, as he is adopted by Misato and lives in her apartment, where they are joined in the intimate space by female teenage *Eva* pilot Asuka in episode nine.

The opening credits sequence shows a sullen Shinji's face against a cloud-filled sky as silhouettes of naked women are superimposed over him. A montage cuts quickly between shots of the female characters, the landscape of Tokyo, the *Eva* robots and the NERV base. The association of these images articulates the conjunction presented in the series' between adolescent male sexual anxiety and socialisation, the eroticised female body, spatial liberation and technology.

The series oscillates in its representation of consumerism, particularly associated with the female characters, as the rehabilitation of the adolescent boy is depicted. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Five, the dilapidated Tokyo environment is replete with crumbling advertising hoardings and the detritus of a collapsed capitalist Japan. On the other hand, instances of social bonding punctuated by the presence of branded consumer goods assist the *shōnen* towards self-confidence, freedom of expression and interaction with female characters. Shinji's bewilderment over Misato's prodigious consumption of heavily branded food and alcohol is the focus of comic scenes early in the series. In one scene, Shinji is overwhelmed by both Misato's body as she draws him close in order to intimately encourage him to socialise, and the stack of packets and cans that litter the dining table. His discomfort around women is expressed in conjunction with a discomfort around consumerism. Shinji's sexual and consumer inadequacy are further highlighted in a scene that has him startled in the shower, rushing out naked to be confronted by Misato, who raises her beer can so that it conceals his genitals. Later in episode seven, it is through growing awareness of consumer behaviour that Shinji is able to assert himself, attacking Misato's excessive consumption and undermining her sexually by pointing out that she remains single.

---

[548] See Iida, *Rethinking Identity,* p. 228.

The combative, *tsundere* ('icy hot') *shōjo* pilot Asuka is introduced in episode nine, with school scenes showing her quickly desired by male classmates and idolised by the other girls. Shinji's friends are envious that he lives with Asuka. After failing to overcome an Angel together, a meticulously-choreographed dual attack by Shinji and Asuka is decided upon by Misato. During the episode, the antagonistic adolescents are forced into continual physical proximity in order to bond socially, and made to learn a balletic dance routine set to a classical score that they will translate into an attack pattern.

As Shinji and Asuka shop for groceries, the girl complains about having to collaborate. Femininity and consumer products are here aligned for Shinji as negotiates the delicate social situation. Kneeling in front of a refrigerator filled with branded cans that dominate the frame, Asuka sternly admits that she has no choice but to pilot the *Eva* and do as instructed. Asuka's expression softens slightly and we see her in profile, separated from Shinji by the glass door that shows his reflection. The images of the cans, Shinji and Asuka merge in a symbolic moment that articulates the negotiation of adolescent emotional complexities in the milieu of the consumer environment.

A shot of the pair's heaving shopping bag is followed by an animated Asuka eating a sandwich and guzzling a canned drink against the backdrop of a plaintive auburn sunset over an empty, peaceful Tokyo landscape. In this reflective, intimate setting, Shinji is able to express his opinion and Asuka agrees to pilot the *mecha*. While the pair are not wholly convivial after the experience, this crucial first step towards social interaction occurs against a consumerist backdrop, as the adolescents navigate their relationship alongside a ritual social consumption of branded goods.

Later, a lighthearted sequence shows Asuka and Shinji performing quotidian tasks together, brushing their teeth, sleeping in the same room, guzzling noodles and fighting to change the channel on the television. A burgeoning erotic intimacy and sexual tension is implied as they sit displeased back-to-back beneath a clothes-line holding their adjacent underwear. The process of rehabilitation for the antisocial Shinji is predicated upon confrontation and forced intimacy with the teenage girl with whom he must develop a social bond and overcome his sexual anxieties. An entry into the world of the female constitutes Shinji's tentative first contact with consumerism.

The High School in *Evangelion*

Instinctively antisocial and tending towards self-isolation, Shinji exhibits the profound anxiety of the school refuser when Misato insists that he will attend the local high school in episode three. Considering the prevalence of accounts in the Japanese media of teenage school refusal and the traumatic experience of high school, I will consider the initial representation of Shinji's educational experience.

On his first day, Shinji's new classmates quickly discover that he is an *Eva* pilot and he becomes the reluctant centre of attention. A sequence cuts between Shinji walking alone to the school and an idealised series of tableaux of sociable, smiling pupils interacting in the classroom during a break as they lounge, read *manga* together and share a joke. Accompanied by a soundtrack of excitable murmurs, the sequence optimistically emphasises communication and freedom of expression as norms of the school environment, as Shinji is singled out through his detached solitude. A conversation between Misato and NERV colleague Ritsuko focusing on Shinji's reticence and awkwardness is heard as he enters the classroom. They discuss the 'hedgehog's dilemma' in which two hedgehogs seeking connection damage one another with their spines, the closer the contact between them. Misato here states what might serve as the series' didactic view on adolescent male experience: 'part of growing up is to find a way of interacting with others while distancing oneself from pain.' The '*otaku*' is thus a figure to be rehabilitated and brought out of withdrawn isolation and into society at large, while remaining stoic in the face of traumatic experience and the complexities of interpersonal communication that constitute fundamental components of the teenage maturation process.

Brian McVeigh's investigation into Japanese high schools at the millennium finds in interviews that many pupils simply turn up to class believing attendance to be a means of passing their education, and teachers characterise their students as 'indolent, inattentive, lethargic, listless, and indifferent' and that 'they simply do not listen.'[549] There is ambivalence within the depiction of the education system in *Evangelion*, with responsibility for the stultified environment placed more on adult authority than teenage disengagement. The classroom is populated by energetic, animated adolescents . A laptop terminal at each child's desk enables them to communicate with one another but also atomises them as they ignore the droning history lesson given by their aging

---

[549] Brian J. McVeigh, *Japanese Higher Education as Myth* (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 2002) p. 104.

teacher who avoids interaction with his pupils and gazes blankly out of the window as he orates.

Shinji's classmates are clearly fascinated and inspired by the *mecha,* and by Shinji's connection to the machine. His classmates disobediently gather around him during the lesson, and force him to answer questions as he is hemmed-in uncomfortably. Underscoring the theme of the 'hedgehog's dilemma', this positive depiction of enthused teenagers welcoming Shinji socially cuts quickly to a scene of violence against him as Shinji is punched by a boy whose sister was hurt during an *Eva* battle. This schoolyard brutality constitutes a representation of *ijime* bullying, and confirms Shinji's *tokokyohi* school refuser anxiety about the experience of high school. The attack strongly resonates with the maxim that 'the nail that sticks out gets hammered down' as it is prompted by the fascinated attention given to Shinji by his classmates.[550] In a subsequent episode, Shinji rescues the boy, Suzuhara, from an Angel attack and the bully is contrite, insisting Shinji throw a reciprocal punch in atonement. Here the ambivalence to adolescent interaction with technology is pronounced, as it is through the *mecha* that Shinji is able to cope with the travails of the school experience.

The mundane settings of the series closely resemble contemporary Tokyo except for occasional indicators of the saturation of the teenager's life with technology, with which the adolescent is fascinated and about which the series exhibits an ambivalent view.[551] In the classroom, the juxtapositions of traditional wooden school desks and advanced laptop terminals, energised adolescents and a weary elderly authority figure, demonstrates the tension in the series between the pull of technological progress and a reluctance to move beyond the past. Manifesting pre-millennial discourses which problematise the adolescent as a rebellious threat to the social order, both victim and perpetrator of antisocial activity, the recuperating wandering teenager is placed at the centre of these cultural anxieties and is presented with a series of choices as to how he will emerge from this crisis of identity. While the *mecha* has provided Shinji with the means through the series to develop socially, he is finally forced to cast it off and affirm his self-worth separate to his engagement with the machine.

The feature-length release designed to summarise the series' events in anticipation of the release of the *End of Evangelion* film is titled *Death and Rebirth* (*Shinseiki Evangerion Gekijo-ban: Shito Shinsei*, Anno Hideaki, 1997). The cycle of death and rebirth is observed conceptually in Buddhism, whose temples and shrines are

---

[550] See Yoneyama, *Japanese High School,* p. 169.
[551] I return to the juxtaposition of urban and rural environments in Chapter Five as I discuss the representation of space in the series.

ubiquitous in both urban and rural Japan. In recognition of impermanence and the significance of renewal, several shrines are periodically torn down and rebuilt to exactly the same specifications.[552] In the series' world, Tokyo has been destroyed and rebuilt almost identically in the ashes, and there is ambivalence towards this steadfast preservation of existing structures. The ultimate threat in the series comes from Shinji's father, who pursues 'instrumentality' which will destroy all life for it to be reborn as a single consciousness.

Both the ending of the series and the *End of Evangelion* film see a resistance to instrumentality and, according to Ortega an 'individuation firmly anchored in the body's materiality'.[553] At the climax of the series, Shinji is asked whether he wants blissful instrumentality at the expense of his own identity, or to reject it and return to individuality. The series ends by articulating the necessity for the *shōnen* to endure suffering and anxiety as an inevitable aspect of the maturation process. The complex, fragmentary and non-linear episode 26 begins with a coaxing speech delivered by multiple characters that positions instrumentality as an antidote to Shinji's feelings of social isolation and atomisation, and as a state of ultimate connection for which humanity has been striving. Through a montage of shots depicting teenage suicides, subject individuation is presented as inherently isolating and lonely, which will be overcome when instrumentality is achieved. Shinji decides he wants to live as an autonomous individual despite the pain that accompanies existence, and the final moment has the series' cast clapping and congratulating him for his choice. This therapeutic intervention that forces the teenage *otaku* to assert his own subjectivity also engages with issues of conformity, as the rehabilitated, reconstituted adolescent forcibly resists a heightened manifestation of groupism.

At the climax of the *End of Evangelion* film, instrumentality has been achieved and Shinji and Asuka awaken in a surreal vision constituting a new plane of existence. As Shinji crouches weeping over Asuka, she awakens and rejects his emotional display as disgusting, a moment of both adolescent conflict and reassurance that, for Ortega, demonstrates a return to the body and physicality.[554] Returning to the link articulated in the series between *shōnen* sexual anxiety and *otaku* rehabilitation, tentative sexual experience and the female body has earlier inspired Shinji to pilot the *Eva* once more, as

---

[552] For an account of this phenomenon and the principles behind it, see Aidan Rankin, *Shintō: A Celebration of Life* (Winchester: O-Books, 2010), pp. 118-120.
[553] Ortega, 'My Father, He Killed Me', in *Mechademia 2*, ed. by Lunning, p. 220.
[554] Ortega, 'My Father, He Killed Me', in *Mechademia 2*, ed. by Lunning, p. 229.

a dying Misato encourages a weeping Shinji via a passionate kiss and the promise of further sexual experience when he returns.

Evangelion is often bleak in its depiction of adolescence and the state of education in Japan, but tentatively positive in its presentation of sociable, communicative teenagers willing to engage with one another, if not the schooling system and other institutions that have failed them. While Evangelion is consolatory as it acknowledges the life of the teenager establishing his position within the cultural framework to be fraught with anxiety and self-doubt, the series encourages a stoic acceptance of these conditions, encouraging a therapeutic process towards adolescent interaction and socialisation.

Throughout the series and at both versions of the climax, the liminal adolescent is located at the centre of unresolved anxieties revolving around the inevitability of social change, the failure of cultural institutions and the pleasures and pitfalls of consumerism in a world propelled towards a technological future. Through the topos of rebirth, the series tentatively suggests that this state of rootless adolescence symbolises a condition of temporary cultural anxiety and uncertainty. While social upheaval is painful, as is the maturation process of adolescence, it is necessary and potentially reinvigorating – though the series will not commit wholly to this view as it leaves the audience uncertain about the future of the world and its characters.

I will return in Chapter Five to this rich series' representation of wandering in relation to geographical space, considering the juxtaposition of Shinji's wandering within the urban and rural environments as it articulates attitudes towards modernity.

Negotiating the *Hikikomori* and *Otaku* in *Welcome to the N.H.K.*

While I am investigating the representations of the adolescent in *anime* TV series and their relationship to contemporary Japanese culture, I am not simply seeking out instances where real-world phenomena are directly referenced or engaged with to determine the attitude that is expressed within individual texts. I am concerned primarily with decoding the discursive consonances between these texts and contexts, and the frequently oblique strategies employed by *anime* that can be observed in conjunction with its contexts. There are, having said that, interesting instances when *anime* attempts direct engagement and tackles the representation of youth culture panics.

While I have discussed *Evangelion* as a series that codes its protagonist obliquely as a representation of an *otaku*, a handful of *shōnen manga* and *anime* series have explicitly represented *otaku* figures and their predilections. The *media mix* phenomenon *Train Man* ('*Densha Otoko*') has been discussed by Susan Napier in terms of its reorientation of perceptions of the *otaku*: an *otaku* figurine collector encounters a woman on a train and begins to court her, advised on an internet forum by a group of likeminded *otaku* well-wishers who become a dependable support group as he negotiates the emotional complexities of interactions with real-world women.[555] At the story's close, he is forced to reveal his interest in dolls after he has reluctantly discarded his collection. The woman manages to recover the collection and she affirms that she doesn't mind (in fact she too enjoys them). In *Train Man*'s narrative logic, one can be both an *otaku* who enjoys virtual relationships with fantasy girls as well as with real-world women. The *otaku* type is legitimized and repositioned from antisocial shut-in or murderous sociopath, to 'fundamentally redeemable young man'.[556]

Similarly, *Genshiken* (Palm Studio: CTC, 2004) explores the social potential of *otaku* culture, centring on a club for *otaku*, in which the shy and initially friendless protagonist Kanji becomes a part of a friendship group based around both consumption and production activities like *manga* collecting, playing videogames and amateur comics publishing. The cast exhibit *otaku* tendencies to varying degrees: Kōsaka is sociable and outgoing despite his preference for erotic gaming; Madarame excessively purchases collectibles to the detriment of his health; and Kōsaka's girlfriend, Saki, is initially prejudiced against *otaku* but as her preconceptions are challenged she becomes sociable with the group and participates eagerly in their pastimes. The series establishes the potential for *otaku* artifacts and pursuits to unite both male and female characters. This dynamic is exhibited elsewhere in *Oreimo* (*Ore no Imōto ga Konnani Kawaii Wake ga Nai,* lit. *My Little Sister Can't Be This Cute*, AIC Build: Tokyo MX, 2010)*,* whose initially antagonistic brother and sister Kyōsuke and Kōsaka resolve their differences and bond after the boy, ignorant of *otaku* culture, discovers his sister's secret extensive collection of erotic games and *moe anime* DVDs based around *bishōjo* figures. Here, *otaku* culture forms the basis for reconciliation of nuclear family members.

Recognising the similarities between media treatment of *otaku* and *hikikomori,* sociologist Horiguchi Sachiko addresses the 'cultural interpretation' of the *hikikomori*

---

[555] For discussion of its many iterations and a discussion of the reorientation of the *otaku* carried out by the series, see Napier, 'Lost in Transition', in *Mechademia 3,* ed. by Lunning, pp. 259-261; see also Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 153 and pp. 249-251.
[556] Lamarre, *Anime Machine,* p. 152.

in the 2000s and the widespread tendency to assess it as a uniquely Japanese phenomenon that encapsulates a fundamental aspect of the 'national character':

> Very much resembling other past and current youth debates in Japan, *hikikomori* has sharply highlighted the (shifting) boundaries between socially accepted and deviant behaviour, supplying social commentators as well as other citizens with an explicit obverse image of a wholesome, culturally appropriate kind of young person.[559]

The series *Welcome to the N.H.K* deals explicitly with *hikikomori, otaku* and *NEETs* as it presents a vision of Japan saturated with *otaku* culture. Its protagonist Satō self-identifies as a *hikikomori* shut-in, unable to face the world outside his squalid urban apartment and convinced that the national television network, NHK, is encouraging Japan to atomise and remain indoors through the broadcasting of addictive, high quality *anime* series.

At first glance we might presume that the connection Satō makes between *hikikomori* pathology and *otaku* fan practices represents the series' viewpoint on the issue. Marc Hairston comments on the series as a satirical depiction of *hikikomori* in relation to real-world Japan's concerns over the condition and distinguishes it from the *otaku*, whom he argues are parodied as the story progresses.[560] The series certainly contains broad pastiche and exaggerates familiar traits of *anime* and *manga* narratives for both comic and sinister effect, but I find there to be a strategic distinction made between *otaku* and *hikikomori* here that can give us valuable insight into changing attitudes towards youth panics around the two problematic figures in contemporary Japan.

Welcome to the NHK negotiates *otaku* and *hikikomori* pathology through framing these phenomena early on in terms of teenage *futoko* (school absenteeism) in a pre-millennial Japanese context. The *hikikomori* protagonist also shares the antisocial qualities and reticence of *anime* teenagers like *Evangelion*'s Shinji and *Natsume's Book of Friends'* Natsume Takashi (discussed later in this chapter). While protagonist Satō is 22 years old, a flashback in the first episode shows him as a teenager at school in the late 1990s. A chaotic classroom scene shows disaffected youths ignoring their class

---

[559] Horiguchi Sachiko, '*Hikikomori:* How Private Isolation Caught the Public Eye', in *Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et al, pp. 122-138 (p. 132).
[560] Marc Hairston, 'A Cocoon with a View: *Hikikomori, Otaku* and *Welcome to the NHK*' in *Mechademia 5,* ed. by Lunning, 311-323 (p. 311).

president, and Satō decides to intervene in an instance of *ijime* where a group of boys violently assault a classmate. He is attacked as a result of his interference, and in a voice-over from the present he connects his formative, traumatic post-bubble high school experience to the ensuing *hikikomori* condition of isolation and entrapment. This brief but telling contextual recollection articulates the impact of the Japanese school system in the 1990s on teenagers who are by the series' airdate of 2008 grown men. Bearing in mind Saitō Tamaki's influential conception of *hikikomori* as 'adolescence without end', and a prolonging of socially 'immature' impulses, we can consider a perennial teenager, the *hikikomori* condition, expressed as an arrested development which manifested the moment the teenager opted out of Japanese society as a result of his school experiences. In this way we might consider the series as a representation of his maturation process in similar terms to that experienced by the much-younger Shinji of *Evangelion.*

Satō is introduced in the first episode in the midst of a paranoid delusional dream, pursued by a variety of figures derived from popular Japanese visual culture – gun-toting *Yakuza* gangsters, a clone army of advancing, cute, cat-eared *anime* girls and grainy black-and-white, mock-realist propaganda 'footage' of Japanese ships and aircraft of WWII. The dream constitutes an overwhelmed response to Japanese 20th century media history, where these familiar images are condensed and massed as one oppressive force in his imagination, and he is unable to negotiate them.[561] For Satō, Japanese visual media have created the *hikikomori* and an atomised society. On this level, it might appear that the series is taking a counter-cultural stance and subversively attributing responsibility to the industry within which it operates. Looking further into the series suggests a more complex relationship to its contemporary cultural situation. In this introduction, Satō is established as simultaneously rooted and rootless; spacially trapped and yet fleeing ideologically and mentally from a confrontation with the signifiers of Japan's cultural history.

Satō is concurrently presented as a figure of pathos, backed into dark corners gripped with anxiety, and one of comic amusement, as he tries manically to shut out the repetitive sound of the insidious theme song of a magical girl *anime* he is forced to

---

[561] The conflation through rapid montage of several decades of Japanese imagery can also be construed as a vertiginous representation of the hybridity of contemporary *anime* and the range of genres and historical periods that are compressed with slender logic or justification in many series. See for example the very popular genre-blurring science fiction historical series *Gintama* (Sunrise: TV Tokyo, 2006-2010, *manga* serialised: *Weekly Shōnen Jump,* 2003-) in which a group of adolescent *rōnin* in period costume negotiate a technology-infused version of Late Edo-period Tokyo that has been invaded by aliens.

endure as it pipes through from his neighbour's apartment. The audience is shut in with him from the outset, as the action begins indoors and without an exterior establishing shot. When he attempts to imagine the images that accompany the sounds next door, he hallucinates and we too see his vision of a myriad of taunting, brightly coloured cute-faced puddings that rotate in front of his head in time to the upbeat music. These splashes of vibrant colour are in contrast to the banal, scruffy interior of his apartment, and while we are quickly given a sense of his interiority and its complex paranoid fantasies, the energetic visual and sonic intrusion is immediately more engaging and lively than his stultified, cluttered environment. Sympathy is encouraged, rather than identification and self-recognition. This is a significant establishing of discursive parameters, as it sets up an immediate distinction in the series between the oppressive gloom of the antisocial shut-in, and the imaginative, singsong world in which the *otaku* immerses himself. There is some initial ambivalence: on the one hand the series presents an excessive parody of *otaku* culture, where the *media mix* industries and character brands are invasive and damaging to a victimised subject. The other side of the line it treads is a celebratory affirmation of its ubiquity – for as the series goes on to demonstrate, like it or not, Satō has to engage with it if he is to break out of his cycle of paranoia and *hikikomori* isolation.

It is Satō's acceptance that he must engage with the dynamic character-filled, popular culture saturated world of the *otaku* that enables him to move out into the world outside and interact. The *hikikomori* discovers that his noisy neighbour is Kaoru, an old high school classmate who has become an *otaku*, his apartment a shrine to the *bishōjo* of *manga, anime* and *eroge* ('erotic games').[562] In episode two, Kaoru and Satō begin work on their own *eroge*, and the first outside contact the *hikikomori* has experienced for a long time is initiated. As they plan their erotic game, their conversations become a therapeutic process for Satō. They wander Tokyo's *otaku* hub, Akihabara, in episode four, and Satō learns the *otaku* lexicon of nuances regarding *moe* character types and situations. He later meets a similarly meek and introverted (but not *hikikomori*) teenage girl, Misaki, who volunteers to help longstanding shut-ins become sociable. The initially successful therapy she uses to draw Satō out is to appeal to him via appealing

---

[562] 'Erotic game', also called 'dating simulations' or 'sims', associated with the *otaku* in which the player takes on the role of male suitor to a range of female characters, is read as an unfolding story and the player makes decisions at key moments in the text which affect romantic outcomes. This phenomenon will be referred to again through the thesis in relation to the representation of female teenagers.

moe tropes: she arrives at his door at points during the series wearing *otaku*-oriented costumes including a French maid outfit and *kawaii* cat-ears.

Despite pro-*otaku* discourse and activities within the 'Cool Japan' initiative, debates on the *otaku* are not settled. Sociologist Thiam Huat Kam finds through interviews with Japanese students on the subject of *otaku* in 2012 that the social values that contribute epistemologically to their location and comprehension of the type are defined negatively in terms of consumption without production of capital. The *otaku*, he concludes, are still viewed as troubling to the advancement of Japanese industry 'not merely for failing to produce capital through their consumption, but also for actively practicing a perversion of the capacities that are necessary to advanced capitalist Japan, most notably imagination and autonomy'.[563] The *otaku* in *Welcome to the NHK* is defined in opposition to this view as an active producer and, as a fervent consumer, a contributor to the Japanese economy, engaged in a vibrant capitalist infrastructure and presenting concrete goods for circulation.

Much of the humour of the series relies upon familiarity with existing tropes of *anime* parodied by the repetitive *Puru Puru Pururin* theme song and the absurd, heightened emotional and sexual situations Satō and Kaoru incorporate into their game. The series thereby affirms *otaku* habits and predilections as normal in contrast to the pathological *hikikomori*, and it secures the otaku identity as fans through the recognition of that which they are not. Although, as *otaku* they may be different socially, the term does not constitute a pathological condition of ill health. This view is borne out as the series progresses and the gradual socialisation process that brings Satō out of his apartment begins, where *otaku* culture provides the antidote or panacea for feelings of isolation and detachment. As the series develops, *otaku* culture is celebrated as diverse and exuberant, with the *otaku* conceived as a sociable, passionate, active creator and contributor to public discourses.

When his father is taken ill, Kaoru is forced to return to his hometown to become a farmer. Nanako, the female classmate with whom he has expressed romantic feelings, is his inspiration for the main character of the game, but he has not revealed his *otaku* leanings to her. He drunkenly invites her to visit his apartment, a shrine to eroticised, *moe* girls of *eroge,* in order for Satō to film her reaction as reference for their game. When she arrives, Kaoru has concealed his figurines and posters, and he unveils them grandly, even showing her an erotic drawing he has made of her. She responds in

---

[563] Thiam Huat Kam, 'The Anxieties that Make the '*Otaku*': Capital and the Common Sense of Consumption in Contemporary Japan' in *Japanese Studies,* vol. 33, issue 1 (2013), pp. 39-61.

a measured way at first to his confession that while erotic games aren't appealing to her, she admires his honesty and is prepared to accept his predilections owing to his attractive personality.

Unsatisfied by this lack of dramatic impact, Kaoru offends her by suggesting she too is perverse and a fan of explicit rape fantasy games, at which she punches him and leaves in disgust. This moment constitutes an important distinction made in the series between socially acceptable and unacceptable *otaku* behaviour. The real-world woman will in fact accept his idiosyncratic tastes, but when he attempts to subsume her own agency into the fictive and make her adhere to a female type found in his fantasy texts, she refuses to be controlled and repositioned. When the series progresses to this late stage, it is not clear-cut in its attitude to the issue of *otaku* fandom, simultaneously revelling in fantasy imagery and ridiculing its excesses. It negotiates its ambivalence with the ultimately noncommittal position that the *otaku*'s habits and interests are fine, as long as the individual does not force his interpretations on others; they should remain a fantasy separate from the real-world. *Otaku* culture serves a transitional, temporary and remedial purpose via indulgent fantasies for individual consumption rather than a template for interactions. The series celebrates these fantasies but is careful to warn against applying the logic of situations in erotic games and other *otaku* texts to everyday life.

In Episode 21, Kaoru boxes up his *otaku* collection in preparation for his move, and he passes, among other things, his prized life-size figurine of Puru Puru Pururin on to Satō. In the first episode, the character represented a terrifying hallucinogenic threat to Satō's sanity, and now Puru Puru Pururin is static and manageable. The moment symbolises the transference onto the former *hikikomori* of a newly acquired social ability achieved through his friendship with Kaoru and his immersion in *otaku* creativity. An ensuing snowball fight in an idyllic scene of mental and physical liberation represents a negotiation by both men of their respective classification as *otaku* and *hikikomori* - Kaoru has thrown off the virtual in favour of bodily expression and physical experience, and Satō enjoys the sensation of being physically out in the world (although it is empty of people, this is a positive recuperative step). As they play, they recite impassioned dialogue in the style of their game, and their tempers unexpectedly flare as they release their repressed emotional concern for each other, resulting in a physical fight. Again, *otaku* culture provides the discursive framework and preliminary script for this cathartic airing of complex emotional responses.

In *Welcome to the NHK*, the pathologised condition of *hikikomori,* made explicitly distinct from the lifestyle choice of *otaku,* constitutes a prolonged state of adolescence, where consumption and production of *otaku* culture provides a therapeutic framework for rehabilitation and recuperation. As the series leaves Satō in the final episode, like *Evangelion*'s Shinji he remains in a tentative, liminal position. While he agrees to live out in the world and interact with others, fantasy characters from his paranoid delusions still nip at his feet and remind of his instability, though he subdues them temporarily with a kick. While the *otaku* represented by Kaoru is now living an active, productive life in the countryside, the *hikikomori* remains ambiguously at the locus of a troubling cultural shift, a product of his media-saturated environment but asserting his individual agency in the face of anxiety about maturing into a redeemable adult.

In Chapter Five I will look in more detail at the wandering adolescent protagonists of the series *Initial D* and *Last Exile*, but here I would like to briefly illustrate the reorientation of the reticent *otaku*-coded adolescent from consumer to producer that these series can be seen to present. *Initial D* revolves around teenage sportscar drivers, while *Last Exile* is set in a world where the populace operate light aircraft throughout daily life. Rather than presenting a fetishised view of technology and the mechanical where characters do not ask questions about the mechanisms that propel their craft and they simply function, both series make a point of showing the adolescent actively engaging with the machine's inner workings. Dialogue around broken engines, spare parts, customisation and sequences showing the focused labour required to adapt the mechanical are frequently depicted. In *Evangelion*, Shinji and the NERV administration are unaware of the precise mechanical workings of the *Eva*, and this lack of knowledge provokes frequent anxiety and feelings of unease that are discussed at various times by the cast. In the magic-oriented series *Fullmetal Alchemist* and *Natsume's Book of Friends*, the teenage protagonist exhibits creativity, focused concentration and craftsmanship when performing ritualistic spells that impact upon the environment. In these examples, the empowerment of the adolescent is not taken for granted, but active production and conscientious engagement is celebrated.

Invisible Monsters: Reconfiguring the *Shōnen* in *Death Note* and *Natsume's Book of Friends*

Death Note and *Natsume's Book of Friends* are successful fantasy *manga* adapted into popular, long-running *anime* series, set in contemporary Japan and laden with imagery and concepts from indigenous folklore and phenomena associated with *Shintō* mythology. *Death Note* is a pessimistic, suspense-driven urban psychodrama whose single lengthy storyline unfolds over the course of 37 episodes as prolific teenage killer Light evades capture as he uses a demonic notebook to pass the death sentence on those he deems guilty or who threaten to capture him. *Natsume's Book of Friends* presents a rural idyll in which the protagonist Takashi comes into possession of his grandmother's notebook full of the captured names of monsters that has trapped them in servitude, and he vows to return them to their owners. While the tonally distinct series develop their themes along different lines, both stories feature a wandering *shōnen* at their centre who is empowered through handwritten notes and consequently has a unique access to the otherworldly realm of *yōkai* (demons or monsters) and *kami* (the *Shintō* religion's divine spirits or gods). I will look at them comparatively and highlight a range of connections they exhibit to the discourse of the monstrous *shōnen* as embodied by the letter-writing *Shōnen A* in order to explore attitudes towards the teenage boy in Japanese media several years after the initial spate of panics.

In the handwritten letters of *Shōnen A*, the teenage murderer rails at the fact that 'his existence had been reduced to that of an invisible being'.[565] Additionally, the boy claimed to be able to see and communicate with an 'invisible' being, a supernatural version of himself that embodied his alienated and detached state.[566] 'Invisibility' or erasure is a theme explored in both series, at the level of the adolescent individual and in terms of the cultural and traditional. *Natsume's Book of Friends'* Takashi is, following the *shōnen* type exemplified by *Evangelion*'s Shinji, 'invisible' at the series' outset through his reticence and asocial characteristics, and is shunned at school owing to his shyness and nervous disposition. The series tells us that these qualities, and his choice to isolate himself, are derived from the fact that he is constantly able to see unnerving monstrous figures (referred to specifically in the Japanese folkloric taxonomy of *yōkai* in the series) that are invisible to everyone else. Similarly, *Death Note*'s Light is uniquely able through possession of the notebook to see the demon Ryuk, who ambivalently oversees the action but does not intervene.

[565] Yoneyama, *Japanese High School,* p. 1.
[566] Mika Maruyama and Frank R. Ascione, 'Animal Abuse: An Evolving Issue in Japanese Society', in *The International Handbook of Animal Abuse and Cruelty: Theory, Research and Application*, ed. by Mika Maruyama and Frank R. Ascione (Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2010), pp. 269-304 (p. 275).

While I have noted in Chapter Two that a prominent conjunction was apparent in popular *anime* and *manga* of the 1990s between the male adolescent and technology, in the 2000s and beyond a number of popular series have depicted a close relationship between teenagers and the supernatural and monstrous, especially derived from indigenous folktales and *Shintō* mythology, using its particular taxonomy. Previously, the representation of the teenager empowered by magic and the supernatural was primarily associated with the *shōjo* of magical/fighting girl *manga* and *anime*, but in the 2000s the *shōnen* began appearing more prominently at the centre of stories infused with these elements.

This shift occurred in the years following Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* (2001), the most successful film of all time in Japan, [567] in which the *shōjo* protagonist Chihiro encounters a variety of supernatural entities as she is forced to work in a bathhouse for '*kami*', the *Shintō* deities or spirits that can inhabit everyday objects.[568] At the film's outset, Chihiro asks her mother off-handedly what the hundreds of stone *Shintō* shrines to *kami* and Buddhist statues of Jīzo (guardian of children) that litter the roadside are (an extremely familiar sight across rural Japan), and the moment represents the ignorant girl's first encounter with *Shintō* and Buddhism as cultural organisational principles that give meaning to the Japanese environment that she has hitherto taken for granted. This lack of connection between the young protagonist and her cultural past provides the film's symbolic justification for her subsequent 'spiriting away' and immersion in a world articulating a specifically Japanese mythology and heritage.[569]

Manga and *anime* series exploring the relationship between the adolescent and ghosts, demons and other supernatural phenomena include *Ayakashi: Samurai Horror Tales* (*Ayakashi,* Toei: Fuji TV, 2006), *Kekkaishi* (*Kekkaishi,* Sunrise: Nippon Television, 2006-2008)*, Naruto, Bleach, Blue Exorcist* (*Ao no Ekusoshisuto,* A-1 Pictures: JNN, 2011)*, Beelzebub* (Studio Pierrot: NNS, 2011-2012)*, Amatsuki* (Studio DEEN: AT-X, 2008)*, Nura: Rise of the Yokai Clan* (*Nurarihyon no Mago,* Studio Deen: Yomiuri TV, 2010) and *High School of the Dead* (*Gakuen Mokushiroku Haisukuru obu za Deddo,* Madhouse: AT-X, 2010).

---

[567] ¥30.4 billion at the Japanese box office during its year of release, responsible for 62.5% of the market for *anime* films the same year. See Denison, et al., '*Manga* Movies Project Report 2: Japan's contemporary *Manga, Anime,* and Film Industries', p. 25.

[568] The animistic *Shintō* concept of *kami* deities has it that formless gods or spirits are or can be present in any worldly object or location. *Spirited Away* imagines anthropomorphic bodily forms for these *kami* who take temporary respite from their homes. For a summary of *kami,* and *Shintō* notions of good and evil, see Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror*, p. 37.

[569] For an account of the film's transnational distribution and reception in relation to its perceived Japanese cultural specificities see Rayna Denison, 'Global Markets for Japanese Film', in *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer, pp. 308-322.

These examples are infused with supernatural or religious (*Shintō*, Buddhist and Christian) concepts, with the teenage boy empowered through magical or religious artefacts that connect him to a cultural past rather than a technological future, and the adolescent is positioned in a variety of roles towards the supernatural ranging from nurturing to antagonistic. The terms *yōkai* and *ayakashi* are used in many recent supernatural *anime*, and the diverse range of spirits and creatures to which these terms refer are often derived from folktales and *Shintō* myth.[577] Michael Dylan Foster notes the slippage in Japan between the 'fuzzy' classification of entities as *yōkai* and the specifically *Shintō kami*: while *kami* are 'more sacred manifestations of belief', *yōkai* are often a source of anxiety.[578] According to Foster, for example, a water spirit 'may be simultaneously worshipped as a *kami* by families for whom the river provides ample irrigation and feared as a *yōkai* by families downriver who experience drought.'[579] While there are many folktales featuring mischievous or harmful *yōkai*, Foster asserts that these creatures 'are ambiguously positioned beyond (or between) good and evil.'[580] This ambiguity of intention and predilection is demonstrated in the vacillating, ambiguous depictions of *yōkai* in contemporary *anime*. Public belief in *yōkai*, while a vexed issue, is a distinctly pre-20th century, pre-industrial phenomenon, having been 'explicitly criticised' during the Meiji period of modernisation and expansion (1868-1912).[581] I would like to suggest that the infusion of supernatural entities into the everyday life of the teenager seen in *anime* articulates therefore a return to premodern Japanese modes of thought, value systems and interpretations of the world.

Ayakashi presents a reorientation of folktale and *Shintō* narratives within the contemporary stylistic parameters of *anime* in adaptations of classic Japanese ghost stories, its first four episodes retelling the staple *kabuki* play *Yotsuya Kaidan* (written by Tsuruya Nanboku IV, 1825) with adolescent characters.[582] *Kekkaishi'*s teenagers train as *ayakashi* exterminators, guided by benevolent animal spirits. *Bleach'*s Ichigo polices the divide between the living and the afterlife as he combats *yōkai* attempting to feed on the souls of the recently deceased. In *Naruto*, the body of the young ninja-in-training of the title houses the captured spirit of a nine-tailed fox – in *Shintō* myth, the fox is a

---

[577] While *ayakashi* initially referred to spirits that appeared above water, the term is used in *anime* to signify any demonic or supernatural entity.
[578] Michael Dylan Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yōkai* (Berkeley, California, London: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 14-15.
[579] Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade*, p. 15.
[580] Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade*, p. 15.
[581] Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade*, p. 12.
[582] Part of the *kabuki* repertoire and previously filmed more than 30 times, e.g. *Yotsuya Kaidan* (Nakagawa Nobuo, 1959).

magically empowered trickster figure whose power and wisdom is indicated by the possession of plural tails. Throughout the series, Naruto subdues this monstrous part of his makeup as it motivates him to act violently and selfishly. *Beelzebub*'s delinquent schoolboy, Oga, learns social responsibility through becoming a surrogate parent to the baby son of a demon. *Amatsuki* particularly addresses a disassociation between the adolescent and Japan's past, as the protagonist, Tokidoki, fails history class and is forced to negotiate Japanese history and myth; he is transported within a virtual version of the *Edo* Period (1603-1868). In *Nura: Rise of the Yokai Clan*, the protagonist, Nura, lives in a house populated by *yōkai*, and acts as their leader while he tries to maintain normalcy in his everyday high school life.

In these series, the initially reticent and antisocial adolescent's encounter with the supernatural establishes a conjunction with traditional folktale entities as indigenous phenomena that links the teenager to Japanese cultural heritage. Knowledge of the idiosyncratic attributes of antagonistic creatures encountered by the adolescent enables the successful outcome of conflicts – this metaphorically acts as a call for the recovery of the past and a connection to Japanese heritage through the action of the teenager, who develops familiarity with the iterations of *yōkai* and *ayakashi*.[583] A commonality of these series is the convergence of the everyday and the fantastic. The high school or an equivalent teenage training environment figures as principal stage for the teenager's development, and equal weight is given to daily routine, social experiences and magical conflicts.

These series share with *Death Note* and *Natsume's Book of Friends* the adolescent's specific affinity for the monstrous, which articulates the existence of a dual antisocial aspect to the *shōnen* that must be negotiated, limited, controlled or contained. *Naruto* and *Blue Exorcist* highlight a dual nature in the supernaturally empowered male adolescent as the essentially well-intentioned protagonist contends with a monstrous internalised 'other self', constituting an intrinsically antisocial nature that threatens to erupt violently unless monitored. There is consonance between these teenage figures who struggle to overcome innate physiological or psychological imperatives with anxieties surrounding the monstrous adolescent in contemporary Japan. In conjunction with a story of social development and rehabilitation, balancing the supernatural with

---

[583] Elsewhere, elements of Christianity are depicted in *Ao no Exorcist,* in which the teenage son of Satan trains as a demon-hunting exorcist, while in the hybrid post-apocalyptic series *High School of the Dead*, the hallmarks of the Western zombie horror film (cf. *Dawn of the Dead*, George A. Romero, 1978) are migrated into a familiar *anime* setting as a cast of Japanese high school pupils defend their school as a refuge from the attacks of zombies.

the everyday constitutes the reconfiguration of the adolescent boy away from the monstrousness expressed within the discourses of high school disobedience, *ijime,* and child killers like *Shōnen A*. Exhibiting this adolescent duality, *Death Note'*s Light maintains a superficially altruistic, charming and benevolent appearance, but secretly harbours violently egomaniacal sociopathic tendencies. Meanwhile, *Natsume's Book of Friends'* Takashi is shunned owing to his supernatural sight that uniquely allows him to perceive *yōkai* inhabiting the everyday environment, and he is frequently misperceived by these monsters, who see him as his antisocial grandmother.

Death Note

The title of the first episode of *Death Note*, 'Shinsei' ('Rebirth')*,* recalls the Buddhist observance of the cycle of death and renewal, and the theme's expression in *Evangelion.* Introducing the antihero Light, the episode establishes his subjectively bleak view of the travails of contemporary Tokyo. As Light gains possession of the 'Death Note', he aims to cleanse society and achieve a rebirth through passing a sentence of death on all criminals. An article in the *Asahi Shinbun* on 11 December 1994 cited teachers' growing concerns over what became known as the *botsu-shutai* personality type, characterised by lack of energy, disinterest, boredom and passivity, and that talking to children of this kind is like 'talking to an alien'.[584] The teenager in *Death Note* is configured early on in terms of profound ennui and dissatisfaction with social reality that chimes with this description, constructing associations between the teenager and an otherworldly, monstrous alien creature.

The action begins by tracking through the barren, harsh and rocky terrain of the world of the *Shinigami* ('death gods'), a grim space analogous to the *Shintō* afterlife realm of *Yomi* in which the dead fester and rot.[585] The camera settles on the isolated, slumped form of the *Shinigami* Ryuk, who stares out over the bleak plains where vague, silhouetted and amorphous forms appear to torment one another. His posture, bent over with head in hands, conveys ennui and detachment from the gruesome scene (the first chapter of the *manga* from which this scene is adapted is called *Taikutsu,* 'Boredom'). Through a close-up of Ryuk's eye that is match-cut to the eye of Light, the grim,

---

[584] Yoneyama, *Japanese High School*, p. 9.
[585] For discussion of the significance of the *Shintō* origin tales of *Yomi* and its cultural connotations, see Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*, pp. 62-64.

decadent *Shinigami* realm and Ryuk's alienation are paralleled clearly with real-world Tokyo and the experience of the adolescent.

In a visual match cut, Light sits unmotivated and similarly slumped head in hands, alone in a high school class of apathetic pupils who are shown in montage ignoring their monotonous teacher. One pupil plays a handheld games console, one reads a *manga,* and we hear the voice of a girl deliberating on the unexpected and irrational breakdown of her romantic relationship (she states flatly that she hasn't done anything yet her boyfriend wants to split up with her). Immediately the series characterises the contemporary Japanese adolescent's milieu through atomism, disinterest and apathy. Its teenagers are fragmented, unfocused and uncommunicative. Light is framed against the stark geometric lines of the classroom window that are echoed severally by the drab square windows of the other schoolrooms that make up the outside view.

Light singles himself out intellectually as he perfectly translates a complex passage from English into Japanese, before we see him wandering alone through a bleak view of modern Tokyo. The palette is washed-out and steely grey, the setting characterised through the accretion of oppressive urban imagery articulating squalor, grime and industrial artifice. Signs of humanity and social interaction are absent, and Light is visually constricted in each shot by a range of hard perpendicular angles made by the monochrome buildings, wireframe walkways and crosshatched fences. An aerial view of the busy Hachiko crossing in Tokyo's Shibuya commercial district shows the multitude of pedestrian figures rendered as a teeming mass of indistinct shapes, making the visual parallel between the *Yomi* realm and real-world Japan.

The depiction of Tokyo shares these stylistic traits with key Tokyo-set examples of the successful boom of Japanese horror films at the turn of the century including *Ju-on* (Shimizu Takahashi, 2002) and *Ringu* (Nakata Hideo, 1998). Of these, Colette Balmain argues that social disconnection and individual anxiety are driving forces behind the horror spectacle, which hinges upon a 'syntax of despair, isolation and loneliness' communicated visually within the stark *mise-en-scene* of the urban environment.[586] Murder has become the everyday: in a grim representation of millennial Japanese media reportage, newsreaders intone flatly first that a man has been found dead in his apartment, and then a woman has been murdered by her partner in their home. Light remarks on the everyday familiarity of such instances of violent crime. In *Death Note*, the *Shinigami* afterlife and Tokyo have both normalised appalling

---

[586] Balmain, 'Inside the Well', para.12.

antisocial acts. As Colette Balmain states, in *Shintō* myth the afterlife realm of *Yomi* is associated with 'pollution, decay and death', and these are the qualities that characterise both the *Shinigami* world and the series' representation of contemporary Tokyo.[587] Within these circumstances, Light comes into possession of the 'Death Note' notebook that Ryuk has dropped on Earth, and after experimentally using it to kill a murderer he sees on a news-report, decides to use the book to punish criminals and, he claims, recreate the world according to his own interpretation of justice.

The second autonomous adolescent character, L, appears in the second episode. Purportedly the greatest detective in the world, the teenager is brought in to discover the identity of the murderer. Light and L are linked by their antisocial tendencies and social alienation, but once Light is empowered by possession of the Death Note, he becomes socially able, charming and manipulative in contrast to L's jarring social quirks and hunched, unkempt appearance. The antagonist of the series is initially presented in far more conventionally appealing terms, but Light's character shifts as the series develops from dissatisfied and motivated towards social change to self-congratulatory and antagonistic.

The first letter delivered by *Shōnen A* on May 27th 1997, which accompanied the decapitated head of schoolboy Hase Jun and was published in newspapers across Japan, read 'I enjoy killing so much I can't stand it; I want to, want to see people die so much.'[588] *Shōnen A*'s discursive oscillation between single-minded antagonism and socially-motivated terrorist acts intended to provoke change chimes with Light's characterisation as he seems to become less concerned with the societal implications of using the Death Note and more with the ludic pursuits it offers. *Death Note* depicts the corruption of the apparently ordinary *shōnen* from apparently successful student to antisocial monster. Light's actions using the notebook are, like *Shōnen A* in his written communications, corrective to his feelings of living an 'invisible existence' with no meaningful influence on the world around him.

As Light grows to realise his actions have few ramifications in a chaotic world, he revels in his intellectual ability to evade capture and to manipulate the authorities. The opening credits sequence for the series' first 19 episodes depicts an isolated Light, apathetic and expressionless against a series of oppressive urban views of buildings and walkways - presenting him in the terms of ennui and isolation associated with the *botsu-shutai* type. From episode 20, this representation shifts, and the teenager's face is shown

---

[587] Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*, p. 63.
[588] Marilyn Ivy, 'Revenge and Recapitaion' in *Japan After Japan*, ed. by Harootunian and Yoda, p.207.

ubiquitously repeated on a cluster of video monitors, looking directly at the camera laughing manically in defiance. Like the initially anonymous *Shōnen A,* Light's existence is now anything but invisible, reports of his killings saturating the media. We then see L in his familiar hunched position in front of the monitor screens, twitching skittishly.

Resonating beyond the initial impact of *Shōnen A*'s appalling acts of physical violence in the Japanese public imagination was the invective content of the notes that accompanied the victims' bodies, which when circulated as widely as they were threatened to reveal home truths about families' detachment from and suspicion of one another. Yoneyama asserts that *Shōnen A* fundamentally altered Japanese perceptions of the parent-child relationship and caused 'grave uneasiness throughout society'.[589] *Death Note'*s *shōnen* depictions articulate the misleading nature of surface appearance, and the perils of assuming the social values and ideological leanings of an individual based on superficial criteria.

The letters of *Shōnen A* with their lofty accusations, and the assertion later on that he no longer lives an 'invisible existence' exhibit acute delusions of grandeur. The teenager believed his actions to be serving the interests of Japan and addressing a dysfunctional social and educational system. Similarly, *Aum*'s doctrines indicate that its members believe themselves to be serving a benevolent higher purpose through their terrorist actions.

While *Evangelion'*s Shinji is continuously reluctant to accept his position of extraordinary global importance, both *Welcome to the NHK*'s Satō and *Death Note'*s Light suffer extreme delusions of grandeur. In episode 20 of *NHK*, Satō returns alone to his apartment after Kaoru has left Tokyo and hallucinates that he is the sole occupant of the planet, and that he has become its god, while Light asserts early into *Death Note* that he intends to become the embodiment of justice and the saviour of mankind. These delusions are born out of the teenage characters' isolation and detachment from others, and in Light's case his social malaise and dissatisfaction quickly escalates into psychopathy.

Light's empowerment with quasi-divine, retributive power through the notebook resonates with the extreme cultural effect on perception of the adolescent boy after the circulation of *Shōnen A*'s delusional self-aggrandisement, and is a potent embodiment of the terms within which the boy killer conceived of his actions. Yoneyama reports that 70% of a national TV programme's audience in 1998 expressed concern when

---

[589] For details of the study see Yoneyama, *Japanese High School,* p. 7.

prompted that their children might become murderers, and that Japanese parents confronted with media reportage on *Shōnen A* were concerned that they had become estranged from their children entirely.[590] A paranoid depiction of a monster concealed beneath an innocuous veneer, Light possesses the characteristics of a successful, hardworking student, and is charming, smartly dressed, polite and articulate. The investigative drama at the heart of the series becomes a process of breaking down Light's composure in order to reveal the antisocial element concealed beneath the surface of Japanese society.

L suspects Light very early in the series, and the audience position is one of complete knowledge of the killer's identity, but without empirical evidence his method is to continually monitor the responses of the monstrous adolescent as a means of uncovering his true nature. Sociologist Brian McVeigh discusses the importance of the self-governing concept of *seken*, in which society is conceived by the individual in terms of a gaze directed upon them by peers and authority figures who monitor the appropriateness of their actions. An interesting consonance here with *Shōnen A*'s letters and the monsters of *Death Note* is that McVeigh reports the repeated use by students in interview on the subject that *seken* is 'invisible', 'the world of invisible strangers' and '*seken* is invisible, but it governs people'.[591] While McVeigh writes of *seken* as ensuring groupism and conformity in high school, it is Light's pathological hypersensitivity to the way he is perceived by others that allows him to conceal his murderous nature, pre-empting the tactics L uses to coax him into revealing himself.

The art design of the secretly antisocial, antagonistic Light - slender and tall with androgynous wavy hair and full eyes - is in fact closer to the romantic *bishōnen* of *shōjo manga* than familiar *shōnen manga* male figures. The series enacts an intimate audience confrontation with the monstrous adolescent embodied by *Shōnen A*. This teenage monster is conceptualised in *Death Note* as a fascinating, attractive and alluring figure to be scrutinised in an attempt to comprehend their motivations and interpretation of their environment. In contrast the comparatively heroic (inasmuch as they are attempting to prevent killings) L and Near are, as *hikikomori* types without social grace or sartorial elegance, far less attractive or beguiling as protagonists despite their altruistic agenda.

Presenting an inverse conjunction with this media-circulated discourse of parental anxiety around the male adolescent, in *Natsume's Book of Friends,* Takashi's

---

[590] Yoneyama, *Japanese High School,* p. 7.
[591] McVeigh, *Japanese Higher Education as Myth*, p. 103.

abandonment by his parents and his subsequent isolation and reticence is shown through their abject fear of his personality and his affinity with the *yōkai* he claims to be able to see. As the series progresses, his connection to the spirits of *Shintō* is articulated in terms of adolescent rehabilitation through connection with a lost cultural heritage.

Natsume's Book of Friends

While *Death Note*'s representations of the monstrous within the urban setting articulate cultural anxiety around the adolescent boy as a problematic, threatening anti-establishment figure, *Natsume's Book of Friends'* delicate, often languid pastoral vision recuperates the *shōnen* through interaction with the symbolic past embodied by spirits and deities derived from indigenous folktales and *Shintō* mythology in the natural environment. The series' action is organised around tranquil, verdant locales and signifiers of Japanese pre-modernity including neatly-preserved shrines, traditional *tatami*-floored family mansions, thriving town festivals and community celebrations beneath blooming cherry blossom trees. These elements emphasise good-natured communal conviviality and underscore Natsume Takashi's comparative reticence and isolation. Rather than casting him into a suddenly jarring experience of forced socialisation like *Evangelion*'s Shinji, the process of rehabilitating the *shōnen* takes place gradually amid a nurturing, spacious environment that he can wander freely. *Natsume's Book of Friends'* world is strongly reminiscent of both *Spirited Away* and *Princess Mononoke* for the normalising into the everyday rural environment of spirits and deities derived from the folktale, Buddhist and *Shintō* myth, and the edification of the youth through encounters with these elements. The grotesque supporting cast of *yōkai* are extremely reminiscent of the *kami* featured in *Spirited Away*, especially the wolf-god form of the *yōkai* Madara, who becomes Takashi's familiar advisor on supernatural matters in the hybrid form of domestic cat and *maneki-neko* or lucky cat statue.[593]

Marilyn Ivy, exploring her concept of the perceived 'vanishing' of traditional Japanese customs and values, identifies a cultural identity crisis that led to Japan's

---

[593] Ubiquitous as a symbol of luck and fortune in Japan, particularly in the windows of small businesses, the *manekineko*, one or both paws raised in a beckoning gesture, appears in numerous *Shintō* folktales as bringer of prosperity and good luck. In wolf-god form, Madara's white fur, anatomically detailed jaws and eyes, ornate red facial markings and long, undulating body very closely resemble the River God form of Haku in Miyazaki's film, *Spirited Away*, as well as the *mononoke* wolf gods of *Princess Mononoke*.

'"staging" of old customs, folklores and beliefs to paradoxically reinforce its own sense of identity and loss thereof'.[594] *Natsume's Book of Friends* enacts this reclamation of the past in a number of ways as it recuperates and rehabilitates the adolescent boy. The organisational focus around traditional rural community behaviours establishes an idealised social group based around intimacy and cooperation; the principal settings of the forest pathways, shrines and traditional interiors almost totally deny the urban, technological and commercial in favour of the pre-modern; storylines and discussion between teenage characters seldom leave the locus of *yōkai*, giving them a goal-oriented social commonality that immerses them perpetually in indigenous Japanese *Shintō* folklore.

The connection between wandering teenagers of the present and past is articulated by the opening title sequence of *Natsume's Book of Friends'* first season. As Takashi is shown standing limply, static against a backdrop of clouds, he faces forward towards the camera. This introduction to Takashi immediately recalls *Evangelion*'s imagery, the sullen adolescents in isolation against the open sky. A dissolve shows a *serafuku*-uniformed *shōjo* figure, matched through colour and posture to the boy, facing away from the camera – we learn early on that this is Natsume's grandmother, a feverish collector who has spitefully competed with hundreds of *yōkai* to steal their names for inclusion in the notebook, forcing them into servitude. The first two *yōkai* that Natsume encounters in the series misperceive him as Reiko as they demand he returns their names.[595]

We are told Reiko was a lonely, isolated girl throughout her life, alienated from others, and in the second episode a flashback shows her asserting that 'people are selfish and cruel', accounting for her antisocial, combative demeanour. The similarly isolated but good-natured Takashi is motivated to atone for Reiko's past conduct, and through the series seeks out the *yōkai* that his grandmother has 'collected' in order to learn their names and release them from the book – occasionally they perform plot-specific favours in exchange for release. This relinquishing of acquired possessions is a reversal of the dynamic seen in *Death Note,* as names are not accrued in the book but released with

---

[594] Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 216.

[595] This frequent assumption by the *yōkai* that Takashi is his grandmother, and his taking up of her mantle, chimes with the shift in *manga* and *anime* from teenage girls to boys at the centre of the magical and supernatural milieu. These qualities, especially within a popular series that has a blurred *shōnen/shōjo* generic identity, suggests a recognition of increased gender mobility and a divergence from previously fixed notions of *shōnen* and *shōjo* behaviour, characteristics and audience tastes.

altruistic intent. I have observed in *Evangelion* an ambivalent attitude towards consumerism, and here the guiding principle of the series' plot reorients the image of the adolescent as a greedy, solipsistic consumer, reoriented into an altruistic, conscientious youth who casts off material desires.

Takashi tends to encounter *yōkai* individually, one per episode, and like him they are presented as wanderers, some of them children or adolescents, emerging from the pastoral landscape as they appear in the branches of trees or on riverbanks. His encounters with *yōkai* constitute a pacification of the symbolic monstrous duality of the adolescent boy epitomised by *Shōnen A*, where interactions often take the form of placation and salving in order to calm an aggressive temperament. Takashi returns the *yōkai's* names to them explicitly within the terms of accepting responsibility and seeking atonement for the actions of the adolescent of the past.

Takashi's ability to see invisible monsters is a social curse, where fantastic visions of supernatural entities for both Light in *Death Note* and Satō in *Welcome to the NHK* lead to delusions of grandeur and psychological instability. Ultimately, Takashi's continued confrontations with *yōkai* form an integral part of his social development and recuperative process. The reorientation of the notebook from a book of monsters into a 'book of friends' (*yūjin-chō*) resonates with a number of contextual discourses. Firstly, we might view it as a symbolic rehabilitation of the millennial adolescent, from antisocial, monstrous killer and 'invisible' enigma, unfathomable to older generations, into a fundamentally social and altruistic individual. Secondly, in conjunction with the series' idealised view of the pastoral environment and Japanese heritage, it seeks to reorient perception of indigenous myth and the narratives of *Shintō*. The Japanese past viewed through the lens of nostalgia that the folktale creatures *and Shintō* deities signify, is 'invisible' to, or ignored by, the majority. This loss of connection in contemporary Japan to Shintō, folklore and spiritualism is articulated throughout the series in a register of nostalgic melancholy. In episode two, a previously man-sized *kami* who lives in a small forest shrine has been reduced to a few inches high. He tells Takashi that his size and power has diminished owing to the lack of worshippers at the shrine in recent years.

The sensitive perceptions and unique access to the supernatural realm of the adolescent wanderer Takashi make him the conduit for a reinvigoration of meaning and significance. While his privileged ability to see *yōkai* initially results in an isolated, ostracised existence, the rehabilitative experience that Takashi undergoes once he possesses the book of friends is progressively cathartic and regenerative.

Where the socialisation process for the reticent, rootless protagonist in *Evangelion* occurred in conjunction with futuristic technology and in *Welcome to the NHK* through *otaku* scripts and practices, in *Natsume's Book of Friends* it is through confrontation with the supernatural, and through a symbolic atonement by the wandering teenager of the present for the attitude and transgression of the adolescent of the past. The final episode of the second season culminates with an idyllic, animated communal sequence in which a party beneath falling cherry blossoms is attended by both Takashi's human friends and the *yōkai* he has aided thus far, whom only he can see as they intermingle. This tentative scene of reconnection between the modern world and the *Shintō* entities articulates the liminal position of Takashi between the two worlds, symbolising optimism for cultural reinvigoration and a successful transcendence of past anxieties around the adolescent.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated a number of ways in which the wandering male adolescent in *anime* can be analysed at a discursive conjunction with the problematic 'youth panics' around the figures of the *otaku*, the *hikikomori*, the monstrous teenage killer exemplified by *Shōnen A,* and the perceived crisis in the Japanese high school system as they have been sensationalised and circulated by the contemporary Japanese media. Taking a diachronic approach to these issues, I observed shifts in the approaches taken in Japanese media discourse to the *otaku* and *hikikomori* over time and ascertained a range of discursive consonances within *anime* representations of the wandering adolescent. I went on to consider themes of the monstrous and 'invisibility' as articulated within discourses around *Shōnen A* in relation to *anime* that foregrounded the supernatural in terms derived from folktales, Buddhism and *Shintō* and engaged with the theme of an affinity between the *shōnen* and the monstrous.

Having assessed a variety of issues relating to the male adolescent, I will now consider the representation of the female adolescent in relation to panics that circulated in the Japanese media particular to the high school-age girl, the *shōjo*.

Chapter Four: The Wandering *Shōjo* in Contemporary Japanese *Anime*

This chapter examines the topos of wandering in millennial *anime* television as it relates to the teenage girl (*shōjo*) and her representation in conjunction with discourses of youth panics circulated by the contemporary Japanese media. I will analyse shifting representations of the *shōjo* in *anime* television, particularly in relation to the experience of high school and the consumer-oriented urban landscape of contemporary Japan. As I have discussed in Chapter One, the high school girl, clad ubiquitously in *serafuku* ('sailor suit') school uniform, found herself at the centre of debate in the Japanese print media and television reportage around a breakdown of moral frameworks, centred on teenage promiscuity, materialism and commercially-motivated prostitution via extensive coverage of the 'compensated-dating' phenomenon of *enjo kōsai*.

I will examine *anime* in this chapter at discursive conjunctions with the ambivalence towards the *shōjo* exhibited in contemporary Japanese media discourse, and the shift in the dominant types of coverage circulated. On the one hand, Anne Allison asserts that the *shōjo* was constructed as a 'carefree consumer and dreamer' symbolising hope for economic recovery through indigenous fashion industries.[596] Conversely, towards the end of the 1990s the media panic around the High School girl and *enjo kōsai* was expressed in terms of frightening social change. As Sharon Kinsella argues, the reportage was indicative of 'cultural anxieties about shifts in the balance of power between men and women', and it spoke of female 'disenchantment', 'detachment' and 'abandonment of duties'.[597] At the height of the panic, the Japanese government attempted with some success to quell media coverage of *enjo kōsai,* as it had become the focus of unwelcome international news attention.[598] As Kinsella reports, the phrase*,* and later the word *kogyaru,* stopped appearing so prominently in print and on TV after 1998, owing significantly to police warning the media against the use of the term as it threatened to 'normalize' an '"illegal" activity'.[599] More recently, as exemplified through the tourism-oriented discourse of the Japanese government's

---

[596] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 134.
[597] Sharon Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics: How Compensated Dating Was Sold', in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth,* ed. by Goodman et al., p. 57.
[598] Sharon Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics', in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth,* ed. by Goodman et al., p. 76.
[599] Sharon Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics', in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et al., p. 76.

'Cool Japan' initiative, the *shōjo* became realigned with *kawaii* cuteness and *moe* discourses of nurture, chastity and infantilism, celebrated as a uniquely Japanese symbol of optimism and cultural reinvigoration.[600]

Central to my investigation is a discussion of the variety of circumstances in which the *shōjo* is presented as a wanderer and the nature of the psychological and emotional trajectory on which she is placed. I have argued that we can understand the wandering male protagonist of *Evangelion* and other *anime* series as on a path towards socialisation and rehabilitation within the context of youth panics around the *otaku*, *hikikomori* and the crisis of high school education. Here I will consider the ways in which we can employ the discursive context of panics around *enjo kōsai*, 'parasite singles', the Japanese education system and the rise of apparently rebellious teenage female fashions such as the *kogyaru* as we consider the construction of the *shōjo* in contemporary *anime*.

In the first part of the chapter I will analyse the representation of the *shōjo* in *anime* around the millennium that feature a female protagonist and situated the high school girl as a wanderer within the city. The urban, technology-oriented horror milieu of these series offers up discursive parallels between accounts in the Japanese media of the *shōjo's* perceived plight in contemporary Japan. *Serial Experiments Lain* (1998), *Boogiepop Phantom* (2000) and *Witch Hunter Robin* (2002) are three reconfigurations of the *mahō shōjo* magical girl sub-genre (as discussed in Chapter Two) and, playing on existing generic tropes, constitute a direct response to popular series like *Sailor Moon* that emphasise the liberating transformative potential for the contemporary female teenager. As Anne Allison has argued, *Sailor Moon* uses the topos of female magical and cosmetic transformation as part of a commercially oriented product line that articulates an exciting frisson in social development and identity shifts achieved through consumerism.[601] Conversely, these bleak representations of contemporary Japan offer an alternative view, situating the *shōjo* as a wanderer within an oppressive, alienating urban environment and subjecting her to supernatural or technological forces that provoke both emotional and physical trauma.

In the second part of the chapter I will consider the representation of the *shōjo* in the high school-set *nichijō-kei* ('slice-of-life') genre, exemplified by the

---

[600] As argued in Laura Miller, 'Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan' in *IJoJS* (*International Journal of Japanese Sociology*), Vol. 20, No.1, Oct 2011, pp. 18-29.
[601] See Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, pp. 128-162, (p. 134).

seminal *Azumanga Daioh!* (2002)[602] and the extraordinarily popular and lucrative *K-On!* phenomenon (2009-2012).[603] In this recently booming genre that largely avoids depiction of the supernatural or fantastic, the daily life of the ordinary adolescent girl without magical transformative powers, and her experience of the Japanese education system are idealised, with mundane and conflict-free quotidian minutiae brought to the fore. As discussed in Chapter Two, central to the depiction of the *shōjo* in these series are the qualities of *moe* associated with *otaku* feminine ideals. These series represent a dramatic shift away from the depiction of the *shōjo* as an entrapped, rootless wanderer discussed in the previous section, and construct the *shōjo* as wholesome and chaste in terms of reassuring groupism and an optimism around daily routine.

Through these investigations I will demonstrate a variety of ways in which *anime* texts have responded and contributed to contemporary Japanese media's discursive oscillation between cultural anxiety and celebratory optimism around the *shōjo*.

The Wandering *Shōjo* and the City in *Serial Experiments Lain*

1998's *Serial Experiments Lain* has, like *Evangelion*, received critical attention in the West owing to its complex, imaginative narrative and the sophistication with which it addresses anxieties over the advent of communications technology during a period in which the internet was beginning to become normalised into the everyday.[604] The series originated in *anime* form and was first aired in Japan in the niche late-night *shinya* slot of 1:15am on TV Tokyo, but was later acclaimed through an award for excellence given by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs at the 1999 Japan Media Arts

---

[602] For comment on *Azumanga*'s influence, see Andy Hanley, 'Classics of Anime – *Azumanga Daoih!*' (2010) <http://www.uk-anime.net/articles/Classics_of_Anime_-_Azumanga_Daioh/2> [accessed 23.07 2013]; For a review by *anime* scholar Marc Hairston, see 'The Yin and Yang of Schoolgirl Experiences: *Maria-sama ga Miteru* and *Azumanga Daioh*' in *Mechademia 1,* ed. by Lunning, pp. 177-180.

[603] Sales of merchandise associated with *K-On!* reached a staggering ¥15 billion in 2011, including sales of 1.1 million BDs and DVDs. See Nana Mizuki, '*K-On!* by the Numbers: Sales of 'Phenomenon' Outlined', (2011) <http://www.animenewsnetwork.co.uk/news/2011-11-06/k-on-by-the-numbers/sales-of-phenomenon-outlined> [accessed 8.8.2013].

[604] See Susan Napier, 'When the Machines Stop' in *Science Fiction Studies,* Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 418-435 and Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle,* pp. 177-181; Steven T. Brown, *Cinema Anime*, pp. 2-6.

Festival.[605] I wish to contribute here to debates around this provocative series through situating it within the wider topos of wandering expressed in *anime,* exploring its relationship to contemporary Japanese media discourse on the *shōjo*, and accounting for the ways in which it expresses an ambivalence to the teenage girl as both a symbol of exciting cultural change and of anxieties around consumerism and technology.

Serial Experiments Lain articulates the dehumanising and alienating effect on the adolescent girl of an over-reliance on technology and consumer culture. The bleak setting constitutes a Tokyo in which the *otaku,* conceived as a 'database animal', in Azuma's terms, who is more comfortable with technology than people, and whose existence is taken up with activities of information storage and classification, has emerged from subculture to be normalised into the everyday, and technological proficiency now holds substantive cultural currency.[606] The series embodies Karl Taro Greenfeld's statement about the world of the *otaku* in 1993, where 'Technology is your companion… your teacher… your friend… your livelihood… Ultimately, technology becomes your reality.'[607] Situating the *shōjo* within an environment focused on trend and conformity, the series' setting is a near-future Tokyo in which knowledge of electronic communications and possession of a '*Navi*' computer terminal is essential to social success and belonging as it enables access to the online world referred to as 'The Wired'.[608]

The urban environment negotiated by the *shōjo* is created as an indecipherable mass of excessive noise and visual stimuli. The beginning of each episode features an impressionistic, saturated vision of Tokyo's commercial centre: indistinct, blurred silhouettes wander over a street crossing, an indeterminate murmur of light conversation and schoolgirl giggling merging with deep mechanical drones and the din of traffic. The silhouettes fade at the edge of the frame and merge into blurred, shifting neon signs, which become increasingly abstracted, obscure and illegible. The first episode

---

[605] The judges state, 'We were impressed with its willingness to question the meaning of contemporary life as it explored the development of the computer and the ways in which real people live.' See '2nd Japan Media Arts Festival: Excellence Prize *Serial Experiments Lain'* online article, available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20070426014853/http://plaza.bunka.go.jp/english/festival/backnumber/10/sakuhin/serial.html> [accessed 5.8.2013].

[606] See Azuma, *Otaku*, p. xvi; Grassmuck, '"I'm Alone, but not Lonely"'; Greenfeld, *Speed Tribes*, p. 234.

[607] Greenfeld, *Speed Tribes,* p. 237.

[608] Brown notes the series' opposition to the contemporaneous generally held perception of the internet as a site of discursive freedom through its presentation of technological apparatus in terms of surveillance and control. Steven T. Brown, 'Screening Anime', in *Cinema Anime*, ed. by Brown, p. 4.

establishes the series' representation of the life of the *shōjo* in the city through a spatio-temporally disorienting sequence. Shots of drunkenly stumbling lovers, low-angled shots of looming neon-lit skyscrapers bisected by black powerlines, and a labyrinth of glaring advertisements emphasise decadence, excess, entrapment and trauma. In this inscrutable, bewildering setting, a distressed, overwhelmed High School girl under the direction of obscure online messages throws herself from a building. A shot of her body crushed beneath a shattered advertising hoarding depicts her as a mangle of school uniform, flesh and technology. Her blood merges with the red neon light reflected in a puddle, articulating through bodily trauma the subsuming of the alienated contemporary *shōjo* into the urban environment.

In its representation of an *otaku*-dominated world, the series shows that the consequences are disenfranchised alienation for the *shōjo*, and the family are atomised as 13-year-old protagonist Lain's position as a wandering outsider is established. In her family home, her withdrawn and neglectful father shuts himself away in a room full of computer terminals. Her expressionless mother is disinterested, ignoring Lain other than to tell her to tidy up in a superficial demonstration of maternal domestic responsibility. Lain succumbs to pressure to become more computer proficient and purchase a *Navi*, approaching her father for advice. Hemmed in behind a vast technological apparatus linked by a trailing net of wires that dominate the domestic space, he is distant and unable to meet her gaze. As he states that the Internet is essential to communication between people and not possessing a *Navi* indicates a withdrawal from society, the irony of his assertion is emphasised as his online contacts appear onscreen represented by inanimate faceless torsos in a clutter of indecipherable icons and information.

Lain's alienation in High School is expressed through her lack of awareness of consumer culture, technology and her childlike demeanour compared to her fashion-conscious classmates. The High School environment is conceived as a consumer-driven arena for discussion of the latest fads, desirable objects and urban hotspots for socialising, and Lain is ignored and voiceless amidst the cluttered chatter of her materialistic peers.

When Christine Yano considers sexuality, chastity, consumerism and the seeming disparity between the *kogyaru*, *enjo kōsai* and 'the safe world of *fanshii guzzu* ('fancy goods', luxury branded fashion items) and Hello Kitty', she asserts their proximity within the cultural epistemology of girlhood in contemporary Japan:

It is the juxtaposition of girl-child and sex-child, of lunch boxes and condoms sharing a logo of Sanrio characters, of sadomasochistic bondage and cute goods within the same magazine, that generates a deep and variable pool of meanings given the *shōjo* and her evolving girl culture.[609]

Yano sees an oscillation between these viewpoints in the 'widely circulating public discourse' where each reinforces the other through suggestive inferential 'cross-referencing'.[610] The teenage girl as a site for a struggle of identity between contradictory notions of social impropriety in terms of hedonistic, self-serving promiscuity and innocent, infantilised *kawaii* cuteness is played out in *Lain*. Symbols of both youth and experience take on a sinister aspect that entrench the *shōjo* in an environment where the range of identity choices for the teenage girl is limited and restricted to two equally undesirable modes. Lain's spartan, enclosed bedroom is lit with a sterile steely blue glow and cluttered with teddy bears, given an uncanny dimension as they loom, ominously silhouetted, against the window above the girl's bed. Lain wears an infantilising furry cap with bear ears, and we see her in continual proximity to cute character logos that appear incongruous to her comparatively 'mature' peers. The conception of the *shōjo* as chaste, proper and refined is expressed through Lain, while her peers resemble more closely the style of the *kogyaru* with short skirts, white socks and carefully styled hair.

An intriguing consonance occurs in the series with Sharon Kinsella's description of the dehumanised, distorted images of the *shōjo* that circulated in the Japanese media around the millennium. Owing to anonymity-preservation through pixellation and vocal effects, the girls presented on television broadcasts were 'blurred and shifting impressions of flesh and uniform with computer-distorted voices and apparently autonomous legs', brandishing their newly-acquired bills.[611] The consequence of this imagery is to present the schoolgirl's image distorted and compromised through an effect connoting a corruption through technology and materialism (this notion has already been expressed by the suicidal *shōjo* as she lies merged with the mechanical). Lain is haunted early in the series by nightmarish visions of her alternate 'Wired' self that resonate provocatively with this description of the misshapen and compromised

---

[609] Christine Yano, *Pink Globalisation: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 54.
[610] Yano, *Pink Globalisation*, p. 54.
[611] Sharon Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics', in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et al., pp. 54-80, (p. 54).

image of the anonymised and generalized female teenager. In the first episode, we see a silhouetted girl who appears to be Lain dressed in school uniform situated alone at the centre of a bleak grey representation of the suburban environment, the sky enclosed and bisected by a mesh of overhead wires. As she walks towards the camera and becomes larger in the frame, her face is revealed as a featureless blur, contorted as her mouth shudders silently open and closed. The alarming scene articulates anguish and entrapment, a representation of the *shōjo* as disenfranchised and detached from her surroundings. In conjunction with discourses surrounding the millennial *shōjo* as engaged in hedonistic, promiscuous and commercially driven pursuits, the sequence constitutes the embodiment of an assault on individualised female identity subsumed into an anonymous mass.

Sharon Kinsella describes the dominant popular and visual culture representation of the *shōjo* and the *kogyaru* in the 1990s as 'a guerrilla army of sexy rebels taking over society'.[612] Lain is cast as an outsider in direct opposition to a representation of this homogenous, groupist 'army' but begins to integrate and adopt their characteristics and appearance as she becomes increasingly dependent on her *Navi*. After her initial online forays, a mature double of Lain appears in the real world, and Lain finds she can move corporeally between the real and virtual worlds. This co-existent version of Lain is socially-confident and becomes quickly accepted and admired by Lain's classmates owing to her exhibitionistic hedonism in the fashionable Cyberia night-club. In school, they approach the outcast girl to congratulate her with approving commentary on her newly discovered social persona. Deborah Shamoon asserts that the *kogyaru* subculture entwined with images of the teen engaged in *enjo kōsai* moved 'emphatically in the opposite direction' to the proper, chaste and refined *shōjo* as she had emerged in the early 20th century, 'embracing vulgarity and sexual promiscuity'.[613] The two versions of Lain that appear in the world present an interrogation of these dichotomous evolving cultural conceptions of the *shōjo* as firstly dutiful, chaste and bound by obligation, and conversely a hedonistic consumer, promiscuous and driven by personal pleasure.

Wandering is reconfigured from alienated rootlessness in the series to pleasurable terms as Lain becomes socially adept and approved of by her peers. The series is initially ambivalent to these pleasures of wandering afforded to the *shōjo* through interaction with technology. In episode six, a newly-confident and more

---

[612] Sharon Kinsella, 'Narratives and Statistics', in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et al., p. 54.

[613] Shamoon, *Passionate Friendships,* p. 3.

socially able Lain sports lipstick and a fashionable beret as she wanders Tokyo's commercial centre with her peers, who now approve of her behaviour and demeanour. When a ghostly vision of herself emerges from the clouds, she enters The Wired in order to investigate. Assertively brazen, the *shōjo* is now able to freely negotiate the virtual world that is now represented as an expansive, metamorphic landscape. A distinct corporeal presence in the digital world, Lain no longer shuffles awkwardly but strides with determination. The depiction of the internal world of information as an expansive landscape in which the natural and manmade converge harmoniously emphasises Lain as an unrestricted wanderer through space.

Here, the online virtual world gives Lain a purchase on her self and her environment that is, like the *mahō shōjo,* empowered and pleasurable. She becomes a wanderer between the worlds of the real and virtual, affecting tactical alterations on both as she moves seamlessly through the mediated landscapes. Lain's state comes to represent a transcendence beyond the strictures placed upon the adolescent, and as she alters her online appearance (like the transforming girls of *Sailor Moon* she makes herself look more mature and elegant than her 13 years) the series appears to articulate the fluid nature of *shōjo* identity, reconfigurable by the female subject according to her own desires. Here the series demonstrates its ambivalence towards technology and consumerism, as Lain's new abilities are entirely contingent upon the machine, which empowers and permits the alterations she makes to her identity and to the world around her. When Lain discovers she is not real but a programme created within The Wired that has been able to move out into everyday Tokyo, it triggers a traumatic existential crisis.

Lain's apparent transformative duality is not presented as liberating or exciting, but ultimately provokes extreme anxiety and psychological trauma. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the mobility of gender and female identity presented in *shōjo manga* stories and the wondrous empowered potential in the duality we are shown in the *mahō shōjo* fighting girls of *Sailor Moon* are reconfigured from enticing spectacle into alarming crisis of identity and lack of stable subject position. The series in this manner contests the terms in which Anne Allison describes the conception of the *shōjo* that both fed into and emerged from *Sailor Moon* as a 'carefree consumer and dreamer'.[614]

As Lain realises she can affect positive change on the real world, she attempts to improve the life of her classmate Arisu, who as a fashionable, hedonistic teenager early in the series has acted as Lain's guide to the Cyberia club and the commercial city. Arisu is the final representation of the *shōjo* in the series, and her development and

---

[614] As I have discussed in Chapter Two, see Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 134.

ultimate position engages with debates around 'parasite singles' and the prolonged adolescence of young Japanese.[615] In the last episode, Lain sacrifices herself in order to return stability to the boundary between the digital and the real, in the process erasing herself from the memories of everyone in the real world, while she remains in isolated martyrdom inside The Wired as an omnipresent sentinel policing the divide.

The final scene takes place in Tokyo's Shibuya commercial district, exhibiting an ambiguously tentative optimism towards technology, consumerism, the heterosexual couple and domesticity. The fluidity of identity through commerce is articulated by a shop window displaying stylish women's clothing on a headless mannequin, bathed in warmly colourful lights, rather than the oppressive dirge depicted in the series' early excursions into the commercial city. Arisu and her boyfriend walk into shot to contemplate the display. Her boyfriend has proposed that they leave their family homes and live together, and Arisu happily agrees but jokingly asserts that she wants to choose the bedroom curtains. This now idyllic, impressionistic vision of Tokyo shows interpersonal relationships mediated through commerce, and the expression of feminine identity through consumer preference. Arisu, an initially pleasure-seeking and autonomous *shōjo,* has moved through high school and overcome the obstacles of a dehumanising technological landscape. Through consumerism, she takes up domestic responsibility and self-reliance in the family home, progressing in these terms from adolescence to marriage and adulthood.

The sequence is ultimately ambiguous, as Lain's condition in the closing moments reminds us of the series' representation of adolescence in contemporary Japan as straddling the real and the virtual – the teenage girl as both empowered and entrapped by access to information technology. Her attitude to this position is stoic rather than resigned. In this final guise, Lain represents the ambivalence demonstrated in contemporary Japanese media discourse to the adolescent girl, a manifestation of the simultaneous reification and insubstantiality of the *shōjo* who is celebrated as a symbol of consumerist potential but denied actual mobility and the ability to affect meaningful change.

---

[615] See Yoda, 'Roadmap', in *Japan After Japan*, ed. by Harootunian and Yoda, p. 42; Satō, 'What Are Girls Made of?', in *Millennium Girls*, ed. by Sherrie Inness, pp. 38-39.

The Wandering *Mahō Shōjo* in *Witch Hunter Robin*

Panics around the troublesome activities of *shōjo* as a rebellious exhibitionist in the urban space and a promiscuous, anti-establishment participant in *enjo kōsai* are engaged with by the supernatural drama *Witch Hunter Robin*. Following *Sailor Moon* and other depictions of the transforming *mahō shōjo, Witch Hunter Robin* is a reconfiguration of the magically empowered 'beautiful fighting girl' story that situates the teenage witch within a war torn urban environment and raises questions about the extent to which the *shōjo* is liberated or entrapped, and a figure that inspires both fascination and anxiety. In this *anime*, the 'witch', like the *kogyaru* and other *shōjo* subgroups, represents a very explicit countercultural threat to hegemony and must be limited and contained. I particularly want to focus on this series for its conjunctions with the widely circulated and popular magical girl figure.

With references throughout to the persecution of witches in European history, the series' setting is a representation of contemporary Tokyo in which magically empowered beings called 'witches' are regulated, policed and hunted by a government agency that is fearful that they will use their abilities for criminal activities. A perceived threat to cultural homogeny, the empowered witches are viewed as an epidemic, or as an infestation by an undesirable other that threatens to disrupt the existing social order. The 15-year-old protagonist, Robin, is recruited by the agency to police other witches, an activity with which she becomes increasingly disenchanted. A witch attempting to gain control of her unruly powers of fire manipulation, she is cast as a persecuted and scrutinised outsider. Through her characterisation as a socially-awkward, melancholic and isolated adolescent, the *mahō shōjo* figure of the witch comes not to signify the delight of transformation seen in, for example, *Sailor Moon* but a current of frustration and despair.

In Chapter Three I argued that the antisocial wandering *shōnen* in relation to youth panics around the millennium is represented in terms of rehabilitation: *Evangelion*'s Shinji, in conjunction with debates around the antisocial *otaku,* is propelled on a trajectory towards socialisation; *Death Note*'s Light and L, and *Natsume's Book of Friends'* Takashi represent a negotiation between the adolescent boy as monstrous and redeemable. In *Witch Hunter Robin*, the *shōjo* is initially guided by a government authority towards managing her abilities, reforming herself from an unruly and chaotic being into a civilised and social entity. When the government agency is

revealed as corrupt and deceitful, Robin flees and wanders the city streets, governing her own actions and guided by her own moral code.

Sharon Kinsella's assessment of the representation of the *shōjo* in circulating narrative of *enjo kōsai* is of 'greedy young schoolgirls… voluntarily selling their bodies for large sums which they extort from Japanese men, and who deserve strict punishment for their unacceptable behaviour'.[616] Similarly, Yano asserts that 'The public outcry was not so much against the (older, male) customers; rather, it was against the *shōjo* as the schoolgirl gone irreparably bad.'[617] *Witch Hunter Robin* offers up a provocative representation of this apparent climate of persecution, where the teenage girl is reimagined as a culturally threatening, powerful entity whose interactions with the urban environment must be monitored and contained.

Like *Lain*, the series begins with an articulation of the consumerist, industrial city as a space of entrapment and squalor through a montage of close-ups on an empty, run-down area at night: a dark alleyway littered with waste, closed metal shutters, an empty, filthy road, flickering bright neon signs and traffic lights that continue to shine despite the absence of people. Over this bleak view, a distorted radio voice intones that 'the Tokyo stock exchange ended in a downward trend today', locating the city specifically within a contemporary economic recessionary context.

This urban space becomes the setting for self-analysis and contemplation, the topos of witchcraft an expression of female otherness and anxiety rather than exciting change and the potential for self-definition. As the series progresses, Robin encounters a variety of melancholy witches who use their powers destructively out of frustration over social conditions. These figures are marginalised and alienated, and as the similarly introspective, abandoned, and increasingly reluctant Robin dispatches them, she begins to question her own status. The life of the contemporary *shōjo* is framed as fraught with conflict and traumatic enquiries into the nature of her own identity.

Tokyo in *Witch Hunter Robin* is segregated into two areas with contrasting aspects. The 'Walled City' is a dilapidated urban sprawl that houses the city's sordid criminal element and vagrant witches hiding from persecution. In the latter half of the series, Robin becomes an outcast wanderer in this environment. Entering the Walled City in episode 12, Robin walks alone through the deserted narrow alleyways. The camera alternates between low angles, which emphasize the area's complex labyrinthine toils and tightly enclosed grey multi-storey buildings, and looming high angles, which

---

[616] Sharon Kinsella 'Narratives and Statistics', in *A Sociology of Japanese Youth*, ed. by Goodman et al., p. 74.
[617] Yano, *Pink Globalisation*, p. 54.

track Robin from a position of overhead surveillance. Montages of still shots through the episode showing rusting pipes, shattered windows, grimy walls and broken machinery create the impression of a failed, abandoned, technological city that has fallen into decay and disrepair through social division.

The series expresses ambivalence toward the empowerment of the *shōjo* in this urban space as it articulates a gruesome, sordid underside to the city, concealed by an idealised veneer. The empowered Robin performs an investigative role and possesses a unique affinity with and access to this aspect of the modern environment. Episode four's story focuses on two empowered *shōjo* making steps towards social connection in this vision of the city, and this is a key moment in Robin's reevaluation of the relationship between ordinary humans and witches. When bodies are discovered in an idyllic, expansive park, pecked to death by birds. Robin later demonstrates unique insight into the scenario and can readily access facts of which others are oblivious. She makes conversation with a teenage painter, Sayako, who is also a lone *shōjo* in the urban environment pursuing a space for creative expression. They talk pleasantly but awkwardly, stating that they had wanted for some time to talk to the other as they had seen one another in the park alone several times before. The moment articulates the experience of adolescent detachment and yearning in the urban space, and is a tentative step towards social bonding.

Robin is dismayed to learn that Sayako is a witch who has influenced the crows in the park to commit the murders. After a violent conflict resulting in the girl being gruesomely burnt and shot in the back, a character remarks that the painter murdered those who intruded into the scene she was painting. Robin encapsulates the series' representation of intolerance and violently imposed conformity as she muses that witches kill humans because they are unwanted in their world, and that humans kill witches for the same reason, though neither are intrinsically incompatible. Sayako is an example of a wandering adolescent whose isolated alienation has culminated in critically antisocial behaviour, and this leads Robin to further examine her own need for connection with others in the city. The timbre is melancholy and reflective, emphasising the senselessness of waste and conflict.

Witch Hunter Robin presents a setting in which the empowered *shōjo* in the urban space is not celebrated but suspiciously scrutinised and forcibly subjected to surveillance and monitoring by authority. Like Lain, Robin is singled out via her deviation from social norms. Central to this is the teenage witch's exoticism signaled

through her ethnic hybridity; she has been raised in Italy and is coming to Japan as a cultural outsider.

Sociologist Laurel D. Kamada's ethnographic investigation into the negotiation of identity by Japanese girls of mixed-ethnic parentage (denominated as '*haafu*' or 'half' in Japan) reveals the shifting conceptions and treatment of female adolescent difference and otherness within the Japanese High School, and helps to illustrate underlying issues surrounding teenage conformity and perceived difference.[618] The female teenage subjects with whom she conducts extensive interviews were found to oscillate between positions according to how their perceived otherness was interpreted by their peers. Initially the girls were found to be violently rejected, subjected to *ijime* bullying in line with discourses of homogeneity that play on the proverb '*deru kui wa utareru*' ('the nail that sticks up gets hammered down') which for Kamada 'illustrates the taken-for-granted "commonsensical" notion of the disagreeableness of standing-out'.[619] Later, as the girls negotiated adolescent relationships, they were found to celebrate and emphasise their difference through the hybridity of their identities as a means of claiming individuality and uniqueness, acknowledging their own independence from what was perceived to be a restrictive, conformist environment.[620] Robin is characterised by reticence and solitude, coupled with mature, sophisticated tastes for foreign products. For example, in the first episode, she is comfortable when drinking espresso alone in a French-style café. Consumerism goes on to form the basis of contemplative scenes depicting her colleagues' attempts to socialize with her, as Robin drinks coffee with a fellow witch hunter and shares lunch with the agency's reticent *otaku* type computer hacker.

Robin's costume strongly suggests the Gothic Lolita style of the ornately formal and rococo conjoined with doll-like *kawaii* elements characterised by 'outlandish, fairytale frills', and her identity as a witch and deep orange hair colour suggest the *yamanba* ('mountain witch') style also prevalent around the millennium and marked by

---

[618] Asuka Langley-Soryu in *Evangelion*, Chiyo Yamada in *Azumanga Daioh!,* and Tsumugi in *K-On!* are also representations of the *haafu* type Western-Japanese mixed-race *shōjo*. In a media form in which female characters routinely possess blonde, pink or blue hair without particular explanation, it is significant that these characters are all constructed via difference and individuality within their respective discourses, and future study might usefully build upon Yamada's findings in relation to hybrid female identities in *anime.* An initial observation is that these characters are strongly connected to affluence, a fascinating exoticism and material wealth.

[619] Laurel D. Kamada, *Hybrid Identities and Adolescent Girls: Being 'Half' in Japan* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2009), p. 31.

[620] Kamada, *Hybrid Identities,* p. 144 and p. 210.

lurid dyed hair.[621] Yano describes the Gothic Lolita and *yamanba* as 'rebel faux *shōjo* who took the street as their own stage, parading in an endless stream within particular enclaves of Tokyo'.[622] This description helps us to situate the representation of the visually idiosyncratic Robin wandering through the Tokyo environment, normalised into the everyday as no other characters remark on her dress or finely-detailed cosmetic styling. The act of wandering in the urban environment is presented as both restrictive and liberating, and, once Robin ceases her allegiance with the agency owing to her growing disapproval of their treatment of witches, it carries with it the frisson of rebellion against the education system and other authoritarian bodies targeted by girl cultures like the *kogyaru* and *yamanba.*

Observation of these elements within *Witch Hunter Robin* demonstrates a range of tensions within the cultural understanding of the *shōjo* as both a site of fascination and excitement for her glamorous, rebellious exhibitionism in the urban space and anxiety for her threatening assault on social norms and accepted ideological frameworks. Like Lain, Robin is a liminal *shōjo* who belongs neither to the institutional, status quo-preserving and authoritarian world of the agency nor to the maligned rebellious witches that conceal themselves within the city's streets. Through the wandering adolescent girl the series articulates the ambivalence towards the *shōjo* in contemporary Japan as a site of both social panic and optimistic renewal. While the series' tone is distinctly gloomy and downbeat, nonetheless the hope for cultural rejuvenation is articulated through the *shōjo* Robin's willingness to question pre-existing social frameworks and ultimately resist them.

The Wandering *Shōjo* and the Consumerist City in *Boogiepop Phantom*

Boogiepop Phantom is an adaptation of an extremely successful series of *light novels*, short novels aimed at teenagers with simplified *kanji* characters for accessibility. Published regularly from 1998 to 2008, *the Boogiepop Phantom* novels pioneered the illustrated *light novel* format that is now lucrative in Japan and forms the basis for many *anime* adaptations.[623] The storyline is complex, the depiction of violence is explicit, and the series initially appears (like *Lain*) to be challenging and *avant garde* in its disjointed

---

[621] Yano, *Pink Globalisation,* p. 53.
[622] Yano, *Pink Globalisation*, p. 53.
[623]See *Anime* News Service, 'Light Novels Becoming the Basis for More Anime' (2005) <http://www.animenewsservice.com/archives/jan07.htm>, (para. 20) [accessed 12.08.2013].

chronology and gradual revelation of key narrative information. However, it is also a popular and influential mainstream text, conceived and distributed amid the panics around the *shōjo* in the Japanese media.[624]

The majority of *Boogiepop*'s novels and short stories, as well as the *anime*'s twelve episodes, follow a socially awkward, melancholic adolescent, linked by their proximity to a series of murders in an unnamed city resembling contemporary Tokyo. As in *Witch Hunter Robin*, the topoi of adolescent persecution and scrutiny are explored as, like *Robin*'s witches, the teenagers are unwittingly and supernaturally empowered in a variety of ways through a one-in-a-million, genetic, evolutionary quirk. As they become rootless and detached after a variety of supernatural encounters, characterised by melancholy and ennui in the urban Japanese environment, they are preyed upon by a government agency set on exterminating them using demonic experimental creatures. This establishes a climate of paranoia and surveillance around the adolescents of *Boogiepop Phantom* who, like Lain and Robin, are singled out in terms of a divergence from conformity.

Through traumatic conflict, and a subsequent encounter with the supernatural wandering *shōjo* called Boogiepop - an enigmatic, empowered figure that polices the boundary between the real world and a supernatural dimension - each character is presented with the opportunity to reassess their perception of themselves and to develop socially. Here I will focus on the depiction of the *shōjo* wandering the urban Japanese commercial environment in the series' self-contained first episode to *highlight Boogiepop* Phantom's concern with the impact of consumerism on the contemporary female adolescent.

On the connection between millennial girl culture and the commercial landscape of modern Japan, Christine Yano summarises that the *kogyaru* 'inhabited a consumer lifestyle that carved out her subcultural territory with iconic urban spaces (e.g. Tokyo's Harajuku and Shibuya).[625] The rebellious reclamation of identity by the *kogyaru* and other *shōjo* groups was seen in public discourse to revolve around consumer pursuits, including purchasing and sporting branded goods, being seen loitering in proximity to fashionable stores and commercial activity hubs such as 'print club' photobooth arcades and *karaoke* centres. The vision of these iconic Tokyo environments presented in *Boogiepop Phantom* characterises the city as a consumer playground for the unsupervised wandering *shōjo*, and in the series this liberated existence is articulated in

---

[624] 2 million copies were in print in March 2000. See *Go Manga*, 'Seven Seas enters the World of *Boogiepop*' (2005) <http://www.gomanga.com/news/press_015.php> [accessed 12.8.2013].
[625] Yano, *Pink Globalisation*, p. 53.

ambivalent terms of autonomy and the readily experienced pitfall of alienated detachment.

Boogiepop Phantom's Japanese city is a bewildering, crowded labyrinth of alleyways and oppressively hard-edged grey buildings in which the adolescent is easily overwhelmed and alienated. This representation of the cityscape is achieved through quick, disorientating cross-cutting between close-ups of cluttered crowds of consumers; tilted views of hard-lined buildings whose edges visually comprise an enmeshing web; and obscure, indecipherable part-views of ubiquitous garish, flickering neon advertisements. The opening title sequence similarly comprises a series of grainy, impressionistic views of a crowded and stifling Tokyo, cross-cutting between indistinct concrete and industrial areas; the space taken up principally by vehicles and glaring artificial lights.

During scenes in the commercial centre, the image fades at the borders of the frame, dissolving to dark edges that obscure and constrict peripheral vision of the city. As Dani Cavallaro has noted, the transformative city is couched in key moments of dialogue in terms of anxiety over cultural shifts and a disappearing past. [626] One character speaks melancholically of 'the look of the city changing' and another states 'the city must change over time, it's important that people move forward in their lives.'[627] This sense of anxious social change is expressed in the first episode through *shōjo* protagonist Moto, a reticent girl bewildered by urban Japan and increasingly alienated from her peers. An isolated wanderer in the streets of the city, she is led astray by a monstrous entity that takes the form of a boy with whom she had fallen in love, and around whom feelings of emotional disconnection and melancholy now revolve.

Consumer conformity is articulated through the representation of the oppressive high-school environment and commercial social areas into which the action follows a group of *shōjo*. In the school, an initial tracking shot of the uniform legs of a group of gossiping teenage schoolgirls, their voices indistinct from one another, expresses a stultified institutional homogeny. Subsequent exposure to social trend and consumer culture heightens Moto's existential anguish. In a fashionable commercial district through which the group wanders at night, she detaches from her peers, stares blankly at the window display of a clothing boutique, and asks, in a flatly spoken internal monologue, why human beings are alive.

---

[626] Dani Cavallaro, *Anime and Memory: Aesthetic, Cultural and Thematic Perspectives* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2009), p. 91.
[627] Translated quotation presented in Cavallaro, *Anime and Memory,* p. 91.

She has difficulty socialising and is later unable to behave appropriately in a private *karaoke* booth. In this fashionable site where adolescent interaction is mediated by technology and commerce, her peers are enthusiastic and communicate playfully as they operate the *karaoke* machine, while Moto sits detached and silent on the edge of the seating area, gazing ahead anxiously.

Triggered by the commercial environment, Moto's loneliness and isolation separates her from the group and she is enticed into the winding back streets by the dead boy's image. She pursues him into a maze of dark, grimy alleyways that branch off from the superficially alluring main street, confronting him at a dead end that culminates in an elevated train track. The experience of the consumerist city for the *shōjo* here becomes nightmarishly entrapping and oppressively restricts the teenager attempting meaningful communication and seeking reassurance. In a desperate outburst of affection for him, her speech is intruded upon by garish staccato flashes of artificial lights and discordant industrial clatter from passing trains that loom over the pair and dominate the frame as she attempts to articulate her emotions. Moto's spatial, visual and aural disorientation peaks as a distorted digital noise crackles while the grinning demon tells the girl that he intends to consume her, before the Boogiepop figure intervenes.

While the urban space is represented in these terms of bewildering alienation, the high school environment does not offer reassurance. Cast in similar terms of isolation and oppression, its labyrinthine spaces are clinical, rundown and spartan. The connection is made visually and thematically between the education system and the commercial arena, provoking an association that holds both equally responsible for the travails of the adolescent girl. At the episode's ambiguous climax, Moto walks alone solemnly down a dimly lit corridor that remains an entrapping, traumatic space as the girl is hemmed in visually by the stark, angular lines of windows, pillars and faulty strip-lights. In a voiceover she states that even after these events, nothing has changed and she still dislikes herself. Hope for positive social development is indicated when a female peer cheerfully greets Moto and encourages her to meet her outside the school gates. Over a more appealingly wistful, soft-edged and spacious mountainous landscape view situated outside of the confines of both the city and the school building, Moto confirms tentatively that at least she is still alive.

Ultimately the series affirms in a consolatory manner that such episodes of trauma and suffering are essential components of adolescent female experience and learning. In the second episode, an empowered *shōnen* visualises the traumatic experiences of others as grotesque insects that attach themselves invisibly to the

person's body. The boy can remove the memory by consuming the insect, and in a moment that intersects with the first episode, he encounters Moto and attempts to remove the memory of lost love, but she resists his advances. By the end of the episode he comes to realise that traumatic experience is fundamental to social development and maturation. As Dani Cavallaro notes, the series articulates the view that 'for humans to learn from the past, they need to remember the chains of events that have led them to the present and propel them into the future.'[628] At the series' climax, the empowered teenagers are left in a liminal state similar to Lain and Robin. Judging the world to not be ready for their evolved state, Boogiepop embeds them in a suspended state beneath the city, whose 'dreams they will share' until such time as humanity catches up to their abilities. This again expresses the discourse of cultural uncertainty circulating around the adolescent in Japan, simultaneously reified and provoking intense anxiety.

The Idealised High School in Slice-of-Life Series

The representation of the teenage girl in the laid back, relatively conflict-free slice-of-life *shōnen* series *Azumanga Daioh!*, *K-On!*, *Hidamari Sketch* (*Hidamari Suketchi,* Shaft: BS-i, 2007), *Lucky Star*, *A Summer-Coloured Miracle* and *Everyday Life* present a reconfiguration of the female adolescent which represents a reversion to a conception more closely resembling the ideals associated with the historic conception of the *shōjo*. These series absolutely ignore elements that might be construed as vulgar, rebellious and even faintly sexual or romantic in their depictions of the quotidian life of the high school girl. These figures constitute a near-total denial and circumvention of the *kogyaru* type and remove any trace of the female teen as a site of social panic that the *enjo kōsai* participant expresses in media reportage.

Azumanga Daioh! follows a group of *shōjo* through the milestones of their three years of High School, while *K-On!* centres on five *shōjo* who form a pop-rock band as part of their *keiongaku* ('light music') club.[630] The *shōjo* of these series are depicted as

---

[628] Cavallaro, *Anime and Memory,* p. 92.
[630] Both series, in addition to *Lucky Star* and *Hidamari Sketch*, are adaptations of serialised *yonkoma* 'four panel' *manga*, comedy-oriented comic strips in which discrete episodes take place within the confines of only four panels with a punch-line or comic conclusion delivered in the final panel. Individual strips may form self-contained stories, though they may also develop a larger overall story. The format has proven particularly suitable for the *nichijō-kei* genre, perhaps given its episodic format that suits fragmentary observations rather than overarching and detailed storylines.

optimistic and autonomous *flâneuses*, who meander the school grounds and surrounding streets without anxiety or conflict, and high school is presented as an idealised environment where self-expression and social bonds thrive.

While I have previously considered negative depictions of an oppressive school system characterised by enclosed, gloomy spaces populated by disinterested and unengaged pupils, in *K-On!* the classroom space is reconfigured into a nurturing, liberating environment for the adolescent girl. Where the schools of *Death Note, Serial Experiments Lain* and *Boogiepop Phantom* are comprised of spartan, purpose-built angular buildings and stark, gloomy corridors connoting entrapment and restriction, the slice-of-life series configures the exterior in harmony with the natural environment and the interiors as spacious, facilitating adolescent creative expression.

In the first episode of *K-On!,* the High School is idealised through the perspective of the enthusiastic *shōjo* Yui, who arrives at the school on her first day. A montage establishes the timbre for the series as it presents the mundane minutiae of Yui waking up in the family home, dressing and walking from home through the town to her new school. While in *Serial Experiments Lain*, the walk to school is fraught, isolated and bleak for the *shōjo*, the imagery of this sequence in *K-On!* accrues to emphasise her autonomy, her free-spirited *flâneur*-like ambling and the idyllic setting of both the domestic space, the urban centre and the school itself.

In this first episode, an exterior view of Yui's home has the frame split in half diagonally, on one side the clean, straight lines of the modern building, on the other a *Shintō* shrine and verdant woodland area. The effect is not to establish the two in opposition but to show the family home in harmony with the natural landscape. This representational strategy continues within shots of the small town, as lush foliage is prominent in the foreground and at the edges of the frame, adorning the roadside and blending along the tops of fences and the sides of buildings, to articulate the town's affinity with the pastoral. In this environment, shots of Yui show her distracted on her route despite her urgency, taking time to pet a cat and assisting an old woman in crossing the road. The *shōjo* is here cast as conscientious, flighty and autonomous in an idealised depiction of mundane Japanese mundane space.

Sociologist Merry White commented in 1994 on the highly-prescriptive restrictions imposed upon Japanese teenagers in High School, including regulations on acceptable hairstyles; on the correct placement of the school badge on the uniform; on the placement of the book-bag strap across the right shoulder in the morning and the left shoulder in the evening; on the use of regulation 100% cotton for girls' underpants; and

on the use of the correct, demarcated side of each street for the pupil's walk to and from school. White also found in certain schools the rule that children must walk directly home at the end of the day's activities.[631] While in *Boogiepop Phantom, Witch Hunter Robin* and *Lain*, the *shōjo* is guided away by inscrutable forms from the brightly-lit path and becomes lost in a labyrinth of alleyways, in *Azumanga* and *K-On!*, routine, unrestricted walks to and from school through wide, sunlit and foliage-lined streets afford the teenage girl opportunities of exploratory, sensory delight and enliven the protagonist's curiosity.

School Uniforms in Slice-of-Life *Anime*

The style in which *serafuku* school uniform is worn by the *shōjo* of *Azumanga, K-On!, Nichijō* and *Lucky Star* is tidy and regulated: socks pulled up neatly and oriented firmly away from the rebellious *kogyaru*'s fashionable bunching at the ankles. The *serafuku* is worn proudly by the characters as they go about their wholesome and social daily activities and it is key to the articulation of an idealised high school experience that firmly disavows discourses of panic circulating in the contemporary Japanese media. The work of cultural psychologist and anthropologist Brian McVeigh here provides us with insight into the meaning of uniforms within the experience of high school. In his investigations into the 'myth' of quality Japanese secondary education and the ideological implications of uniforms in Japan, McVeigh affirms the importance of the social organisational concept of *seken* as key to the regulatory effect of school uniforms. *Seken* is 'society' or 'others' conceived in terms of an imagined 'normalising gaze' from peers and authorities that ensures regulation of individual behaviour and appearance.[632] In interviews with high school pupils, he finds that teenage interpretation of *seken* leads to 'excessive self-monitoring' owing to fear of how one is perceived by others a watchful, vigilant audience.[633] *Anime* scholar Wendy Goldberg summarises the significance to *seken* of the uniform system (*seifuku seido*) in contemporary Japan as a

---

[631] White, *The Material Child*, pp. 223-225.
[632] McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Preservation in Japan* (Oxford, N.Y: Berg, 2000), pp. 86-87.
[633] McVeigh, *Japanese Higher Education as Myth*, p. 103.

'marker of group identity and solidarity' on the one hand, but also a 'coded gesture in order to force these individual members to comply with that group's standards'.[634]

While we are shown the alienating effects of conformity and groupism in *Lain* and *Boogiepop Phantom,* and the pitfalls of the *shōjo* caught up in the bewildering excesses of consumer culture, these are non-issues to the *shōjo* of slice-of-life series, who wears her uniform proudly as part of the schoolgirl collective. These series idealise the uniform, reorienting its connotations away from the implied promiscuity of the *kogyaru* and towards the notion of the *shōjo* as chaste, wholesome and socially appropriate. The convivial group dynamic of school achieved through the wearing of uniform forms an integral part of the idealisation of the high school experience we see in these *anime* series. The first sequence of *K-On!* culminates with Yui gazing excitedly around the densely-packed assembly hall at the mass of girls dressed neatly and identically, and she is overcome with joy as she proclaims 'I'm a high school girl!' In the final episode of *Azumanga Daioh!*, during the high school graduation ceremony the school hall is depicted as enormous and filled with an excitable, teeming mass of uniformed adolescents. The timbre is triumphant and nostalgic for the experience of high school, as the pupils cheer one another's success and Chiyo, the principal repository of *kawaii* infantilism in the series, weeps openly at her school days being over and the forthcoming separation from her peers.

Iwama Hiroshi's discussion of the structure and routine of the Japanese school day emphasises the concerted encouragement of pupils towards afterschool activities as a means of promoting groupism.[635] According to McVeigh's analysis of student responses to the strictures of the Japanese secondary education, 'from the students' point of view, self-expression, though always controlled to some degree, is colorfully allowed and tolerated in clubs, festivals, sports, and other activities *outside* the classroom.'[636] While the classroom should be orderly, focused and disciplined, mediated self-expression is permitted in measured amounts during non-academic activities – though these are scheduled and organised with precision and regularity. This view is echoed by the representation of school activities in *Azumanga* and *K-On!* for whose characters the experience of high school is organised around the reassuring regularity of scheduled and coordinated extracurricular events in the school calendar.

---

[634] Wendy Goldberg, 'Transcending the Victim's History: Takahata Isao's *Grave of the Fireflies*' in *Mechademia* 4, ed. by Lunning, pp. 39-52, (p. 44).
[635] Iwama Hiroshi, 'Japan's Group Orientation in Secondary Schools' in *Japanese School: Patterns of Socialization, Equality and Political Control,* ed. by James Shields (Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1995), pp. 73-84.
[636] McVeigh, *Japanese Higher Education as Myth*, p. 103.

Azumanga's 24 episodes are divided into the three years of high school, and activities like the sports day and cultural festival become the sole focus of attention during episodes set in each annual cycle; in both seasons of *K-On!* the girls meet in their clubroom after school to prepare to play a concert at the school festival.

The *Otaku* and *'Moe'* Representations of the *Shōjo* in Slice-of-life *Anime*

I would like now to return to discussion of the *otaku* and the reorientation of discourse through the initiatives of 'Cool Japan' (as discussed in Chapter Three) and their implications for femininity in Japan. Laura Miller finds that female power and agency is deliberately removed from Cool Japan accounts of the *otaku*, and that the project, through nationalist promotional materials that seek to celebrate cultural uniqueness via representations of the type, 'reifies and officially promotes male geek culture'.[637] In accounts endorsed by the government or 'mainstream institutions', she argues that the *otaku* is reproduced as specifically male and that the female aficionado is made invisible. She argues that 'Cool Japan's cute femininity essentialises and eroticizes girls and women, putting them into service for the state in a contemporary version of *geisha* commodification.'[638] This view provides context for *moe*-oriented representation in slice-of-life series that entrench the high school girl in the realm of unthreatening, neutered *kawaii* cuteness, and the narrative treatment of the *shōjo* in contrast to the *shōnen*.

Briefly observing some of the narrative trajectories of *anime* across gender-orientation and genre within these terms is provocative. Both *Beck: Mongolian Chop Squad* (Madhouse: TV Tokyo, 2004-2005) and *K-On!* are *shōnen* series depicting teenagers playing in rock bands, the former principally made up of boys, the second comprising girls. The girls of *K-On!* achieve only modest success as musicians within the parameters of their own school festivals and supporting performances in their hometown, despite their motivational goal of playing a concert at the famous Budokan centre in Tokyo. Compare this to the international recognition garnered by the teenage rock band *Beck* in the *manga* and *anime* of the same name in which the mainly male group is chosen to perform at international festivals and releases successful albums overseas.

---

[637] Laura Miller, 'Cute Masquerade' in *IJoJS*, Vol. 20, No.1, October 2011, pp. 18-29.
[638] Laura Miller, 'Cute Masquerade' in *IJoJS,* Vol. 20, No 1, October 2011, pp. 18-29, (p. 19).

In *K-On!*, the organisational focus on the girls' after-school rehearsals becomes secondary to their mundane chatter as they eat cakes/sweets and drink tea rather than play their instruments, while in *Beck*, the technicalities of rehearsals, equipment and the production of recordings guides the characters as they develop. Similarly, in *The Prince of Tennis* (*Tenisu no Ōjisama,* Trans Arts: Animax, 2001-2005), the self-possessed protagonist excels in his sport and competes in global championships, while the *moe*-oriented series *Soft Tennis!* (Sofuteni, Xebec: AT-X, 2011) heavily deploys *fan service* eroticism and has its *shōjo* cast of soft tennis players aiming optimistically for a national championship but stalling at high school level. In these series, competitive ambition is largely exclusive to male individuals or groups comprised mainly of boys, while female pursuits are limited mostly to the mundane and domestic. Broadly, in stories about *shōnen* the protagonist can be both wildly successful and develop socially, whereas girls are often relegated to experience comparatively meagre achievement in their field, which is subordinate to the more valuable qualities of kindness, diligence and social stability, and certainly not as important as representation of character through *moe* attributes.

This is not to say that female characters are not afforded a range of the same pleasures of wandering (or the anxieties, comparing *Evangelion* to *Lain* or *Witchhunter Robin*'s nightmarish vision of the city) that are granted to males. In the feature-length cinema release *K-On!* (Naoko Yamada, 2011), the girls travel to London with their instruments and through happenstance play live sets in a sushi restaurant (where the audience is largely passive and uninterested) and at a Japanese cultural festival (owing more to ethnicity than perceived talent). They are cast here as autonomous and freely exploring the foreign city, completely unsupervised as self-governing *flâneuses* open to unexpected and sudden experiences within the film's episodic structure and freeform plotting. Their ambitions are not realised to the same extent of *Beck*'s Mongolian Chop Squad, who tour America and release a best-selling album.

On the significance to the consumption in Japan of the image of the *shōjo* of *lolicon* ('lolita complex', erotic attachment to prepubescent or childlike girls) and the sexualisation of the *serafuku* school uniform, Christine Yano asserts:

> Ironically, the same uniform meant to contain sexuality becomes itself a
> tantalizing, sexualized icon. That desire draws not so much on bodies and
> uniforms – although these are necessary objects of scopophilic attention – but on

the powerlessness and passivity they inscribe. It is the erotic charge of innocence as foreplay, of guilelessness as sexual position.[642]

This description of a specific male erotic subject position can help us to interrogate the seemingly contradictory dynamic of *moe*, chaste sexualisation, that occurs in *Azumanga, K-On!, Everyday Life* and *Lucky Star.* While all of these series totally avoid the question of the girls as either sexually desiring or sexually desired (at no point in any series do the girls discuss sexual preference, or male peers in any terms other than the platonic), it is precisely this apparent innocence and total lack of guile exhibited by the *shōjo* around which eroticism and titillation is located.

While the term *fan service* (as introduced in Chapter Two) usually refers to instances of exposed skin, décolletage and fitted clothing that accentuates the female physique, in *K-On!* the prim, neatly arranged uniformed body of the childlike high school girl designed to embody and inspire *moe* is fetishistically centralised. In the first episode, as Yui is late for school she skitters hurriedly into the kitchen and stumbles to the floor in front of the low-angled camera, her legs splaying and knees knocking in a display of uncoordinated infantilism. The camera fixes for a prolonged take on her feet, legs and behind which fill the entire frame as she attempts to stand, ungainly and childlike. The animation is not limited and perfunctory as it is elsewhere in the series, but is rather especially full and detailed, as every pleat in her skirt ripples and her individual toes move beneath her stockings. The scene initiates the sense of intimacy and privilege afforded to the camera, the minutiae of the *shōjo's* everyday activities and the specifics of her bodily movements in the *serafuku* uniform scrutinised and lingered upon in a way that suggests eroticism but is couched within the milieu of prim chastity. In this scene, and throughout the series in instances of infantile stumbling and guilelessness, no sexual awareness or embarrassment on the part of the *shōjo* is implied, as is essential to the dynamic of *moe* affect.[643]

Returning to Kinsella's description of Tokyo's roaming camera crews seeking to investigate the behaviour of groups of *shōjo* congregating in the Tokyo streets, when the precise details of the High School girl's everyday life are placed under scrutiny in slice-of-life series, she is revealed as wholesome, chaste and proper. In *K-On!* and *Azumanga*, *seken* is embraced; the individual's awareness of the activities of others is positioned as

---

[642] Yano, *Pink Globalisation*, p. 50.
[643] As discussed in Chapter Three, see Patrick Galbraith, '*Moe* and the Potential of Fantasy in Post-Millennial Japan', in *EJCJS* (2009), available at <http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/2009/Galbraith.html> [accessed 24.7.2013].

a positive means of establishing group solidarity and belonging, which is constructed here as wholesome and desirable. The audience is complicit in this reorientation of a surveillance mentality as they occupy the privileged position of observation in relation to the everyday life of the *shōjo.*

Azumanga parodies and subsequently neuters the threat of older male *lolicon* perversity through the lecherous figure of the dour, repellant teacher who occasionally arrives in a scene to peer at the girls in swimming costume or changing clothes. While the running joke is that he is ejected forcibly from these scenes, the camera's position remains inside the intimate locale, enhancing the privileged observatory position afforded to the audience, who are distinguished in opposition to the unwelcome, perverted man. As this sole character becomes the embodiment of perversion and male threat in the series, ejecting him essentially removes competition, securing an audience position of exclusive, inclusive access to the girls' private space.

The popularity of *idoru* (idols) can give us insight into the production and circulation of female adolescent image and identity in Japan, and the virtual intimacy and emphasis on nurture through *moe* representation in slice-of-life *anime*. Emerging in the 1960s, Japanese *idoru* are fashion models-cum-pop performers-cum-actors-cum-advertising tools, and their images are carried on a vast array of commercial products that constitute an enormously lucrative industry. In the 1990s and at the millennium, female idols were a prominant conveyance for adolescent behavioural and self-image norms, an idealised vision of a wholesome, chaste and dutiful *shōjo*. Prominent *idoru* scholar Aoyagi Hiroshi asserts the close association between consumerism and the *idoru* industry. As a cult of personality, and an associated lucrative product line, arise around a successful idol, 'differentiation through acts of consumption and consumption-driven production become the primary means of locating oneself.'[644] The pleasure of consumerism as a means of tying oneself to others is reinforced throughout *K-On!* as the girls wander happily through the brightly-lit commercial district shopping enthusiastically for instruments and clothing, and in the majority of episodes socialise convivially over a diverse array of ornately crafted cakes on which the camera lingers. Similarly in *Azumanga* and *Lucky Star*, daily routine and regular conversation revolve around consumption of both everyday and exotic foodstuffs, the *shōjo* each observing and commenting on the appropriateness of each other's habits in approval or for comic effect.

---

[644] Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles*, p. 263.

The idol and *anime* industries have evolved together, as many *idoru* perform as *seiyū* (voice actors) for *anime* TV series.[645] On the cross-platform marketing of *idoru* performances, Patrick Galbraith argues that 'fictional characters and idols occupy the same conceptual space; like a mascot, an idol appearing in a marketing campaign in Japan is called an "image character" (*imeji kyarakutā*).'[646] Aoyagi Hiroshi asserts that idols are presented as role models for Japanese teenagers, seeking to assess what their 'symbolic qualities' can tell us about the Japanese conceptualization of adolescence. Adolescent idols are 'designed to contribute to the industry's establishment in the market by virtue of their abilities to attract people and perform as lifestyle role models' and constitute a means through which consumers 'can construct their own self-images'.[647]

The precise sense of intimacy and permitted observation as the audience participates in the minute details of the *shōjo's* everyday life characterises the slice-of-life genre and connects it to the *idoru* industry and the imagined intimacy and attachment embedded in the discourse it circulates. On the phenomenon of *idoru*, Yano observes consonance with *kawaii* brands like Hello Kitty as it 'embraces both a strong sense of caring as well as becoming the object of care'.[649] We can connect this to the term *amae*, coined in 1971 by psychoanalyst Doi Takeo to refer to the deliberate inducing of co-dependency and nurture in relationships.[650] In the dynamic of *amae*, the individual who seeks out nurture to an excessive degree is overindulged by the petitioned figure, e.g. parent or friend, leading to a co-dependent relationship in which the carer and caree self-define through these roles. Aoyagi notes this connection (which

---

[645] The networks of cross-promotion and fan consumption in the Japanese *idoru*, *anime* and *media mix* franchising environment are complex and work together to create a marketable personality designed to inspire *moe* and devotional responses in male consumers. For example, the *seiyū/idoru* 'supergroup' Sphere consists of established *seiyū* who, after the group's formation, went on to perform together in several high-profile *anime* including *K-On!* and *A Summer-Coloured Miracle* which aired with songs performed by the *seiyū*, of course available to purchase. Members Toyosaki Aki and Kotobuki Minako performed a live concert to a crowd of 17,000 as their characters from *K-On!*.

[646] Patrick Galbraith, 'Idols: The Image of Desire in Japanese Consumer Capitalism' in *Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture*, ed. by Patrick Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 186.

[647] Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles*, p. 3; *Seiyū* and idols alike will be attached to a particular agency that is part of a larger *keiretsu* and it is highly unusual that a performer will change agencies, or leave an agency and continue to be successful in the industry.

[649] Yano, *Pink Globalisation*, p. 57.

[650] See Doi Takeo, '*The Anatomy of Dependence: The Key Analysis of Japanese Behaviour'* Eng. trans. by John Bester, (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1973). Doi initially viewed the tendency towards *amae* as a uniquely Japanese characteristic that would be discouraged in the West but encouraged in Japan, but found after the book's initial publication that the characteristics of the phenomenon were identified within the West.

he describes as '"indulgence" that encourages empathetic ties between the one who seeks indulgence and the one who provides that indulgence') as integral to the performance and reception of *idoru*.[651] In *Azumanga Daioh!* and *K-On!,* through affinity with the *kawaii*, nurture is emphasised both as a drive inherent in the *shōjo* characters themselves and is encouraged as a drive towards them. In *Azumanga*, the apparently aloof, shy Sakaki is secretly strongly motivated towards petting animals that she finds *kawaii*, and scenes when she is allowed to indulge these drives represent her in a state of quasi-erotic bliss, her cheeks flushed and her sensory pleasure shown through contented expressions.

Conclusion

        In this chapter I have shown a number of ways in which the wandering female protagonists of contemporary Japanese *anime* can be analysed discursively in relation to discourses of youth panics around the high school girl circulated by the Japanese media, principally the antisocial, materially motivated *enjō kōsai* and rebellious fashionable cultural subsections exemplified by the *kogyaru*. I have attempted a diachronic approach in this study that takes into account shifts in representation that have occurred over time in both media discourse and *anime* representation. In the first part of the chapter I found through analysis of *Serial Experiments Lain*, *Boogiepop Phantom* and *Witchhunter Robin* a representation of the urban consumer environment as restrictive and alienating for the female wanderer conceived as rootless and socially detached, operating as a warning against the perils of fashion and conformity. The Japanese high school was found to be an oppressive space that restricts and causes intense anxieties for the girl. In these texts, I witnessed an articulation through the wandering adolescent girl of the epistemological uncertainty surrounding the female teenager in contemporary Japan, an object of fascination as she is simultaneously denigrated for her material excesses and reified as a symbol of cultural optimism for renewal.

        In the high school set slice-of-life *anime*, within a discourse of adolescent female *moe,* consumerism is aligned with the girl and celebrated as it forms a means of bonding socially, and the space of contemporary Japan becomes a liberating space permitting autonomous wandering through its stimulating environments. The high school environment as a site of anxiety and trauma is circumvented as institutions are

---

[651] Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles*, p. 26.

celebrated nostalgically. The perceived promiscuity, materialist greed and rebellious antiestablishment fears in discourses surrounding the *kogyaru* and other teenage female fashion subsections is also denied in this salving reorientation of the female teenager who takes her place as a symbol of convivial group solidarity and cultural regeneration.

Having assessed both wandering male and female adolescent protagonists within the discursive frameworks of youth panics in contemporary Japan, I will now examine the representation of the wandering teenager in conjunction with debates around the changing nature of the family, parental abandonment, the perceived lack of space and the experience of nomadicism as discussed in relation to contemporary Japan.

Chapter Five: The Wandering Adolescent, Space, the Family and Abandonment in Contemporary Japan

This chapter intends to examine representations of the wandering adolescent protagonist of *anime* television and their relationship to debates on the changing nature of space and the traditional *ie* familial system in contemporary Japan. In seeking to develop understanding of the shifting nature of adolescence as it is represented by popular cultural texts, I want to consider depictions in *anime* television series featuring teenagers who explore and map out a variety of terrains of the adolescent experience and negotiation of space. In Chapter One I have introduced sociological and anthropological investigations that assert the nomadicism of the contemporary Japanese adolescent, and an accompanying fragmentation in space and time owing to work and education pressures of the traditionally rigorously maintained *ie* family unit. Through discussion of the relationship exhibited between protagonist and environment in series which exemplify the principal generic modes within which this relationship is most prominently displayed, I hope to demonstrate a range of ways in which *anime* deals with the perceived changes to the Japanese experience of space and the family.

I will first return to the seminal *Evangelion* and look at some of the ways in which that series presents the rootless protagonist Shinji's experience of space. I have established in Chapter Three that he is removed from the traditional familial setting and is introduced as an isolated and antisocial teenager whom the series places on a trajectory towards rehabilitation. I now want to look at how his experiences as a pedestrian in the city's environs and when piloting the *mecha* robot are figured in terms of spatial interaction, and the comparative values attributed to the urban and rural environments. Benjamin's *flâneur* and de Certeau's spatial tactics provide useful conceptual guideposts when discussing the issue of wandering and the appropriation of space.

I will then look at the real-world set sportscar racing series *Initial D*, which is interesting for the ways in which it focuses on the relationships between the male adolescent driver and technology embodied by the racing car, and the technological as a means of adolescent negotiation of an expansive pastoral terrain. The series *Last Exile,* which I will discuss next, is interesting for its hybridity – like *Evangelion* it is a fantasy series set in wartime that hinges on adolescent piloting of a mechanical craft, here a

small aeroplane, and like *Initial D* involves competitive racing as well as a storyline involving lengthy journeys across diverse terrain.

Throughout this chapter, I am interested in the types of environment negotiated by the adolescent, the value attributed through visual and narrative cues to particular kinds of location, and the several ways in which the adolescent is permitted to interact with these environments. To what extent are they trapped by their surroundings, and to what extent are they liberated? How can we consider them to be 'wanderers' in the context of spatial negotiation and which factors restrict or facilitate their wandering?

The Wandering Adolescent Experience of Space and the Family in *Neon Genesis Evangelion*

I have argued in the Introduction and in Chapter Two the significance of *Evangelion* in terms of *anime* representation, and here I would like to address some of the ways in which it engages with notions of the family, abandonment and the negotiation of space by the wandering adolescent protagonist. Firstly I would like to discriminate between the variety of ways in which some of the *anime* series I have discussed so far (and those I will analyse in this chapter) present the circumstances of the family. A principal factor that we often see governing the adolescent's experience is the fragmentation or dissolution of the nuclear family. This can be framed in terms of neglect or abandonment, or through loss of one or both parents. In other series the family unit is implied but not depicted, and family members unseen and unheard throughout.[652] As the trajectory towards bond formation, socialisation and groupism becomes of prime significance for the protagonist, a surrogate familial group will often form that constitutes what Susan Napier calls the *pseudo ie*. As the term *ie* refers historically to the rigorously regimented legal formation of the family in Japan, bound by rules of blood lineage and patriarchy, a more fitting term might be *pseudo kazoku*, as that word is used by individuals to refer to those whom they perceive to constitute their immediate family unit. This inclusive pseudo-family has fluid boundaries, is made up of adolescents and organised around a particular location that replaces the *katei* domestic space.

In *Evangelion,* Shinji has lost his mother and is abandoned by his father – these are specific terms within which his abandonment and isolation are framed in the first

---

[652] For example slice-of-life series *K-On!, Azumanga Daioh!, Lucky Star;* also *One Piece.*

episode - and as the series progresses a group forms with NERV officer Misato as the *de facto* head. The lack of family unit is initially a source of emotional turmoil for the alienated Shinji, but as the pseudo family in instated, his confidence and psychological stability improve.

Comparatively, as discussed in Chapter Three, Takashi of *Natsume's Book of Friends* is first rejected by his mother and father for his ability to see supernatural *yōkai,* and when they are killed he is moved from family member to family member before lodging with the rural Fujiwaras who accept him into their home. A flashback in the first episode as Takashi remembers his parental rejection establishes his lack of familial bond as psychologically traumatic. As the series progresses he forms a social group with both human and supernatural friends and he becomes concurrently more expressive and assertive.

On the Japanese family's responsibility for cases of *hikikomori* and social alienation, Michael Zielenziger asserts the significance of the role played by the concept of *amae*, the bond he describes as verging on dependency between mother and child that, he argues, is firmly encouraged in Japanese society.[653] This follows the underpinning of Saitō Tamaki's popular and well-known approach to diagnosis and discussion of *hikikomori* by the assertion that parent-child codependency is responsible for prolonging the condition.[654] In fact, Saitō posited that in 95% of cases that he encountered professionally, 'the mother plays an active role in supporting the isolation' of her son.[655] This carries substantial resonance when we consider *anime* in which the mother of a wandering adolescent protagonist is absent, while the father may still remain in the family home. In series with absent mothers but present fathers like *Evangelion, Tenchi Muyo! (Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-ohki,* AIC, OVA released: 1992-2005) and *Initial D,* the father governs the teenager in the world of labour or productivity but does not limit autonomy and free expression. For example, *Initial D*'s Tak works in his fathers *tofu* shop by day though his father does not restrict his movements or work methods. Comic fantasy *Tenchi Muyo!*'s Tenchi tends the family shrine overseen by his father but the older man's authority and gravitas is diminished when he is caught by his son and chastised for lascivious attempts to view the series' female cast undressed.

The domestic space does not here carry with it further obligations or duty, the teenager free to participate in outside activities without limitation. While the *ie* system is traditionally patriarchal, in these examples the condition of wandering in terms of

---

[653] Zielenziger, *Shutting out the Sun,* p. 65.
[654] Zielenziger, *Shutting out the Sun,* p. 65.
[655] Zielenziger, *Shutting out the Sun,* p. 65.

autonomy and liberation for the adolescent is initially contingent on the absence of a maternal figure, with the patriarchal household becoming a permissive space that allows freedom beyond the restrictions of observing familial quotidian routine.

Particularly in slice-of-life series, it is common for the *shōjo's* family to be referred to but not seen, and for them to be often absent from the home. While traditional family structures are implied, their interactions are very rarely depicted. In *Azumanga Daioh!*, *Lucky Star* and *Nichijō,* each of the teenage girls lives in the family home, but while the action occasionally shifts to the domestic interior, parents are never seen. The frequency of parental absence is legitimised, accepted cheerily and with stoicism by the teenage characters. Similarly in *K-On!* reference is occasionally made to the whereabouts and professions of the girls' parents, but they are never directly shown despite scenes taking place in the family home – Yui's younger sister Ui is frequently shown attending to maternal household chores while their parents are abroad. *Serial Experiments Lain* depicts a traditional view of the nuclear family, as she lives with her mother, father and sister in the family home - each of them are seen and have dialogue. As I argued in the previous chapter this is for the purpose of depicting their fragmentation and awkward social detachment as they attend to their separate tasks in separate rooms. Similarly we are shown Light of *Death Note*'s mother, father and sister, ignorant that he is a serial killer, in the domestic space specifically to highlight their fragmentation and lack of knowledge of one another's activities.

Evangelion demonstrates an ambivalent attitude towards technology as both facilitating and hindering communication. While a spectacle is made of the militarised city and the excessive destruction caused by the hypertechnological *mecha* robots, the series continually returns to the idealised stillness and contemplative potential offered by the pastoral environment surrounding the cluttered, noisy and dangerous city. In Susan Napier's investigation into landscape representation within Japanese fantasy literature she finds that the countryside is frequently privileged as utopian, figured as 'a magical place of escape and of difference, in direct rejection of the "real" world that is urban Japan'.[657] *Evangelion* similarly demonstrates this representation of the rural environment as an escape from the technological and industrial.

Benjamin's *flâneur* and de Certeau's concept of spatial tactics can give us insights into the ways in which the teenager interacts with the environment in the series, both as pedestrians and within the *mecha* robots, and the consequences of these

---

[657] Susan Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, p. 223.

interactions.[658] While the *flâneur* walks freely through the city allowing for a variety of unexpected stimulating experiences, and alerts us to the variety of ways in which the *anime* adolescent might experience the free traversal of his surroundings, de Certeau highlights the ways in which the individual within the city can tactically and spontaneously appropriate the environment for an idiosyncratic personal agenda that generates novel meaning at the conjunction between subject and space.[659] These considerations can alert us to the tension that is created in *Evangelion* between the adolescent as trapped or liberated, and the means through which restriction is enforced or transcended. While Shinji begins the series as a rootless wanderer, he is restricted in the war torn environment, forced to evade the ruptured debris as the Angel attacks. At first within the *mecha*, he is awkward and ungainly in his actions, but as the series progresses his movement becomes fluid and elegant, and he begins to appropriate the environment tactically - destructively asserting control of the space of Tokyo is legitimised through the wartime setting. The urban space is abandoned, and, given the series' interest in the adolescent psyche and identity formation, it becomes a cathartic theatre for the expulsion of mounting aggressive energy.

The devastation of the Kobe earthquake earlier in 1995 found itself echoed for contemporary audiences in the series through the post-apocalyptic degradation of the shattered city, but the urban arena is subsequently controlled and enhanced through technology. Anticipating an Angel attack in episode three, the cityscape shifts dramatically into a defensive position in a montage sequence focused on skyscrapers descending into the ground to be replaced by monolithic fortified metallic structures; road crossings opening to expose missile launchers, and electricity lines now carrying automated machine guns. The urban centre of Tokyo here takes on a hyper-technological militarised dimension and becomes a fluid, transformative space, simultaneously a kinetic reconfiguration of the real-world urban environment's corporeal rigidity, and an acknowledgement of Tokyo's historic transient instability. One side of this representational shift confirms urban Japan to be in continual flux, the other denotes the ability for the space to be defiantly adapted and contained in the face of impermanence.

---

[658] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project (Das Passagen-Werk),* trans. by Rolf Tiedemann, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 416-455; Michel De Certeau, 'Walking in the City' in *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. by Steven Rendall (California; London: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 91-110.

[659] Michel De Certeau, 'Walking in the City' in *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. by Steven Rendall (California; London: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 91-110 (p. 94).

This fantasy device carries the potent suggestion of an amplified significance to everyday travails in the city centre. The newly revealed underside becomes an arena of warfare in which the teenage *Eva* pilot, sanctioned by adult authority, can legitimately indulge in expressively violent outbursts. The sequence and the ensuing conflict constitutes a satisfying, therapeutic eruption of adolescent emotional energy out of the surface strictures of contemporary Japan, Shinji's anxiety and frustration writ large across the cityscape in a tactical appropriation of the environment.

The adolescent's psychological state and sense of self-worth are presented directly in correlation to the experience of space. At key points, Shinji and the other teenagers are shown nomadically journeying on foot through a range of spaces, both liberating and constricting. The oscillation between an overwhelming sense of entrapment and the enjoyment of spatial liberation and the freedom to wander or make tactical pathways through the environment correlates directly to Shinji's social development and his increased aptitude when interacting with technology as embodied by the *mecha*. Adolescent autonomy away from the domestic space is shown in terms of alienation and abandonment and conversely as optimistically facilitating self-reflection and socialization, with ambivalence towards the urban and an idealistic vision of the rural. Without the *mecha* lending him purpose, Shinji is aimless and insignificant in the Tokyo streets.

In his influential analysis of the experience of everyday life, philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre discusses the restrictive strategies present in the symbolic 'space of representation' which is 'space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of "inhabitants" and "users"'.[660] Representational space affords discursive value to its features as it 'overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects.' For Lefebvre this is the environment constructed by government and planners with mass use value and suggested best practice in mind, is 'dominated', and therefore 'passively experienced', the choices of experience limited through a range of structural factors that guide and influence the 'user'.[661] This is the effect we see Shinji experience as he negotiates the city early in the series.

In Episode Four, Shinji flees from the burden of his responsibilities into the city, whose restrictive environments become reminders of his isolation and entrapment. Slumped alone on a subway train, he is hemmed in visually by metal frames created by handrails and windows that look out onto the city's ominous and silhouetted buildings

---

[660] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (UK: Wiley, 1991), p. 39.
[661] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 39.

obscured by driving rain. In a dingy cinema he uncomfortably stares at a couple embracing, reinforcing his own feelings of sexual and social inadequacy. The city, shot from low angles and constructed of sharp lines and cluttered by intersecting overhead wires is consumerism incarnate, saturated with brand logos, advertisements and sales slogans. Shinji sleeps in a railway station waiting area, his surroundings stark, sterile and lit by the artificial glow of a vending machine. An impressionistic, nightmarish vision of Shinji walking in the city follows, the boy tiny at the bottom of the frame gazing up at a blank monolithic glowing skyscraper that shifts into a dizzying rotating cityscape, conveying the traumatic experience of the nomadic isolated adolescent bewildered by the urban environment. Passively guided through a variety of unpleasant, entrapping arenas that do little to stimulate his senses or imagination, Shinji is not quite a free-roaming *flâneur*, but his experiences are conveyed with a sense of inexorability and predetermination. According to Lefebvre, representational space issues a challenge to the user seeking active engagement with the environment, as it becomes 'space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate.'[662] When Shinji returns to the cockpit of the *Eva* in the following episode he is able to transcend physical and mental restriction and gain mastery over this daunting space, but his rootless pedestrian wandering has here led to overwhelmed panic. Technology becomes the means through which Shinji appropriates the space and enacts change upon its features – de Certeau's terms of the 'tactical' usage of space particularly relevant here as Shinji employs environmental objects strategically in battle with the Angels – but it is the rural environment that affords *flâneur*-like roaming that results in surprise encounters with psychologically resonant affect.

Fleeing in agony from the confusion of the city, Shinji runs without purpose into the countryside, whose potential for reflection and liberation is established in direct opposition to the urban squalor through a silent, oneiric montage of tranquil rural scenes, the camera now unrestricted and taking in shots of the expansive clear sky and fields from above. In the calm pastoral space, the results of teenage wandering are dramatically different.

Anticipating the association between the rural milieu and 'traditional' Japan that we see in *Natsume's Book of Friends* and other series steeped in Buddhist and *Shintō* imagery and concepts, we see Shinji resting in thought at a small woodland shrine. As he wanders freely through the idealised verdant space, he is called to by his classmate Aida, wandering alone playing a war game. Adolescent creativity and imagination is

---

[662] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 39.

enhanced in this environment, as a wistful, contemplative scene of the excited Aida has him contentedly play-acting, tactically appropriating the space to fit his fantasy. He imagines himself participating in the conflict with the Angels, the scene presenting him as stoic, liberated and optimistic in an expansive pastoral space against a clear sky and vivid sunset. The teenagers, unfettered by parental or social restriction in the extensive appropriated space around Tokyo, interact and eat together over a campfire, as Aida enthusiastically tells Shinji how he envies his situation as piloting of the *mecha* and living with a beautiful woman. This is a key moment of social development for Shinji as he begins to appreciate his privileged position and his potential for social growth, and it is significant that it takes place away from the city, both in the natural environment and outside of the familial domestic space. When he first leaves the city, we see Shinji on a hillside overlooking the city, dwarfed in the valley base by the surrounding green hills. A slow track up a mist-shrouded cliff-side and the peak of the mountain ridge emphasises their comparative longevity. While the crumbling structures of the urban space and the ease with which they fall during *mecha* conflicts expresses the transient impermanence of the manmade, the untouched countryside is coded as ancient and perennial.

While these pastoral scenes demonstrate the wandering rootless adolescent's capacity for personal development outside of the confines of the *ie* and through *flâneur*-like nomadicism in the rural space, the series expresses the liberating potential of the domestically-situated surrogate family formed from Shinji's classmates in Misato's apartment. In episode nine, a lengthy congenial scene in the apartment shows this familial group established as Rei, Shinji, Asuka, Aida, Suzuhara, Pen-Pen the penguin and class representative Hikari sit comfortably drinking tea. The scene furthers Anno's agenda for the series as discussed in Chapter Three of promoting teenage socialisation and interpersonal communication through comparison with Shinji's nightmarish isolation in the earlier episodes. Here, the mundane domestic locale becomes a site of sociable consumption and a convivial expressive space for the wandering adolescents who now form a disparate family. The success of this social group suggests the potential for a reconfiguration of the Japanese family not bound by the traditional regulations of the *ie.* The series here exhibits the ambivalent attitude to consumerism that I have discussed in Chapter Three, as the buoyant interactions of this *pseudo ie* are organised around heavily branded consumer goods (rather than the traditional *kotatsu* table) – in this particular scene the group swig bottled iced tea and the frame is strewn with the debris of logo-adorned packages.

Returning briefly and comparatively to the more recent examples of *Death Note* and *Natsume's Book of Friends,* I have argued in Chapter Three that *Death Note*'s Light acts in retributive response to his experience of the decadent, violent and entrapping urban environment and is a representation of the monstrous *shōnen* embodied in youth panic media discourses by the killer *Shōnen A*. The vision of Tokyo in the series is couched in very similar terms to that of *Evangelion*, but while Light's rebellious activity is antisocial and gruesome, Shinji's aggressive destruction of the cityscape is sanctioned and permitted by both parental and government authority. *Death Note*'s story never takes the characters outside of the restrictive city, while *Natsume's Book of Friends* is exclusively set in the pastoral small town idyll and does not feature any trace of the urban.

I have argued that *Evangelion* presents a negotiation between the pastoral landscape and the mechanised city, where the countryside idyll enables adolescent contemplation and temporary liberation. While *Death Note*'s Japan is saturated with screens, advertisements, commercial products and modern conveniences (teenage detective L is rarely seen away from his sterile, monitor-filled operations room), there is barely a hint of the technological or mechanical throughout the entirety of *Natsume's Book of Friends*, and the perennially convivial teenagers' lives are touched little by news of the world outside the rural town. Food is seen being prepared traditionally on stovetops, the family homes are Japanese style, minimally furnished with sliding screens, traditional *tatami* flooring and *kotatsu* tables. In the Natsume home, an archaic analogue telephone and a small television sit discreetly in the room's corners, with the space organised around the *kotatsu*. There is no clutter or modern ephemera to restrict or encroach upon the individual as it does in, for example, *Evangelion, Death Note* and also *Welcome to the NHK*.

Within this setting, we can take *Natsume's Book of Friends'* vision of the Japanese family to simultaneously suggest the conservative and progressive. I have argued in Chapter Three in relation to contemporary Japanese discourses around the murderous schoolboy that the series' depiction of protagonist Takashi constitutes a rehabilitation of the adolescent boy from antisocial monster to socialised young man. The idealised rural familial setting is integral to this process. During the first season's final episode, Takashi's uncle and aunt sit at the centrally placed *kotatsu* and ruminate on the boy's entry into their home. A series of still shots from low angles emphasise the spaciousness and tranquility of the interior, and a shot of a wind chime gently swaying in the open screen door against a backdrop of auburn and sepia trees is lingered upon to

demonstrate the passing of undisturbed time and the close relationship between the house and nature. While traditionally *uchi* and *soto* are observed as rigidly distinct, the match between the interior and exterior palette blurs the division - this vision of the traditional Japanese home is constituted symbolically as 'natural' and consequently desirable. The environment is idealised and celebrated, and as the couple talk freely it also becomes a space of thought, reflection and communication. Evoked here is the nostalgic need to return to a past unfettered by communications technology, media and fashion industries. Takashi's uncle remarks that he feels the boy is too reserved (the boy has been polite and deferential in the home) and that he should do as he wants and enjoy autonomy. This is an interesting departure from the values attributed to the traditional *ie* system of obligation and duty, and the reinstated family framework is presented as liberating rather than restrictive.

The Wandering Adolescent, Space and Technology in *Initial D*

Initial D represents the adolescent trapped and liberated to varying degrees as the landscape of Japan is appropriated tactically by older teenage racing car drivers as the track for high-speed races. The series is part of a successful *media mix* with complementary iterations. First a *seinen* (young adult male-oriented) *manga* (1995-2013) serialised in *Weekly Young Magazine* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1980-ongoing), then an *anime* TV series (1998)*,* then a videogame series (home console, *Sega Saturn,* 1999; arcade, *NAOMI 2,* 2002), then live action films (Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, 2005). Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano uses the series to exemplify the aggregation of fan interaction through consumption of the variety of products, stating that 'the more a person is knowledgeable of the "*Initial D* project" and its fan culture, the more the individual product… appeals to him or her.'[663] *Initial D*'s *media mix* presents extremely close relationship between the *anime/manga* scenarios and the construction of its videogame version, which goes to lengths to interactively recreate the focus of the TV series. The videogame replicates locations, cars, characters and particular races experienced by the protagonist in the series, making a range of options available to the user of the immersive, sit-in games arcade machine that seeks out verisimilitude with its replica steering wheel and upholstered seat, to the extent that the player is required to turn a mock key to start the car's engine. Additionally, a magnetic card system was operated

---

[663] Wada-Marciano, *Japanese Cinema in the Digital Age*, p. 109.

in Japan whereby players could save their accumulated data – the parts and modifications purchased for their car plus the races they had competed in – and return to the arcade regularly to continue a potentially lengthy campaign.

Adolescent protagonist Tak is introduced in specific terms of spatial restriction as he works in a small tofu shop, subject to lengthy work hours and repetitive menial tasks. Like *Evangelion*'s Shinji, Tak is positioned outside of the traditional *ie*, living with his father, and is shown both restricted by routine and autonomous. He is similarly isolated, detached from others and demonstrates antisocial tendencies at the series' outset. He is shown in the first episode uncomfortably heaving crates in the cramped environment. The setting is the mundane small-town locale of Fujiwara in the Gunma prefecture, noted for its dramatic mountainous landscape, and a series of establishing shots of the town connote restriction and isolation as the densely-packed collection of uniform buildings is set at the base of a plunging valley overlooked by several looming peaks.

Tak transcends this physical limitation and enjoys spatial liberation as he drives his sports car at night on the complex, winding mountain roads, known in Japan as *togue,* at which time they are empty of casual drivers and populated by adolescents honing their racing prowess. Restricted by day, at night Tak and the other teenagers the series introduces become free wanderers of the expansive terrain, their negotiation of the environment enabled through acute knowledge and skillful operation of the mechanical object. Tak is initially solitary and withdrawn, and reluctant when challenged to race, shying away from social contact with other drivers. As the series progresses, he undergoes a socialisation process as they bond over car maintenance and racing strategies.

The marketing of *Initial D*'s *anime* and videogames emphasised the series' authenticity through the highly publicised advisory capacity of Formula One driver Tsuchiya Keiichi, the 'Drift King' who began his career in illegal downhill races like those depicted in the series. Tsuchiya became firmly associated with the Toyota AE86 Trueno during the 1980s, leading *manga* author Shigeno Shuichi to feature the car at the centre of the series. Garnering a devoted following through his reputation as rebellious and anti-authoritarian after his suspension from professional racing when he was revealed to again be participating in *togue* races, Tsuchiya advised the studio as they worked on the *anime* adaptation on a variety of matters including engine sound and the

way that the cars handled.[664] These claims to authenticity feed into the videogame experience, which in Tokyo's Joypolis arcade from 2007 featured the actual cars driven in the series, apparently behaving accurately to real life performance and delivering significant affect and feedback through engine rumble and simulated inertia.[665] That this arcade is situated in the Decks Beach entertainment area of Odaiba creates a further conjunction between the immersive virtual space of the series and the lived space of real-world Tokyo. The *manga* was published by Kodansha, the *anime* aired on Fuji TV, who acquired ownership of the publishing company in 2005, and whose headquarters (as I have discussed in the Introduction) are open to visitors and act as an iconic feature of the Odaiba bay's shoreline. The arcade experience, in unique proximity to the series' production hub, allows enthusiasts to immerse themselves in the narrative world of the *manga* and *anime.*

   Initial D has a foregrounded interest in the *shōnen's* interactions with the mechanical. This close relationship with the machine is emphasised by the videogame series, whose simulated control system and detailed options for car customisation refer to the considerations discussed and negotiated by the series' adolescent cast. The landscape of rural Japan is appropriated tactically and interpreted by the teenager, physically contained and bodily augmented by the car, as a proving ground and forum for development. Just as Shinji's piloting of the *Eva* becomes fascinating to his classmates who idolise the pilots, the world of *Initial D* is underpinned by a sense of conformity despite the apparently transgressive, illegal misuse and reconfiguration of public space by the teenage drivers. One-dimensionally focused on the downhill races, the car is presented as a teenage fad and an organizational principle around which the entire drama revolves, with ownership and mastery of the machine enabling mastery of the landscape, emotional development and social success.

   The series' interest in the adolescent's relationship to the space of both the natural and industrial environment is established in the opening title sequence, as enthusiastic portraits of the series' teenage cast are superimposed over high-speed point-of-view shots of the mountain roads from the perspective of a racing car driver in motion. The illusory effect is that of the adolescent body hurtling across the landscape, with the artificial road in the centre bordered by natural foliage. Sexuality and

---

[664] Jonah Morgan, '*ANS* Exclusive Interview: The Drift King Keiichi Tsuchiya' (2005) available at: <http://www.animenewsservice.com/archives/driftking.htm> [accessed 10.4.2013].

[665] Jason, Chen, 'Japanese *Initial D* Arcade Booth Features Actual Tofu Car' (2007)*,* available at: <http://gizmodo.com/283946/japanese-initial-d-arcade-booth-features-actual-tofu-car> [accessed 9.9.2013].

socialisation are linked with spatial mastery and interaction with the car through a still view of *shōjo* characters Natsuki and Saori wearing revealing shorts and tops, followed by an animated shot of Tak closing his hand with determination around a car's key. Just as we are alerted in *Evangelion* to the close relationship between Shinji and the mechanical Eva, which performs actions in response to his thought patterns and moves as an extension of his body, this image articulates the primacy of the interaction between the mechanical object and the adolescent body. The car provides an augmentation of the teenager's abilities with the principle goal of a strategic, tactical spatial appropriation that leads to socialisation and romantic success. The image of the boy's hand grasping the car's key works in conjunction with the heavily branded commercial environment of racing cars to articulate a pleasurable, liberating engagement for the adolescent with consumerism and commodity. Debates occur between enthused teenagers throughout the series on the relative merits of brands of car, and during races the environment is saturated with logos as drivers compare their machines avidly.

The car is revered as a technological object to be manipulated and optimised, consequently enabling mastery over the Japanese landscape. Adolescent interaction with the car improves social status, as skillful drivers command the admiration and respect of their teenage peers. Discussion of driving excellence in the series is frequently couched in terms of the negotiation of the space of the rural environment. In episode two, competitive racer Ry has encountered Tak as an anonymous driver on the mountain road, and has engaged unsuccessfully in an impromptu race. Struck with admiration by Tak's driving expertise, a stunned interior monologue eulogises that the driver performed a flawless braking manoeuvre to take a sharp turn without loss of speed, before he couches his reaction within the realms of the spatial with the observation that Tak must have a perfect knowledge of the mountain pass. A brief flashback shows the car making the turn, the vehicle smoothly drifting round the bend framed by verdant roadside greenery, the image articulating a harmonious relationship acquired between the technological object and the pastoral environment. In his oration, Ry privileges equally prodigious control over the car and the driver's awareness and mapping of space.

The car in *Initial D* enables a bridging of both the manmade and rural elements of the landscape. The concrete surface of the mountain passes follows the smooth curvature of the mountainside, and drivers follow the route as closely as possible, anticipating turns and slopes through acutely-detailed knowledge of the environment. In

the frequent racing sequences, signs of the natural landscape are almost-always present in the frame, with roads bordered by trees and sharp drops revealing silhouetted mountains in the distance.

The first scene of the series introduces these conventions, showing Tak driving at full speed at night, the action cutting quickly between views of the tree-lined road, the sturdy, sleek metal exterior of the car and the hands and feet of the teenage driver as he operates the car prodigiously. The quick cross-cutting immediately establishes the series' interest in the relationship between the natural landscape, technology and the skilled adolescent body. Despite its illegality, the adults of *Initial D*'s Japan do not exclusively disapprove of the teenagers' driving, as shown immediately by the ensuing moment in which the adult driver of a car moving slowly in the opposite direction to Tak recognises the boy and comments fondly that he hasn't changed. When Tak's father realises his son's potential, he encourages him outright to take part in races. This legitimises the racing trend and indicates neatly that it is not considered antisocial, but a normative interest for the prefecture's adolescents.

Initial D presents an engagement with debates around everyday nomadicism and the lack of space for teenagers in contemporary Japan through the affording to the adolescent protagonists pleasurable nomadic liberation that facilitates social success. As in *Evangelion*, technology and consumerism appears to enable this success, though unlike *Evangelion*, the relationship between teenager and the mechanical is unproblematic and is not shown as leading to existential crises or questions of self-worth.

The Adolescent from Restriction to Liberation in *Last Exile*

The world of *Last Exile* shares the single-minded focus on aeroplanes that *Initial D* exhibits in relation to sportscars. I want to look at the series' depiction of the teenage experience of space and the terms within which the wandering adolescent is restricted or liberated. I will also consider the representation of autonomy and nomadicism outside of the confines of the traditional domestic space – to what extent is this lifestyle celebrated or a cause of adolescent anxiety?

Status in the societal structure of *Last Exile* is obtained primarily through success as an aircraft pilot, which is couched in terms of the teenager's experience of spatial mastery and ability to negotiate the landscape. The series focuses on orphaned

15-year-olds Claus and Lavie, who live alone customising, repairing and piloting their two-man 'vanship' aeroplane, earning money as couriers running errands and competing in races. While the vanship constitutes a technological artifact in the series' world – whose costume and architecture is modeled after 19th century Europe – like *Initial D* the emphasis is on the physically-demanding maintenance of mechanical moving parts that the hardworking teenage enthusiast adapts and manipulates concertedly in workshops. The freedom to wander is contingent on labour, and the series presents a clear causal link between this focused hard work and the transcendence of spatial restriction – while the characters live in a cluttered and rundown home, an optimistic vision of adolescent nomadicism and autonomy is conveyed as the teenagers travel extensively across the series' vast world, unrestricted by parental authority or a compulsory education system. Their traversals are leant societal significance as they later ferry people, information and important objects to assist in an international conflict. The series view on technology is ambivalent, despite this romanticised view of aerial endeavours. The perennially warring states of Anatoray and Disith are supplied with continuously advancing technological armaments by the manipulative and decadent Guild (who it transpires are from the technologically advanced far future) as a means of keeping the absurd conflict active despite the specific reasons being long since forgotten.

Character designer Murata Range asserted that a principal aim of the series from the outset was to convey the 'liberating feel of flying'.[666] The opening sequence initiates the series' focus on landscape traversal and teenage development as it aligns the adolescent's piloting of the mechanical craft with liberating spatial negotiation. An aerial shot follows a gliding bird as it moves through a blue cloud-flecked sky and sweeps dramatically across a densely-packed, immediately post-industrial town, as Claus is shown gazing longingly across the rural expanse, indicating teenage desire for spatial liberation. Quick shots of indeterminate, sleekly hypermodern technological apparatus are followed by a close-up on the teenager's determined expression which then dissolves into a shot of him piloting the vanship at high speed through the extensive vista. Scenes of sky-bound warfare are intercut with Claus' craft speeding easily across a diverse range of idyllic, unpopulated and seemingly boundless natural terrain including a dramatic mountain range and sunlit expanse of water. This imagery cumulatively asserts the connection between the maturing adolescent boy's relationship

---

[666] Jonathan Mays, 'Interview: Range Murata', (2005), available at: <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/feature/2005-02-28> [accessed 9.9.2013].

to the mechanical and the pleasurable exhilaration of landscape negotiation and spatial liberation.

Emphasising the vast scale of the world's principally natural landscape, the series opens with a move from a dramatic conflict in the sky between two warring nations (later the storyline's focus), to the idyllic, burgeoning industrial town in which the autonomous teenagers live. Pastoral tranquility and liberating open space is established through a series of still shots showing first an infinite expanse of sky, followed by a long shot of the town showing it emerging unobtrusively from a cliff-side set in a lush green pastoral landscape. The shot tightens on the town to show closely-positioned houses constructed of wood and stone. Scaffolding and building works denote industrial progress and tangibly corporeal, earthbound mechanical development, with the manmade structures' subdued palette of warm browns matching the surroundings and suggestive of a civilisation in harmonious coexistence with the environment. The optimistic vision constitutes a depiction of benevolent burgeoning technology – pre-computers, robotics and electronics - in an industrialising society on the cusp of expansion, prior to urban development but peculiarly possessing advanced flight capabilities.

The action moves to the comparatively enclosed interior of Claus and Lavie's cluttered home, strewn with machinery and tools and the majority of space taken up by their vanship. *Last Exile* demystifies technology through continual dramatisation of its physicality and the tangibility of working parts, emphasising the teenager's ability to affect meaningful change through diligent work effort. There is a focus in the series on the machinery that dominates the culture, primitive in appearance but advanced in performance, as despite crude exteriors the aeroplanes fly speedily and smoothly with vertical take-off and landing.[667] There are frequent close-ups on engine parts, levers and cranks as they are engaged, and the grinding motion of intersecting cogs and other mechanical minutiae. Claus is introduced strenuously working on the aircraft, as a close-up of his straining face cuts to a view of the metal hull being drilled and manipulated. This is the first scene of many in the series to depict the teenager exercising control over technology. Where characters in *Evangelion* have little control

---

[667] The focus on mechanical flying craft that resemble early experimental aeroplanes and WWII fighters is a staple of Miyazaki Hayao's cinema and can be traced to e.g. Studio Ghibli's popular *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (Miyazaki Hayao, 1986) and *Porco Rosso* (Miyazaki Hayao, 1992). *Last Exile* is highly reminiscent in other respects to *Laputa*, including the non-specific, wartime post-industrial setting, platonic male and female central characters and their part in the unearthing of an ancient powerful technological artifact with implications for the future of the world's population.

or understanding of technology's workings, both *Initial D* and *Last Exile* celebrate concerted teenage effort as they present pleasurable, productive engagement with the mechanical.

As *Last Exile* features a *shōnen* and *shōjo* as central characters rather than a single gendered protagonist, it is interesting to consider differences in representation, traits and their responses to the world they inhabit. Firstly, Lamarre's observation that in *anime*, 'mechaphiliac' boys are most closely associated with operation of the mechanical while girls occupy themselves with information and knowledge-gathering is borne out in *Last Exile*.[668] The pleasure of self-reliance is also emphasised by the series in depictions of the domestic space that express teenage autonomy and nomadicism as intrinsically liberating and enjoyable. While Claus, surrounded by workshop tools and machinery, utilises the heavy drill on the plane's hull, Lavie agonises over the administrative and logistical details of finances and seeking work. The young adolescents' domestic environment, though spatially limiting, is free from parental supervision and social restriction and is a space for open emotional expression, as the action cuts to Lavie ranting angrily about material concerns while preparing hot drinks. While as children they operate outside the regulatory constraints of the *ie* system, they themselves exhibit maternal and paternal characteristics, where Lavie is associated with domestic maintenance and routine, and Claus with physical labour and production. When the pair enjoy the first of many convivial sociable scenes based around appealing depictions of domestic ritual consumption, dialogue ceases and a close-up lingers on the steaming drinks being poured, followed by a calm moment as the autonomous teenagers relax in contented silence, contented in their pseudo-familial environment with the results of their strenuous labour.

In the morning, a bell sounds indicating the posting of bills advertising jobs for pilots on the walls of a spectacularly lengthy, deep crevasse eroded naturally into the landscape. As the bell chimes, the view tracks through the trench-like canyon showing the huge number of advertisements pinned to its walls. Emphasising the natural environment's spaciousness, the low-angled view takes in the blue sky above the trench and we hear the ambient noise of a gentle breeze. Essentially a glorified noticeboard, that in the real world of commercial employment would be utilitarian and spartan, the advertisement area is reconfigured into a dramatic space imbued with a sense of liberated excitement. The ensuing depiction of the plethora of aircraft rushing with

---

[668] Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 212.

fluidity through the crevasse as the pilots scour the notices for assignments neatly lends a sense of thrilling freedom of movement and emphasises individual motivation.

The teenagers of *Last Exile* are hardworking and self-motivated. When the vanship is piloted for the first time, the relationship between the mental concentration and bodily exertion of the adolescent and the successful manipulation of the mechanical object is enforced through quick cuts between Claus and Lavie's strained expressions, their hands as they operate the plane, and the complex array of dials, gauges and pistons. The vanship launches and speeds through the peaceful rural environment, causing ripples on the surface of a still river. They merge with a convoy of similarly-minded craft approaching the trench. Despite implied competitiveness, as the vanships sweep through the landscape, the music track comprises optimistic, elongated major chords and light flourishes that heighten the sense of relaxed liberation and teenage participation in the high-pressure working world rather than creating an atmosphere of combative self-determination.

The vanship rushes alongside the wall and Lavie feverishly seeks out appropriate work. As her eyes dart eagerly back and forth, she absorbs and responds to dense information, quickly processing the multitude of notices as they speed by. As the aircraft emerges from the trench performing a series of exhibitionistic acrobatic turns, four elderly townsmen observe Claus' manouevres and comment reverentially on his ability, which they compare favourably to his absent father's. As in *Initial D,* the adolescent's interactions with the machine in *Last Exile* do not represent anti-conformist resistance to oppressive restrictions placed upon them by an older generation (a dynamic we see in the aforementioned 1988 film *Akira*) but enable liberating experiences within an appropriate social milieu carrying the approval of adult authority figures. The sequence celebrates the societally encouraged rewards of self-determination, ambition and self-reliance facilitated by the mechanical craft.

The aircraft race sequence in the third episode builds upon the series' trajectory towards adolescent spatial freedom, and reinforces the discursive connection made between adolescent work effort and the pleasurable experience of negotiating expansive rural space that is at the series' forefront. In addition to the satisfying sense of transcending everyday restrictions, the corporeal pleasure of the kinetic experience as it registers on the adolescent body is shown by Claus and Lavie's straining, elated faces. Exposed and unprotected by a cockpit as the air rushes past them, close-ups of their expressions are inter-cut with close-ups of aircraft components and Claus' perspective of the diverse terrain passing in a blur.

This episode also illustrates the equal weighting placed upon adolescent quotidian routine and the carrying out of mundane tasks that we have seen in several *anime* I have previously discussed. The episode begins with the familiar series of dissolves from still views of the general surroundings of the town through the narrow streets around the teenagers' home before moving into the dingy, cramped interior. These static images once again emphasise the sense of spatial restriction and stagnation, suspensefully anticipating the subsequent liberation of the high speed aircraft racing sequence. Enforcing the adolescent's daily life and their focused attention to physical labour, Lavie enthusiastically prepares food with a series of comically flamboyant physical gestures. The cumulative preparation process is highlighted through a close-up on the appealing fresh ingredients added as she forms a sandwich, and the benefits of exertion and effort are emphasised as Lavie strains while pressing down on the completed meal. Domestic consumption ritual forms the basis for a light-hearted comic moment conveying their autonomous conviviality as Claus rises from sleep reluctantly and Lavie inserts the sandwich forcibly into his mouth, berating his laziness. The movement from the minutiae of these scenes of contented self-reliance in the domestic environment to the effortless gliding of the vanship through the landscape indicates the enjoyment of spatial liberation as a consequence of the adolescents' focused care when carrying out daily tasks.

The race sequence exhibits qualities comparable to *Initial D* despite the radically different milieu and timbre of the series. Before the race begins, a crowd scene depicts the enthusiastic community that has gathered to cheer the pilots on and observe the event. The race begins in the empty streets of the town, the manmade, mundane grey stone space reconfigured and appropriated as a seemingly limitless labyrinthine track. The legitimized, tactical intrusion by the mechanically empowered teenagers into the everyday locale is emphasised through a moment in which Claus narrowly avoids a man hanging laundry from an open window. The navigation of this urban space makes way for an appropriation of the idealised rural environment reminiscent of *Initial D*'s mountain roads as the race leaves the town first into the open sky and then into mud-tracked rolling farmland. Highlighting the reconfiguration of mundane pastoral space, the langour of the rural milieu is articulated through still close-ups of grazing goats, to whom the endearingly conscientious Lavie apologises as the dynamically contrasting aircraft speeds past. Having mapped out the route previously, Claus adapts to the varying surroundings and navigates the vanship with unfaltering ease. The accretion of imagery in the series as it moves from domestic clutter through enclosed urban space to

the liberating expanse of the rural landscape follows a clear trajectory towards spatial liberation for the nomadic adolescents as they take on household responsibilities and attend diligently to strenuous labour.

The race episode promotes social responsibility and the taking on of parental roles over personal gain and status acquisition, as Claus and Lavie forego victory in order to assist a battle-damaged plane and its injured pilot, who before dying charges them with returning a child, Alvis, to her home. The teenagers go on in the series to perform a surrogate parental role to the girl in domestic scenes of nurture. Ultimately, while *Last Exile* begins with a positive representation of a pair of adolescents living outside of the traditional Japanese *ie* structure, and this situation is framed explicitly in terms of the free exploration of space afforded to them, the series' view of the contemporary family is nuanced through the introduction of Alvis and the formation of a more recognisably familial setup. Rather than presenting two adolescents in need of parental guidance and familiar domestic structure, *Last Exile* ushers Claus and Lavie into nurturing positions for Alvis and they become the surrogate mother and father of a *pseudo ie* that comes to resemble a reformation of the traditional nuclear family.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed depictions of the adolescent in relation to the representation of space and the family in *anime* texts. I considered these texts' representation of the wandering adolescent at a discursive conjunction with sociological and anthropological accounts of the everyday life of the teenager characterised by nomadicism which has led to a fragmenting in space and time of the traditional family. Representations of the family are diverse in *anime*, and abandonment or separation is a motivating factor for the wandering adolescent as they negotiate space. Separation can cause anxiety as it does for Shinji in *Evangelion*, or it can lead to self-reliance and autonomy as it does for Claus and Lavie in *Last Exile.*

Emerging from analysis of these texts within these contextual parameters is the deployment of the wandering adolescent as a means of attempting to reconcile a variety of tensions between opposing concepts. The mechanical is positioned in opposition to the natural; modernity juxtaposed with the rural; alienation is opposed to social integration.

Deploying concepts derived from Benjamin and de Certeau, I have been able to consider the tension between the experience of spatial restriction and liberation for the adolescent wanderer and the parameters through which they are experienced. The act of spatial wandering can be couched in terms of both pleasurable autonomy and anxious alienation, for example in *Evangelion*, the juxtaposition is made between excursions into the restrictive urban environment and the liberating rural landscape, while the *mecha* technology facilitates, in de Certeau's terms, a tactical appropriation of space for the abandoned protagonist. Similarly, space is mastered by the adolescents of *Initial D* and *Last Exile* through a pleasurable interaction with the mechanical. In *Initial D*, the parent encourages his son to participate autonomously in dangerous races, while in *Last Exile* the autonomous teenagers are stoic and self-reliant.

I have found that *Initial D* and *Last Exile* engage with debates around everyday nomadicism and spatial restriction through the affording to the adolescent protagonists pleasurable nomadic liberation that facilitates social success. In these two series and *Evangelion,* technology and consumerism appears to enable this success, though unlike *Evangelion,* the relationship between teenager and the mechanical is unproblematic and is not shown as leading to existential crises or questions of self-worth.

While the family may be fragmented in *anime* series at the outset, through the adolescent's excursions and engagement with space, I have observed that a surrogate family may be formed of non-related individuals bonded through commonality that may be preferable to the protagonist's original family, as in *Natsume's Book of Friends*. In *Evangelion* and *Initial D*, this family engages with one another mediated by consumerism. Operating the car in *Initial D* as a commercial artifact leads to both spatial mastery and the formation of an adolescent *pseudo ie.*

Now that I have explored a range of discursive conjunctions between the wandering adolescent as represented in *anime* and a variety of contemporary Japanese cultural phenomena, I would like to turn my attention to an investigation of the wandering adolescent as the figure is variously represented within Japanese videogames.

Section 2

The Wandering Adolescent in Contemporary Japanese Videogames from Collector to Explorer

Chapter Six: Introduction and Scholarship on Videogames

This chapter will introduce approaches to the study of videogames within critical literature that has contributed to the development of the nascent scholarly area of 'Game Studies'. This term has entered scholarly lexicon as broad reference to academic interventions not just into videogames, but also the ever-expanding variety of interactive digital media, user interfaces and technological apparatuses.

Videogames and Japan

On the history of videogame production and reception, Steven L. Kent and more recently Tristan Donovan have produced substantial overviews that trace the medium from inception to the present.[669] Both books highlight significant technological developments and the transnational interactions, particularly between the West and Japan, which gave rise to the global industry of the present. Donovan presents an account of Japan's entry into the games market from its beginnings in 1977 with the initial success of the globally successful *Space Invaders* (Taito, 1977) to industry leaders with the seminal games exclusively available for Nintendo's Entertainment System (in Japan, the '*Famicom*') in 1986.[670] From the 1990s to the present, the dominant companies in Japan are Nintendo (responsible for the GameBoy, Nintendo64, GameCube, DS, Wii and WiiU console systems) and Sony (responsible for the PlayStation and its updated derivations, PSP and PSVita console systems) and the games discussed in this section were all playable on one or more of the systems produced by the two companies.[671]

Chris Kohler's *Power Up: How Japanese Videogames Gave the World an Extra Life* details the development and history of the Japanese game industry and asserts the

---

[669] Tristan Donovan, *Replay: The History of Video Games,* (Lewes: Yellow Ant, 2010); Steven L. Kent, *The Ultimate History of Video Games,* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2001).

[670] *Legend of Zelda, Super Mario Bros., Metroid, Final Fantasy* all represented substantial innovations and helped define the course of games development worldwide. See Donovan, *Replay*, pp. 153-177 (p. 67).

[671] For an account of the industrial struggle between the two companies in the late 1990s and their specific technological developments, see Donovan, *Replay*, pp. 273-279.

globally-pioneering and now-archetypal nature of Japanese game design.[672] Morley and Robins discuss the perceived 'Japan Panic' in the games industry as Japan took American innovations and improved them, then sold them back to America.[673] Kline argues that in the 1990s, the game industry became truly global as issues of national ownership became blurred by collaborations and company integrations.[674] In spite of Kohler's argument for the cultural idiosyncracy of Japanese games and their unique industrial production circumstances, criticism has tended to take a view of videogames couched in a perspective of globalisation and hybridity, where a transnational games industry is not demarcated by cultural borders.

There are exceptions that have addressed issues of cultural specificity in relation to Japanese videogames. In *Millennial Monsters,* Anne Allison discusses the *Pokémon* game series (beginning with *Pokémon Blue,* Nintendo, 1996) as part of the franchise's successful *media mix* within the context of contemporary Japanese nomadicism and consumer culture.[675] Her findings will provide useful framework for my discussion of videogames in relation to debates around the commodification of childhood in Japan in Chapter Seven. Patrick Galbraith's work on *eroge* dating simulations employs Allison's observations on the incorporation of technology into everyday Japanese life in order to assess the relationship between the *otaku* player and the simulated *shōjo* characters with whom the player interacts.[676]

Picard and Nitsche discuss horror games and briefly situate examples within the context of modern Japanese horror cinema, influences from the West, traditional Japanese ghost stories and classical Japanese cinema.[677] David Surman has commented on the art of Japanese designer Takeshi Murakami and the 'superflat' style found in *Katamari Damacy* (Namco, 2004) and elsewhere as possessing intrinsically Japanese

---

[672] Chris Kohler, *Power Up: How Japanese Games Gave the World an Extra Life,* (Indianapolis, IND: BradyGames, 2004).

[673] David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries,* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 168.

[674] Stephen Kline, Nick Dyer-Witherford and Grieg de Peuter, eds., *Digital Play: The Interaction of Technology, Culture and Marketing* (Montreal, London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), p. 122-123.

[675] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* pp. 192-233.

[676] Patrick Galbraith, '*Moe* and the Potential of Fantasy in Post-Millennial Japan', *EJCJS* (2009)*,* available at: <http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/2009/Galbraith.html>, [accessed 24.7.2013].

[677] Martin Picard, 'Haunting Backgrounds: Transnationality and Intermediality in Japanese Survival Horror Video Games', in *Horror Video Games: Essays on the Fusion of Fear and Play*, ed. by Bernard Perron, (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2009), pp. 95-120; Michael Nitsche,'Complete Horror in Fatal Frame', in same, pp. 200-219 (p. 216).

aesthetic qualities.[678] Eskelinen has made the brief suggestion that the study of Japanese games in their cultural context could be focused on the unique Far Eastern aesthetic traditions as they vary from Western ones.[679] Similarly, Jenkins notes the consonance between Japanese platform adventure games and traditional Japanese scroll art, observing that Japanese scroll paintings map the passing of the seasons onto an unfolding space, and that in *Super Mario Bros* (Nintendo, 1985). and other games which are said to 'scroll' from left to right in a manner of unrolling, the avatar traverses seasonally-differentiated levels.[680]

William Huber, in a collection of fragmentary points, has suggested some of the aesthetic idiosyncracies of the Japanese videogame, noting the similarities between the static camera of *eroge* dating sims and the work of director Ozu Yasujiro in their representations of the Japanese domestic space and quotidian routine.[681] Huber also argues that aesthetic performance is rewarded in the Japanese videogame, as in several games, acquiring sets of objects or fulfilling certain play criteria not essential to the 'completion' of the game is nonetheless rewarded with additional video sequences or features.[682]

There is no extant work that has specifically addressed the ubiquity of the adolescent protagonist/avatar of Japanese videogames, nor the topos of wandering as it relates to contemporary Japanese culture and other popular cultural forms such as *anime*. Compared to Film Studies, relatively little has been done to identify structural, thematic or aesthetic qualities in videogames that may be usefully understood in conjunction with a range of specific socio-historic cultural production contexts.

Game Studies: Narrative and Interactivity

To date, scholarship in Game Studies has particularly addressed issues of narrative and interactivity; the creation and negotiation of virtual space; the uniqueness

---

[678] David Surman, 'Notes on Superflat and Its Expression in Videogames', in *Refractory: A Journal of Entertainment Media*, Vol. 13, (2008), available at: <http://blogs.arts.unimelb.edu.au/refractory/2008/05/23/notes-on-superflat-and-its-expression-in-videogames-david-surman/> [accessed on 8.2.2011].
[679] Markku Eskelinen, 'Towards Computer Game Studies', in *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance and Game*, ed. by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 35-44 (p. 38).
[680] Henry Jenkins, 'Game Design as Narrative Architecture', in *First Person*, ed. by Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan, p.122.
[681] William Huber, 'Some Notes on Aesthetics in Japanese Videogames', in *Videogames and Art*, ed. by Andy Clarke and Grethe Mitchell (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2007), pp. 211-218.
[682] William Huber, 'Some Notes', in *Videogames and Art*, ed. by Clarke and Mitchell, p. 213.

of videogames as a medium; and whether games address an implicitly gendered player (usually male).

Early debates in Game Studies regarding the most appropriate manner in which to critically consider videogames were focused on commentary on games-as-narratives and as a vehicle for the delivery of story through representational elements ('narratology') and games as a unique entity in which play dynamic is privileged over representation ('ludology'). Ewan Kirkland's reading of extant criticism is that many writers take issue with games-as-narratives owing to temporality and the fact that immersion and interactivity seem to be antithetical.[683] Jesper Juul suggests that narrative may be separate from, or is contradictory to, the 'computer-game-ness' of a game.[684] Ernest Adams states outright that any notion of interactivity directly opposes narrative, where narrative is authorially-inscribed and interactivity 'depends on the player for motive power'.[685] Similarly for Juul, a rejection of narratalogical analysis is beneficial as that method may intrinsically avoid the issue of that which makes videogames a unique medium, which he sees as 'rules, goals, player activity, the projection of the player's actions into the game world, the way the game defines the possible actions of the player'.[686] My analysis of videogames in the following chapters intends to interact and be compatible with both general terms as it considers elements in both the storyline communicated to the player and the interactive cause-and-effect of player input as intrinsically ideologically interwoven.

As a discipline, Game Studies developed from an application of existing interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks. Barry Atkins argued that videogames can be analysed as a form of narrative fiction like films, television and novels owing to the presence of filmic narrative strategies, implied cameras and cutscenes.[687] Krzywinska and King investigated the applicability of Film Studies methodologies, owing to comparable formal aspects such as cut-scenes, POV, mise-en-scene, iconography,

---

[683] See Ewan Kirkland, 'Storytelling in Survival Horror Videogames', in *Horror Video Games*, ed. by Bernard Perron, pp. 62-78 (p. 65).
[684] Jesper Juul, 'A Clash between Game and Narrative', paper presented at DAC (Digital Arts and Culture) conference (1999), transcript available at: <www.jesperjuul.dk> [accessed 4.9.13].
[685] Ernest Adams, 'Three Problems for Interactive Storytellers', (1999), available at: <http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/3414/the_designers_notebook_three_.php> [accessed 8.9.2013].
[686] Jesper Juul, 'Games Telling stories -A Brief Note on Games and Narratives', in *Game Studies 1.1* (2001), available at: <http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/juul-gts/> [accessed 8.9.2013].
[687] Barry Atkins, *More Than a Game: The Computer Game as Fictional Form*, (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 51.

genre, sound, narrative and spectacle.[688] However, they assert the limitation of this approach as player input is required to 'mobilise the characters'.[689] Espen Aarseth similarly argues that the 'game gaze' is different to the 'cinema gaze,' suggesting that visual pleasure is subordinate to 'kinaesthetic, functional and cognitive pleasures'.[690] For Julian Kucklich, the use of a literature studies methodology is problematic, as games may not have a fixed meaning, but a breadth of meanings dependent on the way the game is played.[691]

A problem area within these discussions of 'narrative' is the production of meaning at the conjunction between player and game text as distinct from that which may be construed as author/designer-inscribed. Frasca admits that there is one 'correct' path through certain games, which he expresses as comprised of a strict 'series of functions performed'.[692] Similarly, Simon Egenfeldt-Nielsen has it that videogame narrative constitutes 'a scripted succession of events that the player has to perform in a specific order'.[693]

Most pertinently, Kirkland suggests that play becomes 'a process of storytelling'.[694] His view asserts the privileging of aesthetic considerations for the adept player of horror games, where 'optimum gameplay produces an audio-visual effect which most closely approximates narrative cinema'.[695] He also observes the difference for players between sought-after 'masterful' performances/play and undesirable 'messy ones with errors'.[696] Barry Atkins considers videogames as a new form of fiction, putting forward the notion of an 'ideal reader' who might progress without error

---

[688] Geoff King and Tanya Kryzwinska, 'Film Studies and Digital Games', in *Understanding Digital Games*, ed. by Jason Rutter and Jo Bryce (London: Sage, 2006), pp. 112-128.

[689] Geoff King and Tanya Kryzwinska, 'Film Studies and Digital Games', in *Understanding Digital Games*, ed. by Rutter and Bryce, p. 127.

[690] Espen Aarseth, 'Genre Trouble: Narrativism and the Art of Simulation', in *First Person,* ed. by Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan, pp. 145-155 (p. 52).

[691] Julian Kucklich, 'Literary Theory and Digital Games', in *Understanding Digital Games*, ed. by Rutter and Bryce, pp. 95-111 (p. 104).

[692] Gonzalo Frasca, 'Ludology Meets Narratology: Similitude and Difference between (video)games and narrative', (1999), available at: <www.ludology.org/articles/ludology.htm> [accessed 8.9.2013].

[693] Simon Egenfeldt-Nielsen, *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), p. 172.

[694] Ewan Kirkland, 'Survival Horror Videogames', in *Horror Video Games*, ed. by Perron, p. 65.

[695] Ewan Kirkland, 'Survival Horror Videogames', in *Horror Video Games*, ed. by Perron, p. 69.

[696] Ewan Kirkland, 'Survival Horror Videogames', in *Horror Video Games*, ed. by Perron, p. 73.

through game and storyline.[697] Juul acknowledges similarly that they may be an 'ideal sequence' for players to discern and follow to optimally complete a game.[698]

Further, Klevjer puts forward the authorial concept of the 'implied designer' who has inscribed an optimal route adhered to via expert play.[699] He states that narrative occurs both at the level of the creation of imaginary narrative environments and story points, then also within actual played game events, the two not opposing one another but enforcing values and viewpoints and encouraging immersion for the player.[700] Jenkins confirms this through observation of the continual authorial encouragement of the player through graphical signposting towards 'narratively salient spaces'.[701]

I will therefore take on board Kirkland's view, approaching videogames from the perspective of a skillful player who attempts to perform without aesthetic errors or unnecessary clumsiness, while acknowledging the initial potential for error and the possibility for player-determined play outside of the inscribed goals required to progress. This skillful player, of course, will begin as a novice who must familiarise themselves with individual games' rules and idiosyncrasy, regardless of familiarity with the conventions of similar games. I shall be mindful of Klevjer's point that embedded storyline and player actions bolster one another narratively and ideologically, as values within the story become driving forces behind player comprehension of in-game events and vice versa.

I am concerned in Chapter Nine with the representation of adolescence within 'cut-scenes' (non-interactive, usually spectacular fully-animated sequences watched by the player that might deliver key story points or depict narrative events) and their place in the structure of gameplay. Klevjer responds to writers he sees as preoccupied with 'radical ludology' that dismiss the value or import of cut-scenes, arguing that they provide a 'unifying logic' and a substantive reward for the performance of the player.[702] My analysis will approach the relationship between a game's story/character and ludic elements with this notion in mind, identifying causal links between player behaviour

---

697 Atkins, *More Than a Game*, p. 30.
698 Jesper Juul 'Games Telling Stories - A Brief Note on Games and Narratives', *Game Studies 1.1*, (2001), available at: <http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/juul-gts/> [accessed 8.9.13].
699 Rune Klevjer 'In Defence of Cutscenes', in *Computer Games and Digital Cultures Conference Proceedings*, ed. by Frans Mayra (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2002), also available at: <www.digra.org/dl/db/05164.50328> [accessed 8.9.13] p. 198.
700 Rune Klevjer, 'In Defence of Cutscenes', in *Computer Games and Digital Cultures*, ed. by Mayra, p. 199.
701 Henry Jenkins, 'Game Design as Narrative Architecture', in *First Person*, ed. by Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan, pp. 118-130, (p. 128).
702 Rune Klevjer, 'In Defence of Cutscenes', in *Computer Games and Digital Cultures Conference Proceedings*, ed. by Mayra, pp. 191-195.

and representational aspects such as imagery and plot. Discussion of the *Final Fantasy* series in Chapter Nine will particularly consider the role of cut-scenes in the structure of play and the ways in which the communicating of storyline can be considered a reward for successful progress through play.

While 'narrative' may be construed as the individual experience of a game in which we acknowledge trial-and-error, mistakes and individual strategy as components, games often encourage a fluid, unbroken series of actions. There are concealed, discoverable incentives, for example, in Japanese games *Super Metroid* (Nintendo, 1994), *Resident Evil II* (Capcom, 1998) and *Final Fantasy IX* (Square, 2000) for the completion of the game within specific parameters. Completing the game within a concealed and unspecified time limit in these cases yields accolade and the obtaining of helpful items that can be used when re-playing the game. This necessitates knowledge of the game's peculiarities and the intricacies of the game-world, playing without substantive error in order to complete the game within these conditions. Awareness of production context and the layered expectations and interactions available to competent players impact upon the player's consumption of a game text. As David Surman has discussed in relation to fighting games, the player's comprehension of the gameplay principles and expectations underpinning specific genres or styles of game results in an intertextual experience where consumption is determined and enhanced through knowledge of a range of texts:

> '…quality of gameplay (how well a gamer is performing in the game) determines both text and context; the matter of the game (e.g. areas unlocked techniques achieved) and the patterns characterizing its consumption (in which cultural context one is situated as a gamer…)'[703]

While advanced knowledge can impact upon a player's game experience, there are hierarchies of interaction available within each game text. Aarseth's concept of the 'ergodic', meaning 'work path', denotes those elements in any text, interactive or otherwise, which require 'non-trivial' effort.[704] Regarding games, Eskelinen argues that the player either cannot or does not have to experience all potential combinations of

---

[703] David Surman, 'Pleasure, Spectacle and Reward in Capcom's Street Fighter Series', in *Videogame, Player, Text*, ed. by Barry Atkins and Tanya Krzywinska (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 204-221 (p. 204).
[704] Espen Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Maryland, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 1.

actions and events that a game offers, as they 'differ in their ergodic importance'.[705] While this may be accurate, many Japanese videogames are repetitive, particularly regarding spatial exploration and material acquisition. The player of *Final Fantasy* or *Super Metroid*, for example, may not access every single environment the expansive game offers, but these spaces only provide further objects to collect and virtual space to investigate, adding little to existing discourse.

In videogames, 'genre' can refer both to the *style* of gameplay and the *setting* at the representational level. Aphra Kerr has commented that serious study of genre in videogames needs to be carried out.[706] Genre-specific collections such as Perron's *Horror Video Games* have begun to address that issue.[707] Mark Wolf has investigated videogame genre assumptions and tropes, providing definition of the generic categories referred to in this chapter.[708] Wolf affirms that genre terminology in videogames can be ascribed owing to interactive elements, for example, 'shoot em up' or 'maze'.[709] Discussing 'survival horror' games, Kirkland points out that, 'reduced to formal aspect of maze navigation there is no horror, nor is there survival' and that it is through narrative, representation and characterisation that these are created.[710] My discussion will refer to these representational elements as well as formal and ludic qualities in its grouping of games within genre terms, particularly focusing on action-adventure games and the *Final Fantasy* series of role-playing games as these are arguably most invested in the adolescent negotiation of space.

The Mechanics of Play: Immersion, Interactivity, Agency and Presence

Central to my investigations in this section is the assertion that videogames offer an immersive experience in which the player suspends disbelief despite the inherent knowledge that the game is artificial, even when graphically and sonically crude or demonstrative of its synthetic nature. Analysis will operate under the assumption of a

---

[705] Markku Eskelinen, 'The Gaming Situation', in *Game Studies 1.1* (2001), available at: <www.gamestudies.org/0101/eskelinen/> [accessed 8.2.2011].

[706] Aphra Kerr, *The Business and Culture of Digital Games: Gamework/Gameplay* (London: Sage, 2006), p. 39.

[707] Bernard Perron, ed., *Horror Video Games: Essays on the Fusion of Fear and Play* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2009).

[708] Mark J.P Wolf, *The Medium of the Video Game* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001), pp. 116-134.

[709] Wolf, *The Medium of the Video Game*, p. 16.

[710] Ewan Kirkland, 'Survival Horror Videogames', in *Horror Video Games*, ed. by Perron, p. 63.

player-text dynamic which might include some or all of the compatible elements of 'identification', 'immersion', 'agency', 'engagement' and 'presence', which I will now introduce.

Scholars have put forward mechanics through which a videogame engages the player in an experience that, through interactivity, is highly involving. The link between the player's gaze, which determines correct courses of action, and physical input, which carries out that action on the game space, strongly suggest a dynamic of power and influence, and in these terms David Surman has considered the player-character as constituting a 'surrogate second-self'.[711]

According to Scott McCloud, animated characters' simplified abstraction and lack of detail allow viewers to more strongly identify with them than realistic, detailed characters, experienced as 'a vacuum into which our identity and awareness is pulled... we don't just observe, we become it'. [712] Stephen Poole extends this view to videogame avatars, and while in his view players generally came to enjoy more realistic characters at the millennium, they weren't 'too real', their features still abstracted, open representations on which to imprint the self.[713]

Janet Murray, in the seminal work on 'cybertexts' or interactive textual media, *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, refers to agency, which she defines in explicit terms relating to player/reader control and influence as 'the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices'.[714] Concurrent to notions of agency is the cybertext/videogame's potential for transformation, where the player who is 'eager for masquerade,' is provided with an environment for role-playing by the technological apparatus.[715]

Alison McMahan's enquiry into player involvement identifies immersion, engagement and presence as key factors. 'Immersion' can occur owing to player enjoyment at the diegetic level of storyline in addition to strategy and pleasure experienced from the game's interactivity.[716] Immersion is defined by Janet Murray as

---

[711] David Surman, 'Pleasure, Spectacle and Reward in Capcom's Street Fighter Series', in *Videogame, Player, Text*, ed. by Barry Atkins and Tanya Krzywinska (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 204-221 (p. 211).
[712] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), p. 36.
[713] Stephen Poole, *Trigger Happy: The Inner Life of Videogames* (London: 4th Estate, 2000), pp. 152-153.
[714] Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (New York, London: Free Press, 1997), p. 126.
[715] Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck,* p. 154.
[716] Alison McMahan, 'Immersion, Engagement and Presence: A Method for Analyzing 3-D Video Games', in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. by Mark J.P Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York, London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 67-86 (p. 68).

the sensation of an experience that 'takes over our whole perceptual apparatus,' or which could be described as being 'surrounded by a completely other reality'.[717] The concept of engagement describes the 'nondiegetic level of devising a winning (or spectacular) strategy'.[718] Presence is, according to Steuer, the 'referencing of our perceptions to an external space beyond the limits of the sensory organs themselves,' in which perception is mediated by communication technology, and as a result, telepresence is the mediated perception of an environment.[719] Marie-Laure Ryan states that it is presence that leads to the perception of 'what is made of information as being material'.[720]

The interactive nature of the videogame and the physical awareness the player has of the control system has been argued as either an encouragement or block to player immersion and identification. Stephen Poole describes the relationship between the simple button-press and the resultant complex performance of actions by the avatar as a 'joyously exaggerated sense of control, or amplification of input'.[721] While Poole suggests that complex input distances the player from the game-world as an immersive space through awareness of the actual physical self, Surman more persuasively argues that it encourages the 'bodily doubling of character and player,' and as a result bolsters a dynamic of identification.[722] Surman considers a reward for dextrous play in the Japanese martial arts game *Street Fighter II* (Capcom, 1991) as the avatar's performance of complex behaviour, a 'fantastic referent' to the player's input, with play requiring the hands to operate separately to the eye in order to maintain focus on the fast-paced on-screen events, leading to the 'spectacular expression of "doing without looking"'.[723] In an ideal situation, the gaze is not on the player's own hands or the control system, but on the screen, and pleasurably detailed visuals and dramatic sound effects are presented as an involving reward for success that confirms 'the player's

---

[717] Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck,* pp. 98-99.
[718] McMahan, 'Immersion, Engagement and Presence', in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, pp. 67-86 (p. 69).
[719] Jonathan Steuer, 'Defining Virtual Reality: Dimensions Determining Telepresence', in *Journal of Communication,* Vol. 42, No. 4 (Autumn 1992), available at: <http://www.cybertherapy.info/pages/telepresence.pdf> [accessed 8.9.13], 73-93.
[720] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media,* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 67-68.
[721] Poole, *Trigger Happy*, p. 160.
[722] David Surman, 'Pleasure, Spectacle' in *Videogame, Player, Text*, ed. by Atkins and Krzywinska, p. 219.
[723] David Surman, 'Pleasure, Spectacle', in *Videogame, Player, Text*, ed. by Atkins and Krzywinska, p. 210.

physical control over the game system'.[724] Complex performance by the player registers as even more complex and lavish on-screen, reinforcing the relationship between avatar and player and encouraging identification.

These approaches to the dynamic of performance will be useful in the following three chapters when considering the construction of the player's interactions with the adolescent avatar of Japanese videogames. While my focus in on the representation of adolescents, it is also important to consider the opportunities for mobilizing avatars afforded to the player of the games being discussed. Observing the variety of interactions between player and avatar, and the outcomes of player input, can give an understanding of the relationship between teenager and game environment.

Videogames and Gender

In Chapter Eight I will examine videogame representation of the relationship between the adolescent *shōjo* and *shōnen* in conjunction with debates around the *otaku* in contemporary Japan, with a focus on the prioritisation of *moe* characteristics in depictions of the female teenager. I will here explore the extent to which gender might be seen to impact upon avatar representations in the Japanese videogame.

In response to a widely-felt presumption that videogame production and playing are male-dominated domains, the essay collections *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat* and *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat* focus specifically on the representation of gender in videogames, female players and female games designers.[725] According to Rebecca Eisenberg in 1998, the number of female players of Japanese games domestically accounted for roughly 40% of players nationwide, and that during the 1990s games distributors sought out 'crossover' products designed to appeal to both genders.[726] *Otaku* scholar Mizuko Ito writes that many Japanese games, including the *Final Fantasy* series, incorporate *kawaii*/cute elements specifically to appeal to a female

---

[724] David Surman, 'Pleasure, Spectacle', in *Videogame, Player, Text*, ed. by Atkins and Krzywinska, p. 218.

[725] Justine Cassell and Henry Jenkins, eds., *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT press, 1998); Yasmin Kafai, Carrie Heeter and Jill Denner, eds., *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2008).

[726] Rebecca L. Eisenberg, 'Girl Games: Adventures in Lip-Gloss', (1998), available at: <http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/3252/girl_games_adventures_in_lip_gloss.php> [accessed 15.8.13].

sensibility.[727] While she asserts that gender politics are 'resilient' in Japan, she identifies a crossover appeal owing to this inclusion of cuteness.[728]

King and Krzywinska have noted the prevalence of game examples in which male avatars are active explorers and non-playable female characters are passive, desirable and presented as 'objects of the male gaze'.[729] Studies including those by Jenkins, Kinder, Skirrow and Kirkland have discussed videogame environments as gendered play-spaces. Marsha Kinder's influential early study of Nintendo games of the 1980s argues that the implied player is male, and that female players and characters were excluded.[730] Skirrow argued in 1986 that contemporary game environments represented maternal spaces to be traversed and conquered by both male avatar and player.[731] For Kirkland, Barbara Creed's work on the 'monstrous-feminine' in horror film provides a useful contextual approach when considering the contested nature of hostile videogame space in terms of femininity and horror.[732]

Mia Consalvo's analysis of sexual themes in videogames finds that romance between men and women is 'expected, desired and to be sought out'.[733] She argues from the example of *Final Fantasy IX* that female characters must be continually protected and rescued by men, and male romantic pursuit of women followed through, acknowledging, however, that this may not be of prime importance to the player, who is perhaps more likely to be motivated by 'central actions of exploration, fighting, and general advancement'.[734]

In Chapters Eight and Nine I will contribute to these debates through a discursive focus on the representation of the *shōjo* in light of these observations on the gender dynamic at work within Japanese videogame texts. To what extent is the *shōnen* avatar

[727]Mizuko Ito, 'Gender Dynamics', in *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat*, ed. by Kafai et al., p. 97.

[728]Mizuko Ito, 'Gender Dynamics', in *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat*, ed. by Kafai et al., p. 97.

[729] Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska, *Tomb Raiders and Space Invaders: Videogame Forms and Contexts* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 179.

[730] Marsha Kinder, *Playing With Power in Movies, Television and Video Games* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).

[731] Gillian Skirrow, 'Hellivision: An Analysis of Video Games', in *High Theory/Low Culture: Analysing Popular Television and Film*, ed. by Colin MacCabe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 115-142.

[732] Ewan Kirkland, 'Maternal Engulfment in Horror Videogames' in *Inter-Disciplinary* Journal, (2009), available at: <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/Kirkland-paper.pdf> [accessed 8.8.13].

[733] Mia Consalvo, 'Hot Dates and Fairytale Romances: Studying Sexuality in Video Games', in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, pp. 171-194 (p. 190).

[734] Mia Consalvo, 'Hot Dates', in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, p. 190.

presented in terms of activity in relation to a passive female teenager? What consonance can we observe between *shōjo* representations in *anime* and those found in videogames? Discussion will also consider the relationship between the *shōjo*, the maternal body and the gameworld spaces of action-adventure and role-playing games.

Videogames and Space

The negotiation of space through the act of wandering by the adolescent avatar is of crucial significance to analysis of videogames in this section as a central activity within the mechanics of play. Wolf has described the importance in the videogame of the creation and implication of space, noting the ways in which games prioritise the depiction of characters' relationships to illusory multiple planes.[735] Relying on precedents in film and television, the videogame uses both 'on-screen and off-screen space in the creation of a diegetic world'.[736] On distinguishing between game types, Aarseth writes that 'the classification of a computer game can be based on how it represents or, perhaps, implements space'.[737]

Jenkins asserts that where the 'dominant paradigm' in film narrative is character, with story structure largely determined by character psychology, in games it is space. As game conflicts and motivations are largely rooted in the spatial, he considers game designers 'narrative architects' as opposed to storytellers.[738] Babic similarly states that 'more than time, events, and goals, almost all computer games celebrate and explore spatial representation as their central theme.'[739]

In Fuller and Jenkins' consideration of 1980s games as metaphors of colonisation, they note that in the seminal Japanese games *Mega Man* (Capcom, 1987) and *Super Mario Bros.* there is 'a constant struggle for desirable spaces' and a fluid, ever-moving

---

[735] Wolf, *The Medium of the Video Game*, pp. 51-75.

[736] Wolf, *The Medium of the Video Game*, pp. 51-52.

[737] Espen Aarseth, 'Allegories of Space: The Question of Spatiality in Computer Games', in *Space Time Play: Computer Games, Architecture and Urbanism: The Next Level*, ed. by Frederich Von Borries, Steffen P. Walz, and Matthias Böttger (Basel, Boston: Birkhauser, 2007), pp. 44-47 (p. 44).

[738] Henry Jenkins, 'Game Design as Narrative Architecture', in *First Person*, ed. by Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan, p. 121.

[739] Edvin Babic, 'On the Liberation of Space in Computer Games' in *Eludamos: Journal for Computer Games Culture*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (2007), available at: <http://www.eludamos.org/index.php/eludamos/article/view/4> [accessed 8.9.13].

division between 'controlled and uncontrolled space'.[740] Writing ten years later, Jenkins still sees the project of games to be the 'struggle to explore, map, and master contested spaces'.[741] His conclusion about this emphasis on spatiality is that the videogame provides compensatory replacement for actual play spaces in modern restrictive environments, offering a 'way to respond to domestic confinement'.[742] The videogame allows 'boys to gradually develop their mastery over the entire digital realm, securing their future access to spaces by passing goal posts or finding warp zones'.[743] For Jenkins, the 'central virtues' of videogame culture are mastery (skills) and self-control (dexterity).[744]

Videogame Genres and Case Studies

As case studies in my examination of the representation of the wandering adolescent in Japanese videogames I have selected some of the most popular and widely-circulated examples from the industry's dominant genres, with a view to particularly prominent, groundbreaking texts, as well as less popular texts that have nonetheless proven influential for their gameplay dynamics and representational qualities. My focus is on games played at home on games consoles using the television or monitor as a separate display unit, where software is purchased in the form of cartridges and discs, and games played on portable handheld machines.

To provide context, the best-selling games of all time in Japan are the *Pokémon* series, whose first incarnation on the handheld Nintendo GameBoy system sold 7.8 million copies in the late 1990s.[745] A game is generally considered to be a domestic Japanese success if it sells in excess of a million copies, according to leading games

---

[740] Henry Jenkins and Margaret Fuller, 'Nintendo and New World Travel Writing', in *CyberSociety: Computer-mediated Communication and Community*, ed. by Steve Jones (London: Sage Publications, 1995), pp. 57-72 (p. 70).

[741] Henry Jenkins, 'Game Design as Narrative Architecture', in *First Person*, ed. by Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan, p. 122.

[742] Henry Jenkins, '"Complete Freedom of Movement": Video Games as Gendered Play Spaces', in *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*, ed. by Cassell and Jenkins, pp. 262-297, (p. 266).

[743] Henry Jenkins, 'Complete Freedom', in *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*, ed. by Cassell and Jenkins, p. 271.

[744] Jenkins, 'Complete Freedom', in *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*, ed. by Cassell and Jenkins, p. 271.

[745] 'Japan's 30 Best-Selling Video Games of all time', *Rocketnews24.com* (2012), available at: <http://en.rocketnews24.com/2012/07/08/japans-best-selling-video-games-of-all-time/> [accessed 23.8.13].

developer Capcom.[746] A game is considered to have low sales dependent on a variety of case-specific factors including industry projection and performance expectation, coupled with manufacture and advertising costs but, for example, domestic sales of 160,000 for the game *Ico* (Sony Computer Entertainment, 2001) on the PlayStation 2 console were considered low.[747]

Pokémon and the Commodification of Childhood in Contemporary Japan

In the *Pokémon* videogames, the top-selling game series in Japan of all-time, the child avatar roams the countryside of a fantasy world seeking out 'pocket monsters' with which to do battle, consequently acquiring them as part of his collection. Exhibiting consonance with discourses of real world fad-orientation, in the narrative world of the *Pokémon* videogame and *anime* series, it is the expected cultural norm for older children and teenagers to participate to some degree in the acquisition of the monsters that roam the countryside, and socialising centres entirely around discussion of Pokémon themselves.

Tajiri Satoshi, designer of the first Nintendo GameBoy iteration, intended *Pokémon* to be interactive and promote communication between friends.[748] He sought to respond to the difficulties of life for children in contemporary Japan as he saw them, with emphasis on studying, peforming and competing leading to the diminishment of 'space and time for play'.[749] With the handheld, portable *Pokémon* experience, children were offered a virtual fantasy space that promoted acquisition and exchange of commodified *kawaii* monsters with peers.

While Anne Allison's extensive analysis of the phenomenon explores more explicitly the cultures of domestic and transnational consumption around the texts, rather than undertaking an analysis of the structures of play and representation in videogames, her analysis provides a framework in this regard within which to develop a reading of the topos of teenage wandering at a conjunction with discourse around the commodification of adolescence. Contrary to Tajiri's original conception of the game's

---

[746] 'Capcom Japan Investor Relations', *Capcom.co.jp* (2013), available at: <http://www.capcom.co.jp/ir/english/business/million.html> [accessed 12.8.13].

[747] Chris Kohler, 'The Obscure Cult Game that's Secretly Inspiring Everything', *Wired.com* (2013), available at: http://www.wired.com/gamelife/2013/09/ico/ [accessed 13.9.13].

[748] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 203.

[749] Anne Allison, 'New Age Fetishes', in *Japan After Japan*, ed. by Harootunian and Yoda, p. 334.

social function, Allison's observations of real world Japanese child players are that they appear atomised and detached, their parents uninterested.[750]

With the title *Millennial Monsters*, Allison associates the popularity of *Pokémon* with the turbulent contemporary economic and social conditions of childhood and adolescence, where 'monsters' refers both to the 'pocket monsters' themselves and to the antisocial youth depicted in the media.[751] She describes a 'proximity of passions' between violence and the appealingly *kawaii* characters, and states that *Pokémon* conceals the attribution of power to the child behind a benevolent veneer.[752] Addressing *Pokémon*'s capitalist system of acquisition, Allison describes its appeal to children as promising, 'corrective to [a] kind of gloomy existence, a route out of atomistic isolation'.[753] *Pokémon* 'perpetuates tendencies of capitalism', which Allison states firmly are 'increased alienation, atomisation and dehumanisation'.[754]

Action-Adventure Games: *The Legend of Zelda*

In Chapters Six and Seven I will examine examples of 'action-adventure' games in the context of debates around the commodification of childhood in the former, and the *otaku* in the latter. The genre is broadly defined by Donovan as 'anything that mixes the story and puzzle-solving elements of adventure games with the action of the arcades'.[755] Action-adventure games are, broadly, set in game-worlds comprising rooms, locations or interconnecting screens, with multiple steps required to fulfill individual goals such as locating a key that will open a door to a room which contains an object required at a later point in the game.[756] Wolf summarises a key characteristic of 'adventure' games, from which the action-adventure derives, as the exploration of game-world locales where, despite certain limitations to progress, a 'certain amount of diegetic space' can be investigated in a given instance.[757] Distinguished from adventure games, which do not require precision timed responses to stimuli from the player, the action-adventure game incorporates elements of time-sensitive and dexterous activity,

---

[750] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 192.
[751] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 76.
[752] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 233.
[753] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 218.
[754] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 232.
[755] Donovan, *Replay*, p. 390.
[756] Wolf, *The Medium of the Video Game*, p. 118.
[757] Wolf, *The Medium of the Video Game*, p. 118.

for example jumping between platforms or dispatching attackers. Jenkins has referred to the typically expansive game space explored in the action-adventure game as 'an isolated world far removed from domestic space or adult supervision ... for people who refuse to bow before the pressures of the civilizing process'.[758]

The Japanese *Metroid* (Nintendo, 1986), *Legend of Zelda* (Nintendo, 1986) and *Castlevania* series are the globally pioneering and now-archetypal game series in the action-adventure style, the former located in hyper-technological science fiction and the others in a pre-modern, quasi-medieval fantasy milieu. Successive games in each series possessed an increased complexity within the game-world that allowed the player to explore several areas of the terrain at any one point. Progress is essentially structurally linear, with the majority of areas only accessible in a set order built into the game's design (for example, a locked door obstructs progress and can only be opened with a key gained by completing a specific predetermined task), but the illusion created for the player is of an expansive, freely negotiable game space.

Tristan Donovan discusses the design and production of *Zelda* games, explaining Miyamoto Shigeru's intentions that with *Zelda* he sought to recreate his childhood in the countryside, with the game's focus on wandering in the pastoral landscape designed to 'recapture the excitement and awe he felt as a child while wandering the countryside and never knowing what he would discover. He wanted players to experience the freedom of exploration and to encounter "amazing things"'.[759] *Zelda* thus emerged as an action-adventure game inspired by the lengthy play-time and expansive game-worlds of Role-Playing Games (discussed below) but replacing statistical management and turn-based combat with real-time responses requiring the dexterity of an arcade action game.

The Legend of Zelda series has consistently been one of the top-selling games franchises both in Japan and worldwide since the first game's release in 1986 on the Nintendo Entertainment System. In 1998, *Ocarina of Time* sold 7.60 million copies globally, while in 2002 *The Wind Waker* sold 3.07 million.[760] I have chosen to focus on *The Wind Waker*, a game that exemplifies the structural and representational characteristics of the series and the action-adventure game type as a whole.[761]

---

[758] Jenkins, 'Complete Freedom', in *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*, ed. by Cassell and Jenkins, p. 279.
[759] Donovan, *Replay*, p. 162.
[760] For officially reported figures see 'Japandemonium' on *RPGamer.com,* available at: <http://www.rpgamer.com/news/japan/rp033104.html> [accessed 8.9.2013].
[761] See Mark J.P. Wolf (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Videogames: The Culture, Technology and Art of Gaming* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2012)*,* pp. 360-365. For a summary of *The Legend of*

In Chapter Eight I have chosen to examine the action-adventure games *Ico* and *Lost in Blue* (Konami, 2005). While *Ico* was not comparatively a commercial success (160,000 copies in Japan) it is now recognised as groundbreaking and influential for both its stylistic qualities and gameplay dynamic, according to leading scholar of Japanese videogames Chris Kohler.[762] The game has captured the attention of games critics and scholars in the West who have been attracted to its groundbreaking minimalist and sepia-tone aesthetic, unique play structure and emotionally resonant storyline.[763] *Ico* pioneered the structure in which a male avatar guides a passive female character through the game-world in an *amae* dynamic of co-dependency. This play device of female adolescent nurture and protection, already present in niche *eroge* dating simulations, has been since incorporated into high profile mainstream videogames including *Resident Evil 4* (Capcom, 2005).[764]

Lost in Blue was similarly innovative for its use of the Nintendo DS' touch screen control system and dual screen display, and for the way in which it combined RPG elements of statistical manipulation and the dynamic of male nurture over a frail *shōjo*. Building on analysis of commodity fetishism in the preceding chapter, and discussion of the teenager in relation to space in *anime* in Chapter Five, I am particularly interested in the game's uniquely combined interests in adolescent landscape exploration, material acquisition and monitoring of the teenage girl. For these reasons, I will explore the ways in which these two games exemplify and manifest core characteristics associated with *otaku* behaviour and response, particularly in relation to depictions of adolescent femininity.

Role-Playing Games: *Final Fantasy*

Zelda series' significance within the global videogame industry see Luke Cuddy, 'Setting Up the Game' in in *The Legend of Zelda and Philosophy*, ed. by Luke Cuddy (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2009), pp. xi-xviii; See other essays in that book for discussions of *The Wind Waker* as exemplifying the series' structure and style, e.g. Jonathan Frome 'Why Do We Care Whether Link Saves the Princess?', pp. 3-16; Douglas Wilson 'Look Before You Warp', pp. 17-28.

[762] Chris Kohler, 'The Obscure Cult Game that's Secretly Inspiring Everything', *Wired.com* (2013), available at: http://www.wired.com/gamelife/2013/09/ico/ [accessed 13.9.13].

[763] See e.g. King and Krzywinska, *Tomb Raiders and Space Invaders,* p. 179; Andreas Gregerson and Torben Grodal, 'Embodiment and Interface', in *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, ed. by Mark Wolf and Bernard Perron, (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 65-84; Aki Jarvinen, 'Understanding Video Games as Emotional Experiences', in *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, pp. 85-108.

[764] *Resident Evil 4* sold over 2 million units on PlayStation 2, see 'Capcom Japan Investor Relations', *Capcom.co.jp* (2013)*,* available at:
<http://www.capcom.co.jp/ir/english/business/million.html> [accessed 12.8.13].

In Chapter Nine I will discuss the *Final Fantasy* series, with particular focus on *Final Fantasy VII* as a case study that exemplifies the complex and time-consuming Role-Playing Game genre that has been Japan's most popular videogame type since the late 1980s. Role-playing games (hereafter RPGs) hinge upon location exploration in a game space of which the player may access a reasonable portion in any given instance, distinguished from adventure games by the emphasis on, in Wolf's definition, the 'creation or taking-on of characters represented by various statistics'.[765] He lists possible examples of this as race, gender, occupation and abilities that are assigned a numeric value that is increased over time through play.[766]

RPGs originated with the Western paper, pen and dice-based wargame *Dungeons and Dragons* (Tactical Studios, 1974) and on computer with the *Ultima* (Origin Systems, 1981-) and *Wizardry* (Sir-Tech, 1981) series. While *Dungeons and Dragons* was not popular in Japan, the first Japanese RPG, *Dragon Quest* (Enix, 1986) took *Ultima*'s emphasis on strategic combat and landscape exploration and reframed the realistic visual style into brightly coloured abstractions with closer reference to *anime* and *manga* of the time, using the design work of popular *Dragonball* artist Toriyama Akira.[767] RPGs became Japan's most popular videogame type in the late 1980s exemplified by the feverish reception of *Dragon Quest III* (Enix, 1988), which sold close to a million copies on its launch day and confirmed Nintendo's leadership of the industry.[768] The genre remained popular and highly lucrative up to the release of *Final Fantasy VII*, which became the biggest-selling game worldwide in 1997.[769] The game was innovative and groundbreaking, and remains the best-selling game in the series at four million copies, and one of the best-selling games in Japan of all time.[770] *Pokémon* took the mechanics of RPG play as established by the earlier *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest*, simplifying the alphanumeric intricacy of the RPG for accessibility by younger players that resulted in the series' industry-leading position.[771]

'Open-World' Games: *Harvest Moon* and *Animal Crossing*

---

[765] Wolf, *The Medium of the Video Game*, p. 130.
[766] Wolf, *The Medium of the Video Game*, p. 130.
[767] Donovan, *Replay*, p. 161.
[768] Donovan, *Replay*, p. 162-163.
[769] See Kent, *Ultimate History of Video Games*, pp. 540-543.
[770] 'Japan's 30 Best-Selling Video Games of all time', *Rocketnews24.com* (2012), available at: <http://en.rocketnews24.com/2012/07/08/japans-best-selling-video-games-of-all-time/>.
[771] For a succinct production history see Donovan, *Replay*, pp. 335-337.

When I examine the wandering adolescent of the Japanese videogame in relation to debates around the commodification of childhood in Chapter Seven, I will discuss *Animal Crossing* (Nintendo, 2001) and *Harvest Moon* (Pack-In-Video, 1996), two popular 'open world' game series that allow the player a range of possible choices for play within the locale of a rural town whose community is focused on object acquisition and capital gain.

The terms 'open world' and 'sandbox' are used to refer to games that afford the player opportunities for self-motivated exploration without time constraint imposed by the game.[772] Jesper Juul employs his notion of 'open and expressive games', which fall into two categories: a game that possesses a defined set of goals yet announces in some way that the player is able to wander at leisure unencumbered by time pressure; or the player may be encouraged by the game towards the perception that there is no underlying goal-oriented system but the game in fact possesses specific rules and criteria for progression.[773] *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon* fall into the latter category, where no set rules or goal-oriented progression is stated at the outset, but after exploring the game's peculiarities a limited range of actions becomes visible.

Animal Crossing is the first game in an extremely successful series that has maintained its core visual appearance and gameplay structure across iterations on different consoles, its most recent entry *Animal Crossing: New Leaf* (Nintendo, 2013) selling 3.86 million copies as of March 2013.[774] *Animal Crossing: Wild World* Nintendo, 2005) is the eighth best-selling game in Japan of all time, with 5.25 million copies sold as it remained in the bestsellers chart from 2005 to 2007.[775]

The *Harvest Moon* series is an obvious precursor to *Animal Crossing* in its representation of a rural community and lack of time pressure or fixed goal-orientation. Both games' worlds vary according to time of day and change characteristics dependent on season. *Harvest Moon* retained its core gameplay dynamic and appearance over the course of several iterations that present slight variations on the original game released

---

[772] For a history of the open world game, see John Harris '20 Open World Games', *Gamasutra.com* (2007), available at: <http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/1902/game_design_essentials_20_open_.php> [accessed 12.8.13].

[773] Jesper Juul, 'On Open and Expressive Games', in *Videogame, Player, Text*, ed. by Atkins and Krzywinska, pp. 191-203 (p. 193).

[774] 'Nintendo Japan Top-Selling Software Sales Units', *Nintendo.co.jp* (2013)*,* available at: <http://www.nintendo.co.jp/ir/en/sales/software/3ds.html> [accessed 23.8.2013].

[775] 'Japan's 30 Best-Selling Video Games of all time', *Rocketnews24.com* (2012), available at: <http://en.rocketnews24.com/2012/07/08/japans-best-selling-video-games-of-all-time/>.

for the Super Nintendo system in 1996. Popular, with good sales figures since the first game's release, the series is particularly successful on handheld portable systems including the GameBoy Advance and Nintendo DS, on which nine separate versions have been released, totaling sales of around 950,000 copies.[776] Exemplifying the series' structure and aesthetic, I will focus on *Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town* (Marvellous Interactive Inc, 2003).

Conclusion

Little work has been carried out on the issue of representation in videogames, and few studies have taken the transmedial perspective that I adopt in this thesis. By examining the representation of the adolescent across the two media of *anime* and videogames I hope to observe points of conjunction between them, observing common articulations that have hitherto remained unaddressed. In the analyses that take place across the next three chapters, I continue to deploy multimodal discourse analysis, framing discussion within the discursive surround of debates around adolescence in contemporary Japan as explored in Chapter One, additionally taking into account the contextual parameters operating within and around Japanese videogame texts. I will look at the representation of avatars and non-playable characters in terms of their visual appearance, movement and function within the game's construction. The construction and representational features of the locations that the adolescent avatar wanders will also be examined, particularly in relation to freedom of motion and the varying degrees of entrapment and liberation afforded by each environment and the objects with which the avatar interacts.

In conjunction with examination of representation, it is important to consider the multiple outcomes of player interaction with the game and the avatar's impact, guided by the player, upon the game's virtual spaces. While representation is my principle focus, the game studies scholarship introduced above has demonstrated that representation is, to a certain extent, mutable subject to mobilization of the avatar by the player, hence available interactive opportunities should be taken into account. While my analysis is in line with Kirkland, assuming a knowledgeable player who will attempt to perform without error, and Klevjer's observation that videogames contain an embedded

---

[776] 'Here's how *Harvest Moon* has fared on the Nintendo DS' on *Siliconera.com* (2011), available at: <http://www.siliconera.com/2011/04/19/heres-how-harvest-moon-has-fared-on-the-nintendo-ds/> [accessed 12.8.2013].

optimal pathway towards successful completion of goals, occasionally there is opportunity to discuss the way players may reorient the activity of the adolescent avatar, even if this is within limited parameters.[777] In considering player engagement, I take into account during my analyses the concepts of immersion, agency and presence as expounded upon by Murray, McMahan and Surman in highlighting the goals and rewards for interactivity presented to the player by a game's design.[778]

When discussing gender representation and the dynamic between *shōnen* avatar and non-playable *shōjo* characters in Chapter Eight I draw on the groundbreaking work on gender in videogames by Kinder, Skirrow and Kirkland as I work towards understanding some of the gendered specificities of the Japanese videogame representation of teenagers.[779] The issue of space and its negotiation by the adolescent avatar (the act of 'wandering' propelled by the player) is fundamental to discussion in the following three chapters, and I take Jenkins' pivotal work on videogame space as my starting point for analysis of the types of spaces traversed by the teenage hero and the opportunities afforded by its construction.[780] When considering the construction and purpose of cutscenes in *Final Fantasy 7* in Chapter Nine, I refer in particular to the work of Klevjer in order to develop comprehension of their significance within the contextual frame of contemporary Japanese discourse around the adolescent.[781]

Having laid out the parameters for my study of Japanese videogames, in the next chapter I turn attention to representations of the wandering adolescent avatar within the context of debates around the commodification of childhood in Japan, and their relationship to game discourses of material acquisition and spatial negotiation.

---

[777] Ewan Kirkland, 'Survival Horror Videogames', in *Horror Video Games*, ed. by Perron, p. 73; Rune Klevjer 'In Defence of Cutscenes', in *Computer Games and Digital Cultures Conference Proceedings*, p. 198.

[778] Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck,* pp. 98-99; McMahan, 'Immersion, Engagement and Presence', in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, pp. 67-86 (p. 69); David Surman, 'Pleasure, Spectacle', in *Videogame, Player, Text*, ed. by Atkins and Krzywinska, p. 210.

[779] Gillian Skirrow, 'Hellivision: An Analysis of Video Games', in *High Theory/Low Culture: Analysing Popular Television and Film*, pp. 115-142; Marsha Kinder, *Playing With Power in Movies, Television and Video Games* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991); Ewan Kirkland, 'Maternal Engulfment in Horror Videogames' in *Inter-Disciplinary* Journal (2009)

[780] Henry Jenkins, 'Game Design as Narrative Architecture', in *First Person*, ed. by Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan, p. 121; Henry Jenkins and Margaret Fuller, 'Nintendo and New World Travel Writing', in *CyberSociety: Computer-mediated Communication and Community*; Henry Jenkins, '"Complete Freedom of Movement": Video Games as Gendered Play Spaces', in *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*, p. 271.

[781] Rune Klevjer 'In Defence of Cutscenes', in *Computer Games and Digital Cultures Conference Proceedings*.

Chapter Seven: The Wandering Adolescent of Japanese Videogames and the Commodification of Childhood in Contemporary Japan

This chapter will examine the representation of the adolescent in the contemporary Japanese videogame in relation to debates around material culture and the commodification of childhood in Japan. Here, I seek to develop understanding of the representational strategies at work within videogames featuring adolescent avatars in conjunction with cultural accounts of the Japanese teenager's situation within a capitalist environment predicated upon consumption, fashion and highly active consumer product industries. The acquisition of objects and currency is a central activity within Japanese videogames of a variety of genres, with these actions performed as the player wanders, explores and maps out the game territory. I am particularly interested in exploring the connections between these two textual projects of the videogame within the discursive contextual parameters of investigations into materialism and consumer culture in contemporary Japan.

As I discussed in Chapter One, sociological and anthropological investigations have focused on the growing concerns around excessive materialism in Japan around the millennium, as fad-oriented culture and an emphasis on fashion and trends began to dominate the life of the teenager. Sociologists Ashkenazi and Clammer assert that contemporary Japanese society is dominated by consumption, and that the consumption and manipulation of commercially acquired objects is intrinsically linked to the formation and maintenance of selfhood.[782] Japan in the post-war period rapidly developed from an agrarian society into a capitalist economy characterised by excessive 'hyper-consumption' during the 1980s boom and into the 1990s recession period.[783] In sociological enquiries into *enjo kōsai*, *ijime* and other youth panics, male and female teenagers were found to be materially motivated.[784] In the media coverage of *enjo kōsai* and the rebellious *kogyaru*, a focus was placed on the consumerist greed of the teenage girls. As discussed, in the previous chapter, in Anne Allison's investigations into the *media mix* of the extraordinarily popular *Pokémon* series, she highlights the commercial motivations and economic interactions at the heart of both series.

---

[782] John Clammer, 'Introduction: The Japanese and the Goods', in *Consumption and Material Culture in Contemporary Japan*, ed. by John Clammer and Michael Ashkenazi (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000) pp. 1-21 (pp. 8-11).
[783] Clammer, 'The Japanese and the Goods', in *Consumption and Material Culture*, ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, p. 7.
[784] Yoda, 'Roadmap', in *Japan After Japan*, ed. by Harootunian and Yoda, p. 21; see also John McCreery, *Japanese Consumer Behaviour: From Worker Bees to Wary Shoppers* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), p. 78 (*enjo kōsai*); and p. 79 *(ijime)*.

The work of cultural historian Iida Yumiko helps particularly to stage an examination of this placement of the adolescent within the virtual environments of the videogame in relation to discourses of capitalist acquisition. Iida argues that during the 1980s economic boom, emphasis on consumption, acquisition, productivity and capitalist expansion made Japan optimistic for a renewal and reinforcement of cultural identity through 'commercial signs', leading to an inversion of the real and fantastic via the 'ongoing intrusion of the virtual into the everyday'.[785]

In the previous section's analyses of the wandering adolescent in *anime*, I identified ambivalence towards consumerism and material culture expressed through a variety of texts. While the urban commercial environment may be represented as entrapping and alienating for the teenage boy and girl, elsewhere scenes of convivial social development are mediated by consumption of branded goods or a focus on a material object which is freighted with value and significance within the series' social framework. In this chapter I will explore the representation of material acquisition, consumption and the accumulation of wealth in the Japanese videogame to identify the discursive positions they occupy.

The central project of this chapter will be addressed through analysis of three main videogame texts. In the first section I will analyse the wandering adolescent in action-adventure games, exemplified by *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* with reference to another key influential example, *Metroid*. Given the action-adventure game's structuring principles of spatial negotiation and material acquisition, I will examine these two preoccupations through observation of conjoined narrative and ludic elements of storyline, character and gameplay mechanics, paying critical attention to the circumstances of wandering for the teenager and the means through which the landscape is traversed.

In the second section I will examine the wandering adolescent avatar in the open-world games *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town.* While these games allow the player a certain amount of freedom to wander their landscapes without time constraints and do not insist upon prescribed actions or a set route through the experience of play, the range of activities the player can pursue that will produce a salient effect on the game environment is limited. Both games situate the adolescent within a rural community of consumers in which interactions are predicated upon consumption habits and material preference. In my analysis I will consider

---

[785] Iida, *Rethinking Identity*, p. 209.

consonances between the games' discourses and the findings of sociological investigations into contemporary Japanese consumer culture.

Action-adventure games: The Adolescent as Explorer and Collector in *Metroid* and *The Legend of Zelda*

The representation of a liberation from the confinement of the domestic is articulated by the action-adventure games of the *Legend of Zelda* series, where the wandering adolescent avatar is shown moving autonomously beyond an initially restrictive environment into an experience of unsupervised spatial exploration and mastery of the physical body, heightened in consequence through survival and quest narrative frameworks.

Jenkins and Fuller address the combination of representational qualities of characters/storylines and the ludic dimension of exploration/mapping, following de Certeau as they suggest that games present 'spatial stories'.[786] When Jenkins links narrative to spatial mastery, he argues that videogames enable the player to both 'perform or witness narrative events', and that a game may be understood as a narrative that is 'pushed forward by the character's movement across the map'.[787]

The contested space of each game in the *Legend of Zelda* series is the spacious and expansive pre-modern country Hyrule, whose 'hub', where the game begins and where the player periodically returns to access further areas, is always a languid rustic village set in a lush pastoral landscape. The avatar progresses through topographically differentiated arenas ranging from dramatic mountainous regions to underwater caverns. To adopt Jenkins' terms, we can see these actions as a mapping and mastery through exploration. Each game's avatar is a green tunic-clad boy called Link, entering adolescence and leaving the domestic space to wander the terrain on quests to free the captive Princess Zelda and defeat antagonistic wizard Ganon.[788]

From each *Zelda* game's narrative outset, separation and the autonomous state of nomadic wandering outside of the confines of the familiar domestic space is positioned as normative, desirable and exciting. In *The Ocarina of Time*, Link belongs to a tribe of

---

[786] Henry Jenkins, 'Game Design', in *First Person*, ed. by Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan, p.122.
[787] Henry Jenkins, 'Game Design', in *First Person*, ed. by Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan, p.124.
[788] In the next chapter I will return to the discussion of the representation of *shōnen/shōjo* gender relations as articulated by the active male hero's pursuit of a passive imprisoned female in the series.

perennial children, and discovers he is human and will age, necessitating his departure into the human world in order to undertake the appropriate maturation process of adolescence articulated by the game's play structure. In *The Wind Waker*, set within a world of pastoral islands separated by expanses of water, it is explained that every male child on Link's home island on reaching adolescence is traditionally given green garb and a wooden sword in recognition of an ancient heroic figure and expected to journey alone into a forest in search of a mystery artefact.

While Link communicates with characters that populate the game world, engaging them in 'conversation' delivered through on-screen text and forming virtual social bonds, Samus of the *Metroid* series is a solitary wanderer empowered via technology as she navigates a primordial natural terrain. Stripped of her technological apparatus, in each game she negotiates the labyrinthine interiors of a planet reacquiring weaponry and tools for spatial negotiation in order to overcome monstrous entities and escape.[789] The intricate natural terrain is traversed arduously at first, with the progressive amassing of items enabling quicker and easier journeys through the game-world. Similarly, Simon and the other avatars of *Castlevania* games explore a sprawling medieval castle comprising a maze of walkways and platforms, where sealed chambers and unreachable towers become accessible once a particular weapon or artefact is obtained. Despite representational differences, these acquired objects fulfill the same function in each series - they augment the bodily ability of the adolescent allowing further penetration into the game space. All three games series place the pre-modern environment at the centre of their discourse of exploration and acquisition, just as they enact a modern capitalist system of consumption, acquisition and economic exchange. Their topographical complexity requires the player to memorise routes or construct a plan that details item and obstruction locations to facilitate progress.

From an early stage in the action-adventure game, a discursive connection is established between material acquisition and the bodily augmentation of the teenage wanderer. This development of physical abilities through consumption constitutes the adolescent maturation process articulated within these games. The player of *Wind Waker* and *Ocarina of Time* accesses screens which show a graphical representation of collected objects and acquired abilities that tantalises and establishes goal-oriented parameters through the depiction of empty spaces to be filled, a silhouette suggesting what the object that will fill that space might be. The screens graphically resemble

---

[789] I will return to issues regarding Samus' gender and theoretical interpretations of *Metroid*'s game space in the next chapter.

shelf-stacks in a real-world shop (or indeed an *otaku* figurine display cabinet). The drive towards completion of full sets of consumer objects is here associated with the progressive adaption and development of the wandering adolescent body. In *Wind Waker,* an outline of Link's body is shown with a series of grey areas shaded to create the impression of a slot into which a particular object can be placed, and as the player obtains items, these slots become occupied. When a wearable item is acquired, the silhouette's outline alters to feature the piece of clothing, appearing at the graphical level to transform the adolescent body. Material objects are graphically incorporated into the teenage physique and augment bodily ability at the representational level, facilitating spatial negotiation at the ludic.

Useful items are dramatically corporeal and either add to the avatar's repertoire of physical abilities or alter and appropriate the game landscape with spectacular sonic and visual displays. The 'hookshot' protrudes aggressively from Link's body and behaves like a grappling hook enabling the scaling of mountainous terrain and large trees, and bombs allow the destruction of previously obstructive rocks accompanied by loud explosive sound effects and the intricately animated scattering of rubble.

As the player maps out the terrain, they will note initially impassible geographic conditions like, for example, an expansive ravine. Through experimentation and inference, as well as prior knowledge gained through previous interactions with the gameworld (and through awareness of the conventions of the game's genre) the player discovers they are unable to proceed. Procuring and augmenting the adolescent body with the hookshot later enables the ravine to be crossed, with the player required to remember the location of the various previously inaccessible areas. Certain shielded enemies are only dispatched by the hookshot, so the item serves a dual purpose as both key or tool to access to new spaces, and as an enhancer of physical prowess and amplifier of player input.

Repetitive routine and lengthy traversals must be endured at the outset of *Wind Waker* and all other *Zelda* games. There is discursive consonance here between the representation of the wandering adolescent and accounts of the spatio-temporal compression in the nomadic quotidian routine of the Japanese teenager as discussed by Anne Allison and Merry White.[790] Allison has emphasised the social atomism ('*kojin shugi*') attributed to the lengthy commutes undertaken daily by members of the Japanese family as they travel between home, school, work and commercial locations,

---

[790] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 67; Merry White, 'The Marketing of Adolescence in Japan: Buying and Dreaming', in *Women, Media and Consumption*, ed. by Brian Moeran and Lise Skov, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), pp. 255-273.

and both writers assert the lack of freely negotiable space afforded to the developing teenager.[791] These contextual accounts are provocative when considered in relation to *Wind Waker'*s depiction of adolescent transcendence of spatio-temporal restriction.

Freighting the material object with both spatial and bodily significance from the outset, the titles of *Ocarina of Time* and *Wind Waker* refer to items that lend the player transgressive control over these initially restrictive elements of the game world, including its physics and natural laws. In *Wind Waker*, navigation between islands is dependent on the randomly altering direction of the wind. If the wind is blowing in the wrong direction, progress is slow. The time of day cycles in an accelerated fashion in which a full day and night lasts for around ten minutes of real world play time. Rain, cloud, sunshine and wind direction occur randomly as time progresses. Certain events that enable either object acquisition and further spatial access are only triggered if the player enters the locale at a certain time of day, and when a certain weather condition is met. Routine and lengthy waiting periods are built into the game initially, and even the competent player must be committed to periods of patient inaction.

Early on, to visit a location specifically at night or in the day to take advantage of time-specific events, entrance to a locale must be timed accurately, after waiting for the transition. This repetition and temporal restriction motivate the player towards an enhanced ability to control the game mechanics and landscape mastery. The player obtains the Ocarina of Time, a woodwind instrument, or Wind Waker, an enchanted conductor's baton, near the beginning of the game, and as the game world is explored and concealed objects located, the player acquires musical notation (in the form of objects which are stored iconically on the collection screen) that when played or conducted instantly changes the time of day to meet the required conditions, thereby moving past initial limitations.

Returning to Benjamin's *flâneur* and de Certeau's tactical appropriation of space as discussed in Chapter Five, the action-adventure videogame exemplified by *Zelda* offers the opportunity for leisurely, spontaneous traversal of the game environment by the wandering adolescent.[792] As objects are amassed and new abilities acquired, previously closed-off areas and features that were presented initially as obstacles can be

---

[791] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p. 71.
[792] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project (Das Passagen-Werk),* trans. by Rolf Tiedemann, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 416-455; Michel De Certeau, 'Walking in the City' in *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. by Steven Rendall (California; London: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 91-110

negotiated, giving the impression of an interactive tactical usage of the space by the empowered teenager.

The Wind Waker is essentially comprised of a large number of minutely detailed individual interactive circumstances, many of which are optional and not essential to the player's success, but that if engaged with will lead to the acquisition of useful objects or currency. Characters will request the procuring of various objects strewn through the landscape, or the deployment of particular artifacts will have an effect on the game-world. Exploration for the player is thus articulated at the level of both spatial investigation and a process of testing a variety of actions in order to discover meaningful tactical affect on the space. Cause and effect will be discerned through inference and trial-and-error based on the player's cumulative experience of the game's object relationships, or through instructions delivered by other characters. Throughout *Wind Waker*, following concealed passageways and strolling down lengthy winding paths lead to further discoverable areas and treasures, rewarding the player who scrutinises the environment, and encouraging the meandering of the *flâneur*. The lack of time limit on the activity of exploration means that this meandering is determined by the player, but ultimately there is a predescribed path of interactions the player must follow in order to progress further and open new environments.

The connection between landscape penetration, economic exchange and consumption is reinforced throughout these component elements of *The Wind Waker*. particularly within the game's exploration and cartographic process in conjunction with its representation of the natural world and its wild fauna. The map of the game world viewed by the player takes the form of a grid of 49 squares, each containing one island in a mass of ocean. At the ludic level, each square is a contested unit to be possessed. At the beginning of the game, the sole island on Link's chart is his home. As Link sails, he encounters the wandering merchant, who appears within the game world around selling useful items including bird food. The player purchases the food with the money accumulated as a result of successful battle encounters and through successful exploration and puzzle solving. Each island is circled by a single fish, difficult to spot, that leaps from the water periodically. When the fish has been located through observation and familiarity with the game at a graphic representational level (another time-consuming and repetitive task), the player scatters food on the water which the fish consumes, then offers to mark the island on Link's sea chart, enabling quick access to that location later. Dextrous play, keen observation, acquisition, consumption, exchange of goods and awareness of the idiosyncrasies of the game landscape are linked in this

play mechanic as the player's ability to interact with and manipulate the game space increases.

The majority of interactive features within the pastoral game world are depicted in consumption terms, and supplying to the demands of a particular entity enables deeper progress into the terrain and subsequent further object acquisition. Fish, pigs, rats and withered magic trees need to be fed with items only obtainable from particular locations and by fulfilling certain conditions. Acquiring or purchasing the appropriate desired objects for each of the game's sentient beings results in the acquisition of objects that aid Link's journey and permit access to previously unreachable areas of the game world. One device in *Wind Waker* associates consumption and acquisition with enhanced vision and greater purchase over the game space. Link places a pear purchased from the merchant on his head, in turn eaten by a seagull. The player is rewarded with the opportunity to take control of the seagull, seeing the game world from its point of view in flight, and enabling the observation and acquisition of items and money that were hitherto out of the boy's reach. All of these elements converge to produce an articulation of a commodified, consumption driven existence for the wandering adolescent within a deceptively pastoral space that bears little surface similarity to the commercial centres of urban Japan.

Despite the implication from the outset of a sprawling game world that the avatar can negotiate freely, embedded into each *Zelda* game is a linear pathway from which the player cannot substantively divert. There are secondary goals that will facilitate later play (e.g. collecting bottles that can be filled with restorative medicine and consumed during lengthy battles) and optional collecting of complete sets of objects, and these activities all comprise seeking out objects secreted in the game's landscape. Ian Bogost asserts that despite the expansive play area of *The Wind Waker*, there are very few beneficial alternative choices that the player can make at any one point or 'inspirations for the player to reorient his current activities' and utilise acquired objects in a significant manner.[793] Ultimately, while the teenage avatar may meander from location to location with a certain amount of freedom, the 'size of the world and the quantity of possible actions matters less than the significance of those actions'.[794]

Spatial freedom and a lack of time limit on required actions may afford the player a certain amount of pleasure in wandering the virtual landscape, but ultimately there is always the background knowledge that the game is waiting for a specific,

---

[793] Ian Bogost, *Unit Operations: An Approach to Videogame Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2006), p. 159.
[794] Bogost, *Unit Operations,* p. 159.

limited combination of actions to be carried out in order for any significant change or development to occur. Continual material acquisition and pushing the boundary of the currently explored space are the principal activities that draw the adolescent avatar through the game. There seems little rewarding or meaningful option other than conformity to the embedded path through the game that requires acquisition and spatial exploration and mastery. The *shōnen* avatar is in this way cast as perceptually free but in fact restricted to a narrow, defined trajectory predetermined by the game's design.

There are, however, additional pleasures of tactical appropriation and subversion for the expert player and aficionado that can be highlighted as an alternative approach to play, and to the representation of the adolescent avatar, than that prescribed authorially. Jenkins has in this regard highlighted the subversive pleasure of detecting and exploiting 'glitches' or errors in the game's programming that allows movement and exploration beyond the constraints imposed by the game's designers.[795] Aficionados have uncovered and disseminated the existence in *Ocarina of Time*, for example, of extensive tunnels and chambers that were intended to form part of the released game's landscape, but were not finished in time for release or were thought to be too complex for players after testing. Jenkins finds that the discovery of, interaction with, and dissemination of these glitches are couched by online forum posters in terms of authorship and as 'creative endeavours'.[796] In these niche interactions with the game text, the subversion of the game rules is articulated in terms of individual agency and control, where the player tactically appropriates the game space and supplants the game's designers as the architect of the experience. In these unscripted, player-determined encounters with the game text, the adolescent avatar becomes an agent of resistance to the predetermined and prescribed route through the gameworld, engaging with further textual layers of game space.

The handheld Nintendo GameBoy Advance iteration, *The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap* provides an additional contextual layer to the interactions of the adolescent wanderer as socialising consumer and spatial explorer. The childlike Minish, a miniscule alien race stranded in Hyrule, have established a society within the tactically appropriated fabric of the human world using found objects like teacups, bowls and cotton reels as furniture and dwellings. The connection between landscape mastery,

---

[795] Henry Jenkins, 'Anatomy of a Game Secret (Part Two): *Animal Crossing*', *henryjenkins.org* (2007), available at: <http://henryjenkins.org/2007/05/anatomy_of_a_game_secret_part.html> [accessed 8.9.2013].
[796] The forum he discusses is in English and contributed to by an international community. Jenkins, 'Anatomy of a Game Secret (Part Two)', para. 7.

object acquisition and social development is articulated as in their dialogue exchanges with Link the concealed Minish community prioritises play and the feverish collection and exchange of material objects. Each Minish possesses half a gemstone which has a corresponding other half secreted in the game world and obtained through successful play. Each Minish speaks with delight about completing the gemstone, and bringing the two pieces together denotes the formation of a bond of friendship, and a brief animation shows the Minish ecstatic as the stones interlock emitting electrical sparks. The joyful social union brought about through the accordance of magical commodities is associated again with mastery over Hyrule's landscape, as when two stones are brought together, a blockage is removed elsewhere in the game permitting Link access to a previously closed-off area.

This game is particularly suited to the miniaturised virtual environment of the handheld system, which emphasises the privileged position of the player as immersed in the fantasy world. Link is chosen to communicate with the Minish in the storyline as it is only a boy of Link's age who is able to perceive them, just as it is the young player with a view of the game screen who has privileged access in the virtual world. Link obtains and wears the titular cap in order to access this world. Returning to the social organisational concept of *seken,* where society is construed as a monitoring by peers and authority figures that ensures self-governance, Link here moves out of the perception of the adults in order to engage with the appropriated space of the Minish community. Link is continually forbidden access to certain key parts of the town centre and other areas of the game world by adult characters, and becoming small to negotiate the pathways and appropriated objects of the Minish world enables a transgressive circumvention of authority in order to obtain previously hidden or unreachable items. Again, a material object is responsible explicitly for the adolescent's transcendence beyond limitations of space and, here, the authoritative controlling gaze of *seken*.

The Consumer Communities of *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon*

The open-world sandbox games in the *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon* series feature wandering adolescent avatars leaving the familial home to learn self-reliance in rural communities dominated by commercial acquisition and economic exchange. The two series do not guide the player through a linear progression, instead requiring

experimentation and observation of cause-and-effect to determine the range of available goals and options for development.

Animal Crossing's wandering adolescent villager, whose gender and appearance is selected by the player, is shown at the game's opening departing their hometown on a train bound for a forest village where they establish a home among a virtual community of animals. Parental separation and autonomy is introduced as normative and expected, and while the subdued palette and gentle montage of introductory scenes wistfully articulates a nostalgic passing from childhood, the situation is introduced as desirable and exciting. The game depicts adolescence and the avatar's development in explicitly commodified terms; the community in which the player immerses themselves fundamentally driven by material desire, commerce and capitalist exchange. The town's population of anthropomorphic animals, each with fixed personality traits that are expressed through consumer preference (enthusiastic about fruit, furniture) are characterised through textual monologues triggered by player command.

Animal Crossing encourages the player-perception of belonging within this virtual community. Time in the game world corresponds to the real-world date and time, with the animal characters' speech specific to the day and hour. When the player returns to the game after a period of non-play, the illusion of the progression time in the game world is created, as animals move out and others join the community. Even when the game console is not switched on, there can remain a sense in the player of belonging to the surrogate community of the game world. As Heather Kelly puts it, Animal Crossing 'intentionally draws on the passage of time to create both emotional resonance and economic value in the game world'.[797]

There are few very instructions that communicate the game's goals, and the player is free to roam the village as a self-governed flâneur interacting with inhabitants and exploring the landscape observing the outcome of actions. There is no precise storyline that will develop through successful play, but there are events that will be triggered through the passing of time and player manipulation of the game space. The entire game arena is accessible to the player immediately and there are no restrictions imposed on wandering, with the player discerning the results of experimental actions upon the landscape and the optimal, appropriate use of acquired items. Almost all actions available are triggered by a simple button-push and relate almost exclusively to the manipulation of material objects strewn around the village.

---

[797] Heather Kelley, 'Animal Crossing: A Game in Time', in Space Time Play, ed. by Von Borries et al, pp. 180-181 (p. 181).

Harvest Moon's pastoral fantasy of an idyllic rural consumer community rewards awareness of correct consumer choice as the avatar engages in a cycle of capitalist expansion and product consumption. Separation, autonomy and solitude are articulated as expected and desirable conditions of adolescence, as the wandering teenage avatar leaves the family home to run an initially dilapidated farm in a small rural village. The farm constitutes an initially unruly contested space that must be mastered and controlled by the player to produce optimum material and numeric economic gain. The player fends off the weeds that generate randomly in unused areas and ultimately, through enhancement of acquired material objects, makes full use of the landscape. The farm is divided into dimensionally regular unit measurements and can be expressed in terms of the state of that individual unit (weed-covered; clear; seeded; dry; watered; growing crop; ripe crop). This linear process of numerically-configured unit management is given emotional resonance at the representational level. The game operates within a virtual time span of four years, with around five seconds of real time equated to ten minutes in the game world. The game encourages deep, prolonged immersion through the extensive time needed to progress meaningfully, as a year in the game world (each season possessing its own unique play conditions) is therefore upwards of 20 solid hours of play.

Play revolves around a capitalist system of acquisition, consumption and commerce that increases gradually in complexity and the management of competing priorities, as the player begins by collecting and selling fruit growing wild on the farmland, amassing money to buy tools and seeds for growing and harvesting crops, cows that produce milk, chickens that lay eggs, and a fishing rod to catch fish, all of which articulate mastery over the natural environment through its reconfiguration into commodities for commercial gain.

Similarly in *Animal Crossing*, with sufficient money the player purchases an axe in order to cut down trees, buying and planting various plants to impose change on the game topography. Jarvinen valuably notes that the game's design connects the aims of the player, the (scripted and embedded) desires of the non-player characters and the ultimate benefit of the community.[798] Where planting the correct number of trees throughout the village has an effect on the fortunes of the village animals and their overall contentment, a smaller-scale aim directly results in the achievement of 'higher-

---

[798] Aki Jarvinen, 'Emotional Experiences', in *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, p. 105.

order goals'.[799] In this instance and other conditions of play, in the virtual materiality of the game world, the appropriateness of the object make-up of the village determines the adolescent's success. Happier animals result in enhanced object acquisition and trading potential.

In both games, the immediate means to begin improvement to the adolescent's initially poor economic standing and lack of control over the game space are communicated shortly after play begins, and like the landscape negotiation within *The Wind Waker* take the form of initially repetitive tasks that are salved later through the acquisition of material objects.

Harvest Moon's designer Wada Yasuhiro has stated that he is an avid horticulturalist and that the patient act of growing plants influenced the game experience he intended to create.[800] Quotidian repetition requiring a committed work ethic is built into the experience of *Harvest Moon*, with the alleviation of monotonous tasks occurring through improvement of acquired objects. Each day consists of a sequence of routine tasks in which crops are planted, watered or harvested, animals groomed and produce collected.

The watering can available at the start waters one unit at a time, making the action repetitive. As the farmer amasses money, he can buy a more robust watering can that waters 12 units with a single button press. This leads gradually to the ability to grow crops covering the whole of the farm's expansive field. The player subsequently buys material additions to his cramped one-room house. Also purchased, for example, are health drinks that enable the farmer to perform a greater number of actions without becoming tired, and a horse that can be ridden in order to make traversing the space of the farm much quicker. In similar terms to *Wind Waker* and other action-adventure games, *Harvest Moon* continually articulates the interrelation of acquisition, capitalism, spatial freedom and increase in the adolescent's physical prowess. In this commodified environment, as capital increases, so too does the player's amplification of input and his subsequent mastery of space and control over the game landscape.

Despite both games' 'openness' to the preoccupations of the individual player, there are only a limited number of salient activities available at any given instance. Though the games try to suggest otherwise, each is, in Juul's description of 'open and

---

[799] Aki Jarvinen, 'Emotional Experiences', in *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, p. 105.
[800] Donovan, *Replay*, p. 157.

expressive games', 'an activity which contains an imperative'.[801] While options are slender, there is a certain amount of latitude offered to the player to negotiate the game according to 'personal aesthetic and social considerations'.[802] Both games offer opportunities for extensive collection behaviour through a plethora of obtainable objects grouped into sets and attributed value according to attainability or rarity, which again here recalls the *otaku* consumer as a committed amasser of products.

As discussed in Chapter One, materialism is bound in accounts of the commodification of childhood in contemporary Japan with a perceived weakening of emotional relationships and social bonds, especially since, as Allison reports, the 'unit of consumption' had moved significantly from the family in the immediate post-war period to the individual in contemporary Japan.[803] Clammer and Ashkenazi find that the Japanese engagement with objects is a means of tying the individual to society, and while the tradition of giving gifts at several points during the calendar may promote 'cordiality between generations', this ritual exchange of material objects may have replaced meaningful emotional connections.[804] In both *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon*, interpersonal relationships are configured in terms of commodity exchange and the positive social effect of material gifts. While in *Animal Crossing* the discourse remains at the level of the platonic, in *Harvest Moon* heterosexual romance (and later the formation of the nuclear family and *katei* domestic space) is articulated in terms of material acquisition and consumption.

On the adolescent sense of 'peer solidarity' obtained through appropriate consumer choice in Japan, Millie Creighton states that 'consumerism is less a way of "finding oneself" and more a way of linking selves to others'.[805] In *Animal Crossing*, acquisition is given the emotional impetus of interpersonal communication and the formation of community. Sending letters to the animals using the appropriate key words associated with that animal and accompanied by a gift that the animal desires they may respond with a letter accompanied by an item. These simple interactions are mediated

---

[801] Jesper Juul, 'Expressive Games', in *Videogame, Player, Text*, ed. by Atkins and Krzywinska, p. 193.

[802] Jesper Juul, 'Expressive Games', in *Videogame, Player, Text*, ed. by Atkins and Krzywinska, p. 201.

[803] Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, p. 70.

[804] John Clammer, 'The Japanese and the Goods', in *Consumption and Material Culture*, ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, p. 6.

[805] Millie Creighton, 'The Shifting Imagery of Childhood Amidst Japan's Consumer Affluence: The Birth of the "5 Pocket Child"', in Harry Eiss, *Images of the Child* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994), pp. 77-102 (p. 97).

by consumer-choices and desires, with acquisition, material preference and consumption practically the sole topic of conversation delivered to the player.

Jarvinen observes that the 'pleasure of nurture' in *Animal Crossing* is strongly associated with collecting, and makes the connection between the game and the elements of nurture embedded in the acquisition of *Pokémon* game cards and other products.[806] Collection and nurture are closely linked through the eliciting of emotional responses from the player through dialogue as a characterisation device and through the aesthetic appeal of the miniature *kawaii* style animals. The game thereby creates the sense of an intrinsically emotional, societally beneficial and personally rewarding value to the accumulation of material objects.

Animal Crossing and *Harvest Moon*'s communities emphasise rural simplicity and tactility, eschewing the signs of modernity and technology that are bound up with the commercial landscape of modern Japan. Corporeal interaction with the environment is continually reinforced, with a focus on the bodily capacities of the adolescent. Change to the village in *Animal Crossing* is enacted through physical contact and labour as the teenager roams the game space, yanking up weeds and planting or chopping down trees with a small axe. The town's wishing well has a supervisory function, and when consulted gives commentary on the state of the village – too many weeds, too few trees in particular areas – which when optimal results in a high yield of desirable artefacts.

Each day the teenage farmer of *Harvest Moon* must tend to the farm's chickens and cows through attentive and repetitive physical contact. A button-press from the player enacts these instances of daily nurture, an emotional reinforcement occurring graphically and sonically as the animal moos or clucks in approval and a red heart floats above its head. Cumulatively, this ensures a healthy yield of eggs or milk to be sold, articulating a discursive connection between *amae* codependent nurture and commodity. If the farmer does not attend to this tactile caring routine, the consequence is that the animal will not feel loved (measured iconically in hearts) at the representational level, but in game terms material and economic gain will be diminished.

Emphasising perception of the avatar's physical engagement with the game world, finance-generating crops are hauled overhead from the field to the depositing bin. Tools that provide shortcuts in farming tasks still require manual operation from both the player and the avatar. These activities enhance the sense of immersive

---

[806] Aki Jarvinen, 'Emotional Experiences', in *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, p. 105.

corporeality delivered by the game as it renders abstract capitalist economics tangible and actualises them as elements within the interactive landscape. The teenage worker fatigues through overexertion, and further actions will simply not be possible until he has rested. The word *karoshi* filled a necessary gap in the Japanese lexicon in the late 20th century to refer to 'death by overwork' among office worker *salarymen* struggling to meet unfeasible targets, reported in the media as accounting for 10,000 deaths a year among Japanese men.[807] While a concerted work ethic is rewarded by *Harvest Moon*, if the teenage farmer pushes his body too far, he collapses and is berated by the town's doctor. This surface benevolence is a veneer placed over the game's punishment of time loss through convalescence for poor management of resources.

In *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon*, communications to the adolescent avatar/the player from other villagers are delivered in the form of virtual handwritten letters received daily through the mailbox. This reinforces the contradictory conceit of these virtual villages as pre-technological, pre-capitalist communities that celebrate tactility, interpersonal interactions and meaningful physical engagement with the environment. In both games, material possessions are an organisational principle around which both selfhood and the wider community are constructed and reinforced. John Clammer argues that the increased materialism embedded in the culture as Japan became characterised by a self-conscious 'expression of selfhood and ... cultivation of character,' derived through relationships to material objects, and that 'attachment to objects ... is an essential component in structuring the sense of self, of continuity and hence of on-going social relationships with others'.[808]

I have argued that in *The Wind Waker*, the natural landscape and its living organisms possess economic value and significance to mastery of the game space. Similarly, the interactive components of *Animal Crossing*, including its flora and fauna, are fetishised collector objects with an assigned desirability based on preference and infrequency. Almost everything in the game world is given commodity value and can be used in economic exchange. A purchased fishing rod or net enables the catching of fish and insects that have rarity value that is reflected by the buying price offered for them in the shop. Fish and insects comprise two of the many sets of objects to collect in the game, with more elusive creatures appearing only at certain times of year and in particular spaces.

---

[807] Allison, *Millennial Monsters,* p.75.
[808] Clammer, 'The Japanese and the Goods', in *Consumption and Material Culture*, ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, p. 12.

Approaching animal villagers when in possession of, for instance, a rare fish or insect will often result in admiration and potentially a gifted object. Knowledge of the temporal specificities of the game landscape enables increased acquisition of desirable items resultant in an increased reinforcement of selfhood and community belonging.

In an anthropological analysis of the changing social priorities and the means through which community relations are established in Tokyo's Mure district, John Clammer concludes that consumption has provided a a substitute for a sense of place, and that consumption relations replace the traditional *chōnaikai* ('neighbourhood association') that improved the neighbourhood through security initiatives, cultural celebrations and contingency planning for natural disasters.[809] Drawing from Benedict Anderson, he states that consumers form an 'imagined community', where consumption behaviour provides a way of linking the self with others. In Anderson's influential Marxist account of the rise of Nationalism, he argues that nationhood is constructed not through actual interpersonal interactions but is imagined by the subject through perception maintained through mass address by media and government.[810] *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon*'s village communities are constructed and maintained in these terms through relationships bound up by consumer preference and material exchange.

Ian Bogost's description of the animals as 'monastic', uninterested in commercial pursuits as they amble peaceably around the village enjoying its environment in contrast to the frantic dashing of the player/avatar does not chime with my own experience of playing the game.[811] *Animal Crossing*'s community and environment encourage an ethos of feverish set completion, with features of the game landscape comprised almost entirely of collectible objects. Each animal is defined by their consumer choice and desire, with a principle aspect of play hinging on financial acquisition (the denomination is 'bells', a *kawaii*-oriented rendering of abstract numeric currency into an ornate aesthetic object) in order to purchase and exchange furniture and household objects in order to achieve full sets of matching items.

Emotion and expression are heightened through exchanges regarding material artefacts. Animals occasionally plead feverishly (their heads quiver in distress or

---

[809] John Clammer, 'The Global and The Local: Gender, Class and the Internationalisation of Consumption in a Tokyo Neighbourhood', in *Consumption and Material,* ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, pp. 241-274 (p. 277).
[810] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread of Nationalism,* (London: Verso, 1983).
[811] Ian Bogost, *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2007), p. 269.

euphoria) with the player to find them furniture and items from a particular range, giving the player an object as a reward if item is obtained, along with enthusiastic praise. As in *The Wind Waker,* the player accesses collection screens that display the acquired items and show silhouettes of items yet to be discovered. The acquisition of items impacts upon the space of the village with an implied municipal benefit as paintings can be bought or exchanged, fossils can be unearthed, fish and insects caught in order to be displayed in the town museum.

The dynamic of financial gain through spatial mastery in *Harvest Moon* extends to social success as the *shōjo* that live in the game's community are wooed through the gifting of acquired items. Consalvo states that heterosexual male behaviour is insisted upon by the game, as the prime element of progression has the male avatar flirting with and dating female villagers.[812] In Wim Lunsing's sociological investigations into the commodification of heterosexual relationships in contemporary Japan, she finds that affluence and the ability to purchase appropriately, and spatial restrictions in terms of house size and privacy, may obstruct relationships to the point that desired unions cannot be achieved, and relationships may also be pursued in order to benefit materially rather than emotionally.[813] Men are expected to buy material gifts for their partners as proof of desire and love, with gifts required to be expensive, forming a significant portion of the man's income.[814]

Wada Yasuhiro states that *eroge* dating simulations influenced the construction of the game, and though the explicit sexual content of the genre has been removed, the focus on courtship expressed through a succession of encounters (providing limited multiple choice interaction) and material gift-giving remains.[815] The player guides his avatar towards the ultimate goal of marriage, domesticity and child rearing by courting one of the eight teenage girls who live in the village and wander its streets in a regular pattern. Through pursuit and observation, the player maps out the chosen girl's daily routine and brings about regular encounters. A commodified abstraction of 'courtship' consists of engaging the girl in conversation, which is limited to a button press that

---

[812] Mia Consalvo, 'Hot Dates', in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, pp. 171-172.
[813] Wim Lunsing, 'Prostitution, dating, mating and marriage: love, sex and materialism in Japan', in *Consumption and Material Culture*, ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, pp. 158-184 (p. 164).
[814] Wim Lunsing, 'Prostitution, dating, mating and marriage', in *Consumption and Material Culture*, ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, p.177.
[815] Donovan, *Replay*, p. 157.

initiates a stock response of a few lines of text from the girl dependent on location and time of day.

The player increases the value of the iconic heart indicator that communicates the girl's affection for the avatar by presenting gifts appropriate to her tastes. In order to ascertain the girl's preferences, it is necessary to experiment with different gifts and read the response given by the girl on receipt of the item, usually an item of food or drink, or a piece of jewellery obtained from the shop in the village. Items that are harder to obtain (rare fish, rare gemstones) will produce a greater numeric effect. In *Harvest Moon*, the female adolescent is an unruly game object reducible to fluctuating numeric values. The girls are component units of the game computations that must be manipulated economically to achieve success. At the representational level, the female must be followed, observed and monitored by the adolescent male avatar and player, her regular behaviour and predilections recorded and anticipated to maximise romantic success predicated upon consumer exchange. This dynamic of scrutiny is clearly highly problematic and provocative in terms of gender representation, where the oblivious teenage girl is subjected to the intimate, predatory observation of a male figure (both player and avatar) stalking her actions as she negotiates everyday life.

In this reading of the two games, space is negotiated in commodified terms, and the very act of wandering for the adolescent within this framework that I am pursuing is positioned in service to those commercial interests. Consumption permits wandering, and wandering is a trajectory towards consumption. There is an interesting consonance here between the work of Susan Napier, who finds that in Japanese fantasy literature the pastoral is conceived as utopian, and the conclusion of Clammer and Ashkenazi that in Japan 'consumption contains utopian impulses' where commercial activities are performed in pursuit of personal and communal enhancement.[816] While the pastoral space embodies utopian ideals of spatial liberation and autonomy, activities within the environment are restricted in *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon* to capitalist operations.

Clammer asserts in his observation of Mure that Japanese consumption behaviour is ritualistic, formulaic and may be undertaken with success or failure.[817] We can consider *Animal Crossing*'s creation of imagined community from this perspective in line with the conception of society conceived via *seken* and the act of of

---

[816] Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, p 143; John Clammer, 'The Global and the Local', in *Consumption and Material Culture*, ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, p. 283.
[817] John Clammer, 'The Global and the Local', in *Consumption and Material Culture*, ed. by Clammer and Ashkenazi, p. 281.

self-governance ensured through the imagined gaze of others. Anne Allison summarises the capitalism embodied by *media mix* toy lines producing countless product variations on an intellectual property as 'endless desire and continual deferment coming together in a cycle of consumptive repetition'.[818]

A domestic object placement system drives the player on in a cycle of never-ending material acquisition and reorientation. Each week the player receives, via a handwritten letter again emphasising an intimacy pre a report and numeric value attributed to the appropriateness of object location in the home. Financial gain enables the wandering teenager to build extra floors and additional space onto the virtual house, each object acquired taking up a certain amount of space measured in area units. More space enables more objects to be displayed in the house, and complete sets in the optimum location (red objects may score higher at a room's edge or corner, for example) will gain a higher score. A higher score results in greater admiration expressed by the animals in the village through gifts of rare items and more trading opportunities arising in conversation. The regular letter received from the judging body indicates the player's current standing as they deem it. *Seken* is here actualised in the game via the continual commentary received from the villagers who appear to be scrutinising your range of consumer habits and cosmetic appearance, and through the monitoring agency that assess your material performance. Ian Bogost rightly highlights the fact that the 'rules' of this system are opaque and remain undisclosed by the game but are discussed globally in online forums where players share their findings.[819]

Similar to the slice-of-life *anime Azumanga Daioh!* and *K-On!* discussed in Chapter Four, and as seen in the rural community of *Natsume's Book of Friends* in Chapter Three, the communities of both *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon* are organised around scheduled community celebrations and public holidays - some of which are globally observed, but some are specifically Japanese. For example in *Harvest Moon*, New Year's Day yields the acquisition and ritual consumption of *soba* noodles, a tradition observed annually in Japan. This staging of traditional customs, coupled with the games' denial of the urban and technological, chimes with Marilyn Ivy's discussion of 'The Vanishing' in which folklore and heritage is reenacted in simultaneous recognition of the loss of cultural identity and an attempt to restore it.[820]

---

[818] Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, p. 278.
[819] Bogost, *Persuasive Games,* p. 269.
[820] Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 216.

This recovery of identity through groupist observance of ritual is configured in *Animal Crossing* as an opportunity for acquiring unique commodities. Public holidays are celebrated fervently in the village, with the villagers' dialogue leading up to the specific days enthused and convivial, emphasising the import of community and positive social agreement. Certain items are made available only on public holidays (corresponding to the real-world date), and on these days, particular rituals of exchange are performed by the animal occupants that lead to the acquisition of items only through these strictly observed conditions.

Discovering instances of the appropriation of commodities based on individual interpretation, Clammer argues that in Japan consumption has ludic significance, with goods not merely fetishised but also possessing a user-determined play-value, as consumers use items in ways outside of intended utility.[821] While, as I have argued, the range of salient activities available to the player is limited within the game to the pursuits of acquisition and exchange, the game's design allows for a certain freedom of expression through tactical appropriation in the terms laid out by Clammer. The adolescent avatar in *Animal Crossing* is afforded further opportunities for tactical spatial appropriation wnen mobilized subversively by the player. In *Animal Crossing'*s more recent iterations *Wild World* and *New Leaf*, players can visit the villages of acquaintances through an online connection. While in the other player's environment they can impose a range of changes, collect objects and, should they wish to vex, deface the landscape. Building on his discussion of glitches within *Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time*, Henry Jenkins discusses the ways in which *Animal Crossing* players have subverted the interactive elements of the game in order to create novel meaning not intended or expected by the game's designers.[822] Similarly, Nadia Oxford describes her experiences in the game with players who destabilise the game discourse through unusual idiosyncratic alterations to the town designed to entertain and perplex visitors and generate unique meanings through play, assuming an authorial role over the environment.[823] When the player exerts influence over the gameworld and reconfigures the text in this manner, the adolescent avatar is cast as a transgressive manipulator of space, beyond the confines of the activities encouraged by the game's design.

---

[821] John Clammer, *Contemporary Urban Japan: A Sociology of Consumption* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 62.

[822] Henry Jenkins, 'Anatomy of a Game Secret (Part Two): *Animal Crossing'*, *henryjenkins.org* (2007) available at: http://henryjenkins.org/2007/05/anatomy_of_a_game_secret_part.html [accessed 8.9.2013].

[823] Nadia Oxford, 'Secret Lives: Beneath the Surface of *Animal Crossing'*, *1up.com* (2006), available at: http://www.1up.com/do/feature?pager.offset=2&cId=3149750, [accessed 8.9.13].

Conclusion

In situating the wandering adolescent of the Japanese videogame within discourses around the commodification of childhood and adolescence in contemporary Japan, I have been able to highlight the consumption-driven nature of exploration as it is borne out in a variety of ways in these examples. The wandering adolescent is articulated in these texts as an explorer of space and a collector of material artefacts on a trajectory towards maturation and social development predicated upon acts of consumption and object manipulation.

I found in my analysis of *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* that the wandering adolescent of the action-adventure game is both explorer and collector, a neophyte being whose burgeoning commodified existence is predicated upon consumption and acquisition, their subjectivity defined through their relationship to objects. Like the empowered *anime* teenagers of *Evangelion*, *Last Exile* and *Initial D*, within these contextual parameters the body of the adolescent is augmented allowing for a pleasurable negotiation and tactical appropriation of space.

The experience of adolescence as it is articulated within the discourses of *Harvest Moon* and *Animal Crossing* is predicated upon an identity defined through consumption activities where commodity acquisition and preference shapes the nature of a community and ties the individual to others within a social group. The space of the game world is commodified, represented as pastoral and idyllic in utopian terms of free wandering and spatial exploration. It is also deconstructed, organised into component unit parts that are perceived through their material value, and this rural environment is made consonant with a contemporary capitalist system of economic exchange. Consumption and commodity form the principle basis for play, though in *Animal Crossing*, through subversive realignment of the game's discourse a certain amount of authorial inscription is made possible, especially when sharing the game space with others. In *Harvest Moon*, romance and the formation of the family unit are articulated in commodified terms where courtship is predicated upon material object gifting that ultimately determines the suitability of a pairing for the *shōjo* figure.

Having assessed the representation of the wandering adolescent of the action-adventure and open-world videogames in relation to debates around the commodification of adolescence and childhood in contemporary Japan, I will now

extend my investigation of videogames to explore the ways in which adolescent femininity is constructed and the *otaku* is addressed in the action-adventure game.

Chapter Eight: The Wandering Adolescent Explorer of Contemporary Japanese Videogames and the *Otaku*

In this chapter I will further examine the construction of the Japanese action-adventure videogame in relation to debates around the *otaku* in contemporary Japan and the representation of *shōjo* figures.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the *otaku* was defined as a games, *anime* and *manga* aficionado before becoming a source of cultural anxiety through panics circulated by the Japanese media after the murders committed by Miyazaki Tsutomu and later *Shōnen A*. In the period following, a reorientation of discourse was staged at various levels of Japanese culture and society, including representation in *anime* of the *otaku* as a redeemable figure, and in the Cool Japan initiative as a national treasure that speaks of the vibrant and prolific Japanese cultural industries to overseas investors and visitors.

In Chapter Four I examined the *otaku* ideals of *moe* and the reorientation of discourse around the high school girl from a site of anxiety to regenerative optimism as articulated through the slice-of-life *anime* genre. In the previous chapter I examined the representation of the wandering adolescent explorer and collector in action-adventure videogames through the discursive framework of debates around the commodification of childhood and adolescence in contemporary Japan. Articulating a discourse of consumption and material acquisition in relation to the mapping of space, *Legend of Zelda*, *Harvest Moon* and *Animal Crossing* foreground the amassing of collections of artefacts that is consonant with the collection of, for example, figurines and *anime* merchandise associated with *otaku* habits.

In this chapter I am particularly interested in developing these enquiries through an exploration of the relationship foregrounded between the wandering adolescent *shōnen* videogame avatar and the *shōjo* as a non-playable character. Referring to the work on gender in the videogame of Kinder, Skirrow and Kirkland, I will discuss issues of gender representation first in relation to the *The Legend of Zelda* and *Metroid* series and their construction of game space.[824] While the approaches of these studies occupy a

---

[824] Marsha Kinder, *Playing With Power in Movies, Television and Video Games* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991); Gillian Skirrow, 'Hellivision: An Analysis of Video Games', in *High Theory/Low Culture: Analysing Popular Television and Film*, ed. by Colin MacCabe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 115-142; Ewan Kirkland, 'Maternal Engulfment in Horror Videogames' in *Inter-Disciplinary* Journal, (2009), available at: <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/Kirkland-paper.pdf> [accessed 8.8.13].

broadly Feminist position within the critical parameters of Freudian Psychoanalysis, used selectively their analyses and conclusions can be deployed usefully in a discussion of game space and femininity.

In conjunction with the development of arguments I have explored in relation to the adolescent girl in Chapter Four, this critical framework can be used in analysis of the depiction of the interactions between male and female teenagers in the games *Ico* and *Lost in Blue*, which imbue the action-adventure genre with an additional layer of emotional affect achieved through a discourse of *amae*-oriented nurture. In these games, player progression hinges upon the wellbeing of a *shōjo* character that must be monitored and protected as the expansive environment is negotiated. Having in the previous chapter examined the relationship between material acquisition, bodily augmentation and spatial negotiation, I will build upon those discursive connections as I examine the representation of the female character configured as both obstacle and key or tool towards successful progress.

Femininity and the Japanese Action-Adventure Game

In *Metroid*, the initially space-suited, gender-unspecific avatar Samus is revealed at the game's successful completion as a young female. As the game's credits roll, her body armour is removed to show her looking out towards the player (now distanced as an eroticized spectacle rather than interactive avatar) stripped to her underwear. The sequels *Metroid II: Return of Samus* (Nintendo, 1992) and *Super Metroid* repeat this device with the added animation, as technologically permitted greater detail, of Samus removing a clip to let her blonde hair cascade around her shoulders, provocatively enhancing the eroticism of the (albeit brief) reward. In *Super Metroid*, the final revelation is dependent on the player finishing the game in under an hour, which requires extensive prior knowledge of the game structure and a significant familiarity with the terrain and object locations.

This phenomenon directly addresses the data consuming and information processing aficionado position of the *otaku*, as the committed, expert player can replay the game at a harder difficulty with Samus in this state of undress.[825] This play incentive strengthens an association between the spatial mastery that is the central project of the

---

[825] See Damon Brown, *Porn and Pong: How Grand Theft Auto, Tomb Raider and other Sexy Games Changed our Culture*, (London: Feral House, 2008), p. 82.

action-adventure game, prodigious knowledge of the game world and the eroticized image of the female body distanced from the player as an exposed object for scrutiny, devoid of the empowering technological armour that enables the avatar to progress through the landscape.

Henry Jenkins refers to this element of *Super Metroid* to illustrate the point that scatological imagery, traditionally associated with the verbal play of young boys, found its way into videogames, which take on an 'overtly misogynistic form, directed against women as a civilizing or controlling force, staged towards women's bodies as a site of physical difference and as the objects of desire/distaste'.[826]

In his assertion that play spaces are gendered female for the pleasure of a male explorer, Jenkins asserts that games involving landscape exploration are aligned firmly with a masculine viewpoint of conquering and spatial mastery, and a male player is addressed by the discourse.[827] Similarly, Gillian Skirrow, in a groundbreaking analysis of 1980s text-based adventure games, argued that videogames 'are about mastering a specifically male anxiety in a specifically male way'.[828] She refers to developmental psychologist Melanie Klein's assertion that young males at play displace that which is threatening onto the inside of the female body, to argue that videogame spaces are representative of a female maternal body as site of anxiety and curiosity.[829] In *Metroid*, avatar Samus' mission is to destroy '*Mother Brain*' in an androgynous warrior suit that features an arguably feminine curve at the waistline but enlarged masculine biceps, shoulders and leg muscle areas. Kinder argues that female players of *Metroid* may be ultimately more comfortable in the knowledge the avatar is female, but that 'they are nevertheless positioned to reject the monstrous maternal and to model themselves after the father'.[830] The titular 'metroids', invasive creatures that attach themselves to a host body and mutate it at a cellular level, must frequently be repelled from Samus, the player maintaining the integrity of the female form as it is guided to a final position as titillating erotic image.

More recently, Ewan Kirkland has conjoined Barbara Creed's concept of the monstrous-feminine and Skirrow's analysis in his discussion of 'maternal engulfment'

---

[826] Jenkins, 'Complete Freedom', in *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*, ed. by Cassell and Jenkins, p. 273.
[827] Jenkins, 'Complete Freedom', in *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*, ed. by Cassell and Jenkins, p. 279.
[828] Gillian Skirrow, 'Hellivision', in *High Theory/Low Culture*, ed. by MacCabe, pp. 115-142 (p. 138).
[829] Gillian Skirrow, 'Hellivision', in *High Theory/Low Culture*, ed. by MacCabe, p.138.
[830] Kinder, *Playing with Power,* p. 107.

in horror videogames, asserting that game spaces, grotesque and womblike, are occupied by castrating monsters, often set against the backdrop of a parental origin storyline.[831] Discussing both Japanese and Western texts, it is indicative for Kirkland that videogame criticism has tended to utilise womb-associated words such as 'immersion, union and symbiosis' to describe the player's pleasurable relationship to the game and avatar.[832] In Barbara Creed's work, the archaic and cavernous spaces of the horror film are entrenched in the imagery of the reproductive female body as a site of male panic and anxiety.[833] Using the work of semiotics scholar Julia Kristeva in her exploration of abjection in the horror film, she finds a range of manifestations of imagery designed to invoke disgust in audiences specifically signifies childbirth, female genitalia and other aspects of the female reproductive body as a threat to the subject's identity stability. The 'central ideological project' of the horror film is a confrontation with and purification of the abject feminine.[834]

For Kirkland, so too is the project of the horror videogame, whose enclosed spaces signify the female body which must be purified through spatial exploration. The wandering adolescent of Japanese videogames is defined at the level of storyline through tensions in relation to origin, family and cultural belonging, with which I have argued the medium is preoccupied, as he is abandoned or separated from parents and journeys outside of a stable domestic space. As Creed writes, 'a reconciliation with the maternal body, the body of our origins, is only possible through an encounter with horror, the abject of our culture.'[835] From this position, we can consider the Japanese videogame in terms of a staging of adolescent identity formation through reconciliation with a place of individual and cultural origin, articulated via mastery and purification of a space that constitutes the maternal body.

As I have observed in the previous chapter, the Japanese videogame representationally privileges fertile pastoral spaces and expansive natural land formations, with particularly lengthy negotiations in each iteration of *Legend of Zelda*, *Metroid* and *Final Fantasy* occurring in underground cave systems and large bodies of

---

831 Ewan Kirkland, 'Maternal Engulfment in Horror Videogames', in *Inter-Disciplinary Journal* (2009), available at: <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/Kirkland-paper.pdf> [Accessed 8.9.13] p. 4.
832 Ewan Kirkland, 'Maternal Engulfment in Horror Videogames', in *Inter-Disciplinary Journal* (2009), available at: <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/Kirkland-paper.pdf> [Accessed 8.9.13] p. 4.
833 See Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis,* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 8-15.
834 Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine,* p. 14
835 Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine,* p. 41.

water, either traversed by boat or investigated by swimming and diving. These environs are teeming with living entities, ranging from sprawling, diverse plantlife to grotesque, hostile creatures. Deploying Kirkland's argument, a penetrative entry into uncharted environments is made in the videogame, with the male avatar mastering the locales through an aggressive subduing and taming of the imaginary mother's monstrous offspring.

In *The Legend of Zelda* series, the titular adolescent princess is a heterosexual desire object that the player is on a trajectory towards obtaining, and as such she is the ultimate goal and inspiration for Link's advancement through the game landscape and the development of his body and abilities. Marsha Kinder argued influentially from a Freudian perspective that Nintendo games of the 1980s possessed an oedipal dimension that appealed principally to male players and marginalised both female characters and players. In her reading, videogames spoke primarily to adolescent boys' fears of castration, involving the player in conflicts between fathers and sons.[836] She sees this pattern in *The Legend of Zelda: The Adventure of Link* (Nintendo, 1987) noting adolescent male Link's activity in comparison to the sleeping girl Zelda's inactivity as he overcomes the powerful male wizard Ganon.[837]

While Kinder argued at an early point in videogame history, her observations hold for the series to date. Later, Havstad and Jahng describe Zelda as a 'vehicle to project transcendence'.[838] They note shrewdly that during the games she stops being perceived as alive and subjective, as in *The Minish Cap* (Nintendo, 1998) she is turned into a stone statue, becoming *literally* an object, and in other games she is objectified through her concealed entrapment in a secret location, the player's final quest goal.[839] While more active guises of Zelda appear when she is disguised as Sheik (*Ocarina of Time*) and Tetra (*Wind Waker*) who influence the game's storyline and landscape in non-playable cut scenes, Zelda has to assume androgynous alternate names and appearances to carry out these masculine actions.[840] As a character in the storyline, there are examples of Zelda motivating Link and the player, pointing out routes through the game and assigning the next short-term goal, which Havstad and Jahng see

---

[836] Kinder, *Playing with Power,* p. 101.

[837] Kinder, *Playing with Power,* p. 105.

[838] Joyce C. Havstad and Iris M. Jahng, 'The Legend of Feminism', in *The Legend of Zelda and Philosophy*, ed. by Luke Cuddy (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2009), pp. 233-244 (p. 242).

[839] Joyce C. Havstad and Iris M, Jahng, 'The Legend of Feminism', in *The Legend of Zelda and Philosophy*, ed. by Cuddy, p. 242.

[840] Joyce C. Havstad and Iris M. Jahng, 'The Legend of Feminism', in *The Legend of Zelda and Philosophy*, ed. by Cuddy, p. 244.

tentatively as a display of strength.[841] However, she is not a playable character, and can only be contrasted to the action and affect of the avatar and player.

These compatible views help to comprehend the male-oriented exploratory structure of *Super Metroid*, the *Legend of Zelda* series and other action-adventure games, as well as the *Final Fantasy* series which I will discuss later, as comprising an interior feminised space of claustrophobic passages populated by grotesque monstrous entities that seek to subsume the avatar and mutilate the adolescent body. The avatar maintains integrity of identity and physicality as the player guides them through the space, mapping out, mastering and purifying its interiors. In the *Metroid* series, the purification of the female body is the project of the game, leading to the ultimate revelation of the girl, now removed of her sanitised, obscuring spacesuit, as erotic object. Similarly, in the *Zelda* series, the goal object is the titular, objectified princess who is released from imprisonment once the game world is rendered freely accessible to the avatar and player.

The *Otaku* and *Moe* femininity in the Japanese Action-Adventure Videogame

Following the adventure/exploration template laid out by the *Metroid* and *Legend of Zelda* series, *Ico* and *Lost in Blue* require the player, controlling an adolescent male avatar, to closely monitor the actions of a non-playable *shōjo* character while negotiating an expansive, cavernous terrain. Ensuring the safety of the teenage girl is essential to progress through the games' spaces, and as she possesses little individual agency that assists strategically, she exists as an object in the game to be observed and manipulated.

The two *shōnen* avatars follow the action-adventure game's trajectory from spatial limitation to free negotiation of the environment as access is gained to further areas of the closed-off game world. Acquisition and incorporation into the body of material objects enables this pleasurable traversal of space, which in these texts is inherently entwined with the female teenager.

I will analyse the representation of the wandering adolescent boy and the *shōjo* in these two games within the context of *otaku* ideals of *moe* and nurture associated with the concept of *amae,* with reference to the *otaku* conceived as a collector and database manager. As I discussed in Chapters Two and Four, the word '*moe*' has

---

[841] Joyce C. Havstad and Iris M. Jahng, 'The Legend of Feminism', in *The Legend of Zelda and Philosophy*, ed. by Cuddy, p. 233.

entered common Japanese parlance to refer to the euphoric response experienced by the *otaku* to a female character design embodying a range of idealised qualities relating to innocence and infantile guilelessness.[842] A discourse of nurture of a passive teenage female character exhibiting these characteristics is integral in the structure of play to successful progress through the landscape of the gameworld. Secondly, both games are action-adventure games following the structure of *Legend of Zelda* in their emphasis on landscape exploration and the collection of objects. Coupled with *Lost in Blue*'s focus on data manipulation, they articulate a discourse of material acquisition in relation to the *shōjo*, whose representation in the contemporary Japanese media, as I have discussed in Chapter Four, expressed both optimism and anxiety around consumerism and rapid social change.

A key moment in the development of *anime, manga* and videogame *shōjo* representation occurs in the first episode of *Evangelion* when Shinji encounters the character Ayanami Rei for the first time. Rei's image is arguably the most widely circulated in the *otaku* world of merchandising to the present day, and in the years immediately following the series' airing, figurines in her likeness sold in vast quantities.[843] Her representation galvanised both *anime* and videogame industries towards articulations of *moe* idealised femininity, and consideration of her construction and legacy can help us to comprehend the *moe* ideals articulated within the Japanese videogame's depictions of the *shōjo.* As Galbraith affirms, the 'doll-like and semi-human' Rei is recognised as the 'single most popular and influential character in the history of *otaku anime;* fans still isolate parts of the character to amplify and rearticulate in fan-produced works to inspire *moe'.*[844] In Japanese fan discourses, Rei is reoriented as 'a target for mating and marriage' where in *Evangelion* she remains firmly closed off from the world of relationships and the domestic.[845]

When Shinji is unsure whether to pilot the *Eva mecha*, he considers fleeing the NERV base after an uncomfortable reunion with his absent father that triggers his traumatic memory of childhood abandonment. Belittled and infantilised by the scenario, Shinji is petulant and anxious as he turns to leave and is confronted by the image of an unconscious Rei carried on a medical trolley after a fraught Angel battle. Tremors cause her to fall from her bed, and the previously passive Shinji is galvanised suddenly to rush

---

[842] See Patrick Galbraith, '*Moe* and the Potential of Fantasy in Post-Millennial Japan', *EJCJS* (2009).
[843] Hiroki, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, p. 51; Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, p. 205.
[844] Patrick Galbraith, 'Moe and the Potential of Fantasy', in EJCJS (2009), para. 10.
[845] Patrick Galbraith, 'Moe and the Potential of Fantasy', in EJCJS (2009), para. 14.

to her aid. In a nurturing parental embrace, Shinji subjects Rei to a prolonged gaze. The camera tracks slowly up the length of her body, her tightly fitted suit eroticising her pubescent femininity (*moe*, it is important to remember, is derived from *moeru*, 'budding', and the bodily signifiers of both child and woman are essential components in its articulation). Rei's physical frailty and limitations are centralised, her agency and autonomy compromised as her arm and head are swathed in bandages, and her blood as it covers Shinji's hand causes him to panic. Steeling himself, Shinji is inspired by this encounter with Rei and asserts he will pilot the *Eva* as the adjacent machine hums approvingly.

Insubstantiality is inscribed into Rei's design and character through multiple layers. In addition to her physical and mental frailty and frequent lack of focus, she is revealed to be a clone with the soul of an angel and therefore an ethereal being who exists outside of the real. As I have argued in Chapter Four in relation to, for example, *Serial Experiments Lain,* the discursive tensions within the Japanese cultural epistemology of the *shōjo* position her uncomfortably straddling dichotomies of anxiety and optimism; chastity and promiscuity; reification and denigration. Through her liminality, Rei exemplifies these vacillations and inspires co-existent contradictory drives in both Shinji and her real-world consumers.

Shinji's immediate fascination with and drive towards proximity to Rei is partly explained later through the fact she is a clone of his dead mother. Through the series she is variously attentive to other characters' emotional needs and in continual need of reassurance herself. With these simultaneous connotations of both nurturing mother and dependent daughter, divinity and infantilism exist simultaneously within the discourse that is Ayanami Rei, producing a figure that is to be worshipped, nurtured and consumed from oscillating subject positions of dominance and subordination.

This *otaku* discourse of *moe* infantilism and nurture can help us to understand the construction of the *shōjo* and *shōnen* relationship in *Ico* and *Lost in Blue*, in conjunction with their focus on exploration and acquisition. How do these videogames address the *otaku* and what do they share with *anime* in their representation of spatial negotiation and their depiction of the *shōjo*?

Returning to the concept of *amae* nurture and co-dependency, and its relevance to *otaku* discourse of *moe* attachment can give us insight into the gender dynamic present in *Ico* and *Lost in Blue.* Focused nurture by a male avatar of a female character is integral to *bishōjo* 'dating simulations' or sexually-explicit *eroge* ('erotic games', as

discussed in relation to *Welcome to the NHK* in Chapter Three).[846] One of the most successful simulations of this kind was the *Evangelion*-based *Ayanami Nurturing Project* (*Shin Seiki Evangelion: Ayanami Ikusei Keikaku,* Gainax, 2001), which placed the player in the nurturing and monitoring role of a NERV officer charged with constructing Ayanami Rei's daily routine and ensuring her healthy development through the course of the series and film's storyline.[847] In the game, Rei is incapable of subjective decision-making, and her experience is entirely dependent on instruction from the player. With *Ico* and *Lost in Blue,* a dynamic of *shōnen* and *shōjo* adolescent co-dependency found itself represented influentially in a mainstream genre.

Ico

In *Ico*, the titular avatar is a young adolescent boy initially imprisoned in a vast, labyrinthine castle comprised of interconnecting chambers and walkways. Each chamber has an entrance and potential exits, and through observation of cause-and-effect, the player shunts objects around in the space in order to create platforms that can be climbed in order to reach inaccessible areas.

Like *Zelda*, the game privileges the pastoral landscape and the pre-modern. A dialogue and text-free cinematic cutscene shows *Ico* taken from his rural village home, caged and transported to an expansive looming castle set deep in the natural landscape, communicating to the player that he has been offered for sacrifice by the other villagers as he is on the cusp of adolescence, marked by the sprouting of two horns either side of his head. The depiction of Ico's abandonment is initially melancholic and shows him exiled from his home, but the castle then becomes a site for development through mastery over the infested space.

A pastoral elegance is inscribed into the game as ambient sounds of birdsong and wind dominate the aural palette, and the occasional game music is lilting and sonorous. The locales are peaceful, expansively spacious and represented in subdued naturalistic brown and grey hues that signify the natural landscape, and so that despite

---

[846] While the yearly market accounts for ¥25 billion, the number of individual players is estimated at 200,000, which is comparatively fewer than players of mainstream console releases. See Patrick Galbraith, '"Techno-Intimacy" and the Virtually Human in Japan', in *Game Studies,* Vol. 11, No. 2 (May 2011), available at: http://gamestudies.org/1102/articles/galbraith [accessed 26.8.2013].
[847] See Hiroki, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals,* p. 48.

moments of peril, exploration of the castle is often a gently immersive aesthetic experience.

Ico encourages immersion through the unbroken aesthetic cohesion of the game-world coupled with its theme of adolescent abandonment and self-reliance. Gregerson and Grodal suggest that the game does not present itself as an 'artifact of audiovisual and ludic fiction', as there is an absence of points to score, a health meter or 'pointers to the world of the player'.[848] The game's designer Ueda Fumito expressed that his intentions with the groundbreaking game were to apply a method of 'subtracting design' in which any perceived obstacles to player immersion in the gameworld were removed.[849] These elements included text-based menu screens, item acquisition screens like those seen in The Legend of Zelda and any abstract onscreen representations of the player's health status (in Zelda this is measured graphically through heart icons). The result of this is that the representation of the space of the gameworld is unbroken and uninterrupted.

The pre-industrial architecture of Ico's castle is expressed through solidity, comprised of heavy stone blocks and solid wood, its windows ornate with stained glass. This connotes both the archaic, ancient nature of the space and emphasises a tangibility as the adolescent interacts with the environment and its objects. Objects are engaged with in frequent tactile appropriations that see Ico struggling as he lends his full weight to the movement of the castle's interactive features. Mechanisms throughout the technology-free game are complex constructions of wood, stone weights and pulleys. Ico emits an involuntary grunt of straining, and the player receives a small feedback vibration through the controller when Ico exerts himself. These elements combine to enforce the sense of the corporeality of the boy and his surroundings, and the removal of onscreen displays enhances this illusion of solidity.

The physically active shōnen takes up a nurturing, guiding role to Yorda, who like Evangelion's Rei is introduced through her physical frailty, insubstantiality and entrapment. Hanging suspended in a cage at the centre of an enormous room, a spectacle is made of Yorda's imprisonment and lack of agency, her delicate ghostly hands barely able to grasp the bars that surround her. Conversely, Ico scales a vast stone wall, operates a complex lever and chain system and leaps acrobatically onto the cage to

[848] Andreas Gregerson and Torben Grodal, 'Embodiment and Interface', in The Video Game Theory Reader 2, ed. by Wolf and Perron, pp. 65-84 (p. 79).
[849] 'The Method of Developing Ico', 1up.com, available at: <http://www.1up.com/features/method-developing-ico> [accessed: 8.9.13].

free her by repeatedly smashing the rusty chain with a stick. Crashing to the ground, they emerge unscathed as the cage shatters.

In the face of this reinforced corporeality and assertion of male physical activity, Yorda tiptoes delicately through the chambers of the castle, her white flowing robe glinting in the sunlight emphasising her slightness and lack of physical effect on her surroundings. Yorda is unable to navigate the castle alone, and the spectacularly active Ico interacts with the material aspect of the castle, principally by pushing and dragging large blocks into the correct areas, climbing on top of them and reaching down to pull the girl up to previously unreachable areas.

At various points, abject black lesion-like entities that produce trails of dark vapour emerge from portals in the castle floors, figuring representationally as extensions of the hostile game space. Conflict in the game occurs at moments when the *shōjo* becomes a contested object of the game space, commodified as the adolescent avatar and the black monsters fight for possession of her body. This again is figured in dramatically tactile terms, as the frail, passive girl is hauled aggressively over the shoulder of the attacking creature and dragged into a gaping portal. As she submerges into the floor, her arms flail in distress emphasising her physical insubstantiality and dependence on the *shōnen* for protection from peril. While the standard for videogames is that the avatar's body that must be shielded, and the avatar's death that results in the unsuccessful end of the game, here the non-playable female character embodies that position. While *Ico* does not possess a graphical 'health meter', and the creatures will just bat the boy away, Yorda takes the form of a measure of depleting resources as she is sucked gradually into the floor, thus weakness, frailty and human limitation is placed onto the feminine body within the game. While Ico will die if he falls too far, he can sustain a substantial drop of up to three stories, while Yorda will not even attempt such daring, experimental activities. This simultaneously freights Yorda with a divine significance while acknowledging her frailty and infantilism, chiming with the representation of Ayanami Rei in the *moe* discourse of *Evangelion.* Combat moments constitute a purification of the hostile environment in order to maintain the discrete, pure form of the adolescent female body as distinct, defined and unsullied.

Kirkland's view that videogames imbue ludic tasks with narrative significance for the player is borne out in *Ico*, where object manipulation carries with it emotional resonance at the representational level.[850] Yorda herself is an unruly object that is monitored, controlled and manipulated to produce the desired effect on the game world.

---

[850] Ewan Kirkland, 'Storytelling', in *Horror Video Games*, ed. by Perron, p. 73.

The girl functions as an obstacle to progress, but Ico cannot decide to simply abandon her as, while passive, she acts as a key for access to further levels of the game terrain.

The *shōjo* is fundamentally associated with the physical construction of the castle, exhibiting a unique relationship to the game world through an undisclosed magical effect which shifts certain large impenetrable blocks encountered at various points, functioning as a tool for continued exploration of the game world. Enhancements to the *shōnen* avatar's ability to negotiate the space of the gameworld are announced triumphantly, as the graphical display surrounding Yorda as she manipulates the heavy blockages is a dramatic, colourful release of energy in comparison to the subdued stillness of the majority of the game. While she takes on the appearance in these spectacular moments of released energy of a magically empowered *mahō shōjo*, female agency is completely removed from the discourse. The eruption of landscape altering magic from the teenage girl is entirely involuntary and occurs when Ico brings her into close proximity to the obstruction. The insubstantial *shōjo* has scant subjective agency, and in this way, the *shōjo* is constructed as an object with use value in relation to the environment, entirely in service to the *shōnen*'s agenda of mapping and mastery, pushing forward against the boundaries of the game space.

Kirkland's view of maternal engulfment and the previously outlined exploration and purification structure of the action-adventure game can help us comprehend the adolescent negotiation of the castle. As uprooted wandering adolescents outside of the domestic space, Ico and Yorda here struggle for independence and self-definition within an environment overseen by the dominating, omnipresent parental figure of Yorda's mother, who requires her daughter's life essence to continue to live, and from whom the girl seeks to free herself. A witch-like antagonist, she entraps her daughter and the boy, emerging occasionally from the castle ground at will as an omniscient and totalising presence that is expressed through the landscape itself, signified throughout the game via cavernous womb-like spaces. This discourse of the adolescent struggle for self-reliance has an interesting consonance with the previously discussed phenomenon of *amae* co-dependency, and the assertion by *hikikomori* scholar Saitō Tamaki that mothers are often found by psychologists in Japan to be complicit through over-nurture in the isolation of their children.[851] Yorda seeks to free herself from a situation of co-dependence and escape from the entrapping familial home, reimagined into an enveloping site of entrapment and psychological trauma with the mother reimagined into a overpowering deity intent on quashing adolescent subjectivity. On the other side

---

[851] Zielenziger, *Shutting out the Sun,* p. 65.

of this representation of *amae*, the active nurture of the *shōjo* by the *shōnen* is encouraged, supported and given emotional resonance and goal-oriented impetus.

Where slice-of-life *anime Azumanga Daoih!* and *K-On!* address *otaku* audiences through allowing privileged access into the daily lives of high school girls with an accompanying intimacy that emphasises *amae* co-dependent nurture, *Ico* requires that the *shōnen* maintain proximity to the girl at all times, observing her behaviour closely and anticipating the frequent moments when she will wander off idly without goal. The player depresses a button on the controller to make Ico hold the flighty, vacant Yorda's hand to drag her to desired areas. Responding to Yorda's insubstantiality and compromised subjectivity, King and Krzywinska rightly note that in *Ico*, masculinity is represented as 'active, resourceful, powerful', while femininity, in the slight, frail depiction of Yorda, is 'weak and in need of strong male protection'.[852] Control over the female body here equates to control of the game space.

This discourse of control and female passivity is heavily concealed by emotional affect achieved at the representational level, leading scholars and critics to praise the game's embodiment of emotional affect.[853] Gregerson and Grodal indeed emphasise the principal themes communicated in *Ico* as emotional, the game embodying issues of 'solitude, bonding and attachment,' through Ico and Yorda's physical relationship and the relationship expressed by the developing storyline.[854] The emotional import of their relationship is carried through the brief cinematic cutscenes depicting the adolescents' tentative initial codependency and subsequent developing companionship as moments of peril for one character elicit desperate, traumatic emotional responses from the other. Their abandonment and melancholy reinforce this sense of the desperate need for connection. Similarly, Jarvinen illustrates the emotional affect of certain games through comparison of *Ico* with the more basic 1980s *Thrust* (Superior Software, 1986). Both games involve the collection and placement of an object from one location to the next (in *Thrust* a spaceship ferries a volatile fuel pod through a cavernous maze). The 'emotional constitution of their design' separates them.[855]

Yorda does not evoke merely 'goal' emotions, but the encouragement of 'feelings of empathy and the desire to nurture' that are embodied by the game's design,

---

[852] King and Krzywinska, *Tomb Raiders and Space Invaders*, p. 179.
[853] See Chris Kohler, 'The Obscure Cult Game that's Secretly Inspiring Everything', *Wired.com* (2013), available at: http://www.wired.com/gamelife/2013/09/ico/ [accessed 13.9.13].
[854] Andreas Gregerson and Torben Grodal, 'Embodiment and Interface', in *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, pp. 65-84 (p. 79).
[855] Aki Jarvinen, 'Emotional Experiences', in *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, pp. 85-108 (p. 97).

the plight of wandering adolescents Ico and Yorda eliciting emotions in the player that express empathic concern for the experiences of others.[856] Bolstered by this emotional engagement, the player experiences pleasure as a result of curiosity as both the elements of exploring and the storyline unfold.[857] There is tension between the game's mechanics and its insistence on the significance of the emotional bond between the adolescents. While Yorda can be, in ludic terms, reduced to an object that must be manipulated in order to proceed through the game terrain, the emotionally evocative gesture of hand-holding articulates human contact and interdependency, just as the game's discourse simultaneously removes agency from the female.

Finally, there is doubt cast at the game's ambiguous climax as to whether Yorda exists or is an insubstantial ghost or a dream projected by Ico into the environment. There is an interesting parallel here with the findings of analysis in Chapter Four of the wandering adolescent girl in the *anime Lain*, *Witchhunter Robin* and *Boogiepop Phantom*. At the climax of these series, the *shōjo* exists in an insubstantial liminal state that stages discourses of uncertainty around the high school girl in contemporary Japan, where she operates as a symbol of cultural change around which circulates both anxiety and optimism. Yorda similarly embodies this discursive attitude to the *shōjo*, simultaneously infantile and possessing the powers of a deity.

Lost in Blue

Lost in Blue has much in common with the slice-of-life *anime* genre and its representation of quotidian routine. In the slice-of-life genre, the *shōjo*'s daily life is depicted as wholesome and benevolent, her actions comfortably maintaining the status quo and celebrating peer solidarity and group dynamics. The gameplay mechanism of *Lost in Blue* adds the interactive dimension of deadline-oriented peril to the close surveillance of the *shōjo*, as her wellbeing needs to be closely monitored by the player or the game will end negatively. In Chapter Four I have assessed the wandering adolescent of *anime*'s relationship to debates around the breakdown of the family and the nomadic experience of space in contemporary Japan. Viewing *Lost in Blue* at this conjunction generates an interesting tension between entrapment and liberation in which

---

[856] Aki Jarvinen, 'Emotional Experiences', in *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, p. 98.
[857] Aki Jarvinen, 'Emotional Experiences', in *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, ed. by Wolf and Perron, p. 104.

the formation of a domestic space between the *shōjo* and *shōnen* facilitates player autonomy and stability.

Lost in Blue combines the emotive representation of adolescent male/female interdependency and player scrutiny of the *shōjo* seen in *Ico* with a numeric economic system of consumption and exchange derived from the RPG. The game's control system, utilising the stylus and touchscreen device of the Nintendo DS console, features an amplification of player input that increases as the game space is mapped out and the needs of the female character are catered to.

The male wandering adolescent avatar is a boy shipwrecked on a primitive desert island who performs an active nurturing role to a passive, unplayable female teenager. Her slender appearance, like Yorda's, is strongly reminiscent of Ayanami Rei, and the player is constantly reminded of her physical restrictions through the fetishistic bandage that remains secured to her thigh in a reproduction of a garter belt that connotes both eroticism and childlike weakness. Cast in *moe* terms of nurture and frailty, her limited agency is also articulated through the fact her glasses have been damaged after the shipwreck and her faculties are compromised. As such she is unable to fend for herself and will not travel without coercion and assistance outside of the confines of the beachside cave, a space that develops through play into a representation of the domestic *katei* (the space inhabited by the Japanese family).

As we have seen in *Legend of Zelda* games, the exploring and collecting agenda of the game associates acquisition and consumption of objects with a consequent adolescent physical development and spatial mastery. This mastery through negotiation and mapping out of the game's contested space, the labyrinthine island, is enabled through the amassing of edible and useful objects secreted through the landscape. Emphasising the pleasure of the spatial fantasy of liberated autonomy and despite the dire survival implications of the situation the game's tone and atmosphere are surprisingly far from tense and suspenseful. The lush, pastoral and idyllic island is configured as a peaceful liberating space for the wandering adolescent's exploration, and the game music is lilting and sonorous as the boy maps and navigates the landscape.

Engagement with the island's locales and objects becomes, returning to de Certeau's terms, a tactical appropriation of the space in which the boy fashions crude mechanical objects from natural materials found strewn about the play area, constructing progressively more intricate tools that are couched in terms of a deeper

interaction with the virtual environment.[858] As the game progresses, the wandering of the adolescent becomes increasingly freely experienced. The formation of a pseudo-familial environment here leads to a *flâneur*-like nomadicism through which the teenage avatar roams the island with decreased temporal and spatial restrictions.[859] Initially able to make only short trips away from the cave, once a stable domestic situation is established the length of time the teenager can remain outside of the new home increases.

The passive girl is bound to her place inside the beachside cave and is unable to seek out food. Her agency is utterly compromised, as she will not suggest survival strategies and relies on the *shōnen* to wander the island amassing objects that will sustain her. A meter depletes as time passes, indicating the boy and girl's health levels. If either value reaches zero, the boy or girl dies and the game ends unsuccessfully. Like Yorda, the girl is an unruly game object that behaves as an aspect of the world to be manipulated, demanding focused nurture at the representational level as an obstacle to player progress, rather than as a character with subjective autonomy.

Just as Yorda becomes a tool for entry to inaccessible areas of the castle, *Lost in Blue*'s *shōjo* generates the means to move beyond spatial obstacles as she volunteers to make useful objects out of items the boy amasses as he scours the island that will enable further exploration of the space. Here, the boy is constructed as explorer and collector while the girl is confined to mundane tasks. Although her ability to construct useful items suggests the implication of agency and articulates the female as an active producer and contributor, her constructions are firmly rooted in the domestic. While the boy creates penetrative weapons to hunt wild animals, the girl assembles a bed that significantly replenishes the teenagers' health levels when slept in. The formation of the domestic constitutes a fantasy of physical intimacy between the teenagers.

Embedded in *Lost in Blue* is the requirement for strict monitoring of the teenage female. Scrutiny of the *shōjo* is not merely acceptable, but necessary to gameplay as her consumer tastes are observed, recorded and satisfied by the wandering adolescent avatar and player. Like Yorda, the girl is intrinsically linked to the island's landscape via the player's freedom to map out and explore the terrain. Adding to the template established by *Ico*'s *shōjo, Lost in Blue*'s commodified pastoral idyll casts the girl as a demanding consumption-driven being whose precise requirements need to be met as greater ability

---

[858] See Michel De Certeau, 'Walking in the City' in *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. by Steven Rendall (California; London: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 91-110.
[859] See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project (Das Passagen-Werk),* trans. by Rolf Tiedemann, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 416-455.

to procure more sustaining foods enables the player to venture farther from her before having to complete the return journey to furnish her with food. Deeper into the island, the player acquires objects necessary to construct the parts of artefacts which enable further progress without the restriction of arduous repeated return travel and the repetitive collection of items.

The *otaku* as consumer of *moe* discourse coincides with the *otaku* as 'database animal' and committed collector.[860] Statistical cause-and-effect is made significant through emotional implication at the representational level in *Lost in Blue*, as what is essentially an economic stock exchange of rising and depleting numeric values with mathematical relativity is presented in terms of human survival and interpersonal dependency. When objects required to create fire are obtained, the girl will prepare meals based on ingredients/food units handed to her by the player. In similar terms to the gift-giving mechanic seen in *Harvest Moon,* the girl will not suggest correct combinations, and the player observes the outcome of pairings through trial and error, attempting to appease the critical girl whose exaggerated, infantile responses (figured as text and still facial graphics) range from scornful disgust to grateful enthusiasm. In this way she represents the *moe* subtype of the *tsundere* ('icy-hot') *shōjo* figure that oscillates between aloofness towards the *shōnen* that masks a tentative affection that ultimately results in cooperation.[861] These emotional responses and character attributes correlate statistically in a complex database to the numeric level the meal will add to the girl's health meter. Gameplay and representational attributes here establish a commodified domestic space in which cordial relations (and game success) depend upon material acquisition and optimum consumption habits.

We can consider the representation of boy-as-producer and girl-as-consumer within the parameters of the reorientation of *otaku* discourse in the Cool Japan initiative as laid out by Laura Miller (discussed in Chapter Four).[862] In *Lost in Blue*'s commodified, objectified terrain-made-database, the boy as *otaku* is an active producer reworking his environment into objects with use and consumption value. Meanwhile, in line with Miller's arguments, the *shōjo* is confined to a passive position as an infantilised manifestation of *kawaii* consumerism, where she is defined by her avid consumption habits.

---

[860] See Azuma, *Otaku*, p. 36.
[861] As discussed in Chapter Two, see Patrick Galbraith, '*Moe* and the Potential of Fantasy', in *EJCJS* (2009),
[862] See Laura Miller, 'Cute as Masquerade', in *IJoJS* (2011), 18-29.

Lost in Blue adapts the *amae*-heightening hand holding device used in *Ico*. Both games create a sense of emotional and physical intimacy as they exhibit a dynamic of male activity and female passivity in a fantasy of male power and agency where the *shōjo* is at the mercy of the boy's actions. When it becomes necessary for the girl to accompany the avatar to a location further inland to enable investigation of newly accessible areas, the girl will not follow the boy autonomously but requires the player to drag her forcibly and assist her in negotiating rock faces and ravines.

The bodily augmentation of the avatar by material objects is reinforced through the adaptive player control system, as the Nintendo DS stylus becomes a referent to the objects the boy constructs. When fishing, the third-person viewpoint changes to first-person perspective of the sea surface, and the player jabs at the screen as fish circulate. Each jab results in a thrust of the spear, which with player dexterity results in the capture of fish. As more efficacious tools are constructed from acquired objects found in newly accessible areas of the game-world, manipulation of the stylus stands in for increasingly efficient killing tools. The player's input is amplified exponentially with greater influence on the game-world enabled as a result of spatial exploration and keen observation of the female adolescent.

A more recent game that exhibits many of the characteristics of the *shōjo-shōnen* dynamic exemplified by *Ico* and *Lost in Blue* is *Pandora's Tower* (Nintendo, 2011) in which the adolescent male explorer negotiates a series of labyrinthine towers to procure the means to cure his cursed lover. Active exploring and spatial activities is again the arena of the male, while the female waits inactive within the *katei* space unless requested to attend to domestic tasks like meal preparation and the sewing of garments. Like *Lost in Blue* she will only cook what is brought to her and will not make executive strategic decisions, though an active learned intellect is implied through her ability to translate ancient texts upon request.

In a gruesome depiction of excessive consumption that creates an interesting discursive tension with the debate around the *shōjo* as a consumerism-oriented being and works against the action-adventure game's interest in material acquisition, the game progresses towards a forced curbing of the girls fevered appetite. On the one hand, the player must develop the bond between *shōjo* and *shōnen* through the giving of regular purchased gifts to the housebound girl. Despite the travelling merchant woman arriving to the house upon demand, the girl is restricted from purchasing her own items. On the other, the curse slowly transforms the *shōjo* into a grotesque monster, so the wandering *shōnen* must make regular trips back to the home to provide her with temporary antidote

in the form of monster flesh procured from the creature-infested towers. The female body here becomes the site of abjection in two ways that highlight the ideals of feminine adolescence sharply. Firstly, the frail and insubstantial girl is forced to consume large quantities of grotesquely pulsing raw flesh, which as the game progresses she begins to enjoy. This enjoyment is a source of shame for the girl, who recoils in embarrassment after the act. Secondly, as she gradually transforms, her skin is tainted by purple lesions and her body becomes grotesquely deformed and slimily amphibian. The act of exploration and collection for the wandering adolescent boy becomes a quest to maintain the discrete, closed off surface of the teenage female body, and a reorientation of the *shōjo* from a gruesome, excessive and monstrous consumer into a demure, chaste and optimistic figure. This is made all the more problematic through the fact that the means to achieve this has the *shōjo* consuming progressively more foul and enormous hunks of monstrous meat in order to magically cleanse herself of the curse and the need to consume.

Conclusion

Both games discussed in this section can be understood as *otaku* fantasies in which the *shōjo* and *shōnen* are isolated in the unfamiliar environment together, necessitating social interaction and a close physical proximity. Considering the representation of the *shōjo* in the Japanese action-adventure videogame in relation to the integral game discourses of spatial mastery and material acquisition, it becomes apparent that female teenage characters are intrinsically linked to the game's landscape as objects to be monitored, manipulated and mastered as a feature of the environment. From a discursive position taking into account *otaku*-oriented *moe* traits, we can view the non-playable, passive *shōjo* as embodying ideals of appealing infantilism, in a codependent *amae* bond requiring nurture from the willing adolescent male.

In *Lost in Blue,* the *shōjo* is conceived in the game's discourse as a demanding consumer with specific requirements that she will not disclose, binding spatial negotiation with a simultaneous appeasement of the teenage girl through satisfying her consumption needs. This reinforces the *amae* bond of codependency encouraged by the game at both representational and ludic levels, and enhances the *moe* discourse of female infantilism and concurrent nurture.

In the final chapter on videogames, I will build upon the cumulative findings of this chapter and the preceding in order to analyse the representation of entrapped and liberated adolescents in the *Final Fantasy* series, considering the dynamics of play in the Japanese RPG in relation to its representation of character and the delivery of complex storyline through animated cutscenes.

Chapter Nine: Adolescent Spatial Entrapment and Liberation in the *Final Fantasy* Series

In this chapter I will develop discussion of the wandering adolescent in the Japanese videogame through analysis of the Role-Playing Game as exemplified by the *Final Fantasy* series. I am particularly interested here in the complex, detailed storylines, large casts of characters and intricate relationships that these games present, their representational complexity closer to *anime* or *manga* than games in other genres which prioritise action over the delivery of story. Focusing on the industrially pivotal and groundbreaking *Final Fantasy 7* as a case study, I will analyse the representation of the adolescent within non-playable cinematic cut-scenes into discussion of the Japanese videogame's organisational principles of spatial negotiation and material acquisition. The RPG is arguably the genre most invested in these activities owing to the intricacy of its economic system, and the sheer expansiveness of the game terrain negotiated by the avatar.

In my analysis of the series, I will discuss the comparative preoccupations of storyline in relation to teenage wandering, collecting and exploring; the significance of cutscenes to the games' discourses; and the mechanics of player interactivity. In carrying this out, I will pursue a range of issues that the previous chapters have explored, including the representation of spatial mastery, the commodification of game space and issues of gender within the Japanese videogame.

In the final section of the chapter I will look at themes of adolescent entrapment and liberation as borne out by the *Final Fantasy* series in relation to the depiction in cinematic cutscenes of the tragic *shōjo* character Aeris Gainsborough of *Final Fantasy 7.*

The Wandering Adolescents of the *Final Fantasy* Series

William Huber characterises the *Final Fantasy* series as possessing 'epic themes… exhaustive dramatis personae… fantastic cosmological preoccupations'.[863] While the stories of *Legend of Zelda*, *Ico*, and *Lost in Blue* are simplistic and uneventful with little emphasis on dialogue or character development, the complex storylines of the

---

[863] William Huber, 'Epic Spatialities: The Production of Space in *Final Fantasy* Games', in *Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives*, ed. by Noah Wardrip-fruin and Pat Harrigan, (Cambridge, MA; MIT Press, 2009), pp. 373-384 (p. 373).

Final Fantasy[864] series lend psychological motivation and global scale to the games' play structure of object acquisition, physical development and terrain negotiation. The series associates mastery of a numerically represented economic system and the transcendence of spatial restriction with the development of the conflicted teenage male psyche leading to the teenager's socialisation.

The games hinge on a dynamic that emphasises an initial entrapment that is both social and spatial, progressively leading to a liberated control of the game space. There is a tension created here between storyline and interactivity with the fact that while the player moves towards a state in which the variety of locales that comprise the enormous game world are freely accessible, the prescribed storyline unfolds in a linear fashion, and animated sequences are played at specific junctures as play progresses. Illustrating this, Mia Consalvo uses the example of *FF9* in her discussion of sexuality in videogames, but her assertions are equally applicable to the other games in the series as she finds that the game's storyline 'idealises compulsory heterosexuality'.[865] Player choice in *Final Fantasy* games resides at the ludic level but there is little option to alter the predetermined storyline. Consalvo emphasises that regardless of the strategies employed by the player and no matter which available choices are taken (so long as battles are won and conditions of play are met) *FF9*'s *shōjo* Garnet and *shōnen* Zidane will still enter into a heterosexual relationship.[866]

In this chapter I will examine the ways in which storyline and character intersect for the player within the actual process of play. While characters will not mention in their dialogue the vast quantities of weapons, items, keys and other ephemera that are acquired on the journey, nor the statistical manipulation and database management required to adequately equip the team of adolescents, this forms a central component of play and thus an important part of how the game and its story is experienced by the player, contributing significantly to its discourse.

Each game is set in the initially restrictive contested space of a country at war or occupied by an invading enemy, with the wandering adolescent cast introduced as would-be empowered liberators. The combination of the games' narrative and ludic structure privileges adolescent material acquisition and relationship to objects, asserting item and data collection as a route to spatial liberation, identity formation and socially meaningful action.

---

[864] Hereafter *FF* plus the number of the edition; e.g. *FF7*. It is general practice to employ Roman numerals when referring to the series, but this often makes for confusing text.
[865] Consalvo, 'Hot Dates', in The Video Game Theory Reader, ed. by Wolf and Perron, p. 174.
[866] Consalvo, 'Hot Dates', in The Video Game Theory Reader, ed. by Wolf and Perron, p. 179.

Common to the storylines of *FF7*, *FF8*, *FF9* and *FF10* is the representation of a wandering male adolescent avatar beset by anxieties relating to childhood and parental origin. Following Kirkland's observations, and following the apocalyptic narrative of *Evangelion*, engulfment by an expansive maternal presence features as a principle threat in each of the games, and the resolution of a paternal conflict is often integral to the wandering teenager's identity stability. At the representational level of character and storyline, psychological development and self-awareness are linked to the adolescent ability to negotiate space.

Play from beginning to end of each game is lengthy, and can take anywhere between 50 to 100 solid hours for a first time player to reach the storyline's conclusion. The first ten to fifteen hours of play in *FF7* occur in the spatially restrictive, overcrowded urban landscape of Midgar city. A commodified environment characterised by looming corporations in skyscrapers and the sprawling, restrictive marketplace of Walmarket, the player is guided on a linear pathway through this densely populated environment with little opportunity for diversion or exploration. Avatar and protagonist Cloud discovers during the game that his memories of being a high-ranking, decorated soldier are falsely implanted and he undergoes an identity crisis. A contemplative, wistful dialogue exchange in the game's early stages have wandering female adolescent companion Tifa asking Cloud to reminisce about their childhood experiences together, but Cloud is reluctant and detached as his memory is vague and incomplete. At this point, the pair is situated in the claustrophobic urban space of Midgar city encircled by looming industrial structures. Much later in the game, when the majority of the largely pastoral and expansive game landscape is accessible, Cloud suffers a climactic psychological breakdown as his memory begins to surface, with the player briefly controlling Tifa as avatar completing a series of tasks that will restore his mental and physical health. Like *Evangelion*, the identity stability of the adolescent is integral to the stability of the environment and has global ramifications. In *FF7*, this is augmented by the discourse of increased player interactivity experienced in conjunction with the storyline's representation of the stabilisation of the adolescent psyche. Viewed as a psychotherapeutic journey, *FF7* stages an initial entrapment and subsequent mastery of space, as previously discussed in relation to *Legend of Zelda*, intrinsically connected to adolescent psychological integrity and identity formation.

The story reveals Cloud and antagonist Sephiroth to be the parthenogenetic clone offspring of the monstrous maternal entity Jenova, with Sephiroth attempting to bring about temporal and spatial destruction through a restoration of Jenova's essence.

This apocalyptic intention mirrors the drive towards instrumentality carried out by Shinji's father in *Evangelion*. Given the game's preoccupation with commodity collection and exchange, material acquisition and spatial exploration are privileged as avenues to psychological development and the ability to overcome the monstrous feminine presence. When Cloud's memory is cohesive and his identity stabilised in conjunction with the acquired ability to traverse the game world freely, he sets about thwarting Sephiroth and Jenova in the game's final section.

The band of orphaned wandering adolescents comprising the cast of *FF8* study and train in the military academy Balamb Garden, with the surfacing of repressed memories near the game's climax revealing that they were raised together in an orphanage. Hazy flashback sequences occurring at intervals throughout the game show protagonist Squall's repressed memories of childhood gradually returning, causing him physical pain and psychological anxiety. Dialogue exchanges characterise the boy as emotionally reticent and antisocial, explained in flashbacks peppered through the game that this is derived from his apparent childhood abandonment by a vaguely recalled parental sister figure.

Distrust of women, who are uniquely susceptible to supernatural influence, runs through *FF8*'s storyline, which follows a process of the concurrent purification of the female body from possession and of the polluted, monster-populated landscape. The monstrous maternal antagonist of the game is revealed to be the sorceress Ultimecia, who like Jenova threatens to collapse reality with the merging of all time into a single instance in which she is the sole totalising, all-encompassing presence. Adolescent identity and subjectivity are contested in the game's storyline, and material acquisition and terrain mastery through wandering reinstates the security of the adolescent ego. Ultimecia, from a position outside time, has manipulated events throughout the characters' lives and compromised their ability to access their own memories, taking possession of female characters through the game, including fellow *shōjo* wanderer Rinoa, with whom Squall bonds romantically.

The activities of acquisition and consumption of objects, and the mapping out and negotiation of the game's terrain trigger the return of Squall's childhood recollection which equips him with the knowledge and psychological stability required to enter into a final confrontation with this monstrous mother figure and ultimately pursue romance with Rinoa. His ego secured through this developmental process, the feminine is redeemed and made unthreatening to Squall via the expulsion of Ultimecia's influence over the placid, *moe*-oriented Rinoa, and the revelation of the absent sister

figure to be the meek and subdued Ellone, whose history the player has seen in a flashback storyline delivered concurrently to that in the present. The absent parental figure is ultimately redeemed in the story and made a martyr, as Ellone, in possession of powers of temporal control required by Ultimecia, was moved from the orphanage in secrecy so as not to be corrupted.

FF10's wandering adolescent avatar Tidus is shown initially as a popular sports figure in a densely crowded technological society. Transported to the expansive, primitivist and technology rejecting world of Spira, he accompanies the teenage 'summoner' Yuna as they wander the vast landscape of the world on a pilgrimage to acquire the aid of supernatural entities in order to overcome the antagonist, the giant amorphous landscape traumatising organism Sin. The storyline emphasises the psychological anxiety arising out of parent-child conflict and separation, presenting the maturation process of Tidus in terms of his relationship to his apparently neglectful father.

Tidus also suffers from incomplete memories and the suggestion of repressed childhood trauma. In flashbacks delivered as the game progresses and the landscape of Spira is made accessible to the wandering teenagers, Tidus remembers himself as a tearful child in conflict with his taunting father Jecht, also a successful sportsman. The story gradually reveals that Tidus' father had also journeyed to Spira, accompanying the previous summoner on her journey to defeat Sin. Jecht has merged with Sin as a condition of victory and is now trapped within its physical form. The narrative has Tidus repeating this pattern, now required to overthrow his father and become the dominating Sin himself. The vast, landscape-destroying entity signifies the monstrous maternal through its murky, undulating, rotund and womb-like organic form that gives birth at regular intervals to innumerable grotesque antagonistic offspring. Sin threatens Tidus with the dissolution of his identity into the maw of this monstrous mother, and through material acquisition and developing the ability to traverse the landscape of Spira unfettered, Tidus and Yuna overcome the maternal threat and bond romantically.

The Use of Cutscenes in the *Final Fantasy* Series

Spatial exploration and object acquisition are rewarded with the development of a predetermined storyline delivered through textual playscript in *FF7*, *FF8* and *FF9*, and through vocal performers in *FF10*. In each game, successful battle encounters result in occasionally lengthy dialogue exchanges in which the player is offered no influential choice or decision-making options. The player may take as circuitous a route and spend as much time in the already-explored locations as is wished, but conversation with a particular character, entry into an unexplored town or a significant room will inevitably trigger the delivery of a new portion of the storyline.

As reward for successful play, the games present 'Full Motion Video' (hereafter FMV) cutscenes. The in-play characters and enemies are comprised of polygons, assembled to as closely approximate three-dimensional forms as technology allowed, with the jagged, angular edges of *FF7* replaced by smoother contours in the later *FF10*. After lengthy, taxing battles and other significant events requiring extensive player input, animated sequences depict the game world and its characters in an accomplished style vastly more mimetic than the in-game graphics and 'cinematic' in its use of, for example, camera angles, editing, lighting and movement. Egendfeldt-Nielsen defines the cutscene as a 'dramatically important sequence, often displayed without the interaction of the player. The scene is typically shown to motivate a shift in the 'plot' of the game and displayed outside of the game engine'.[868]

The distinction is drawn here accurately between the mechanics of play and the passive spectatorship of the cutscene. Cutscenes in the *FF* series are graphically 'fully-rendered', with surfaces contoured and appropriately affected by sources of light, and movements are fluid, often closer to that of traditional cel-drawn animation. Debate abounds in writing on videogames regarding the incompatibility of cutscenes with actual interactive elements which some regard as intrusive and counter to the notion of what constitutes a 'game'.[869] Klevjer has rightly defended cutscenes with the contention that they do not interrupt the flow of play but constitute an 'integral part of the configurative experience', and that simply because an interactive element is absent is not indicative of the halting of 'ergodic experience and effort'.[870]

---

[868] Egenfeldt-Nielsen, *Understanding Video Games*, p. 250.
[869] Egenfeldt-Nielsen, *Understanding Video Games,* p. 178.
[870] Rune Klevjer, 'In Defence of Cutscenes', in Computer Games and Digital Cultures Conference Proceedings, ed. by Mayra, p. 195.

In the *FF* series, cutscenes are emotive and motivational, both as a spectacle acquired as reward for successful play and inspiration towards goal completion. They also serve to establish thematic relationships between representational elements such as character and location. In the example of the opening cutscene of *FF8*, which I would like to examine here, spatial mastery of the game landscape, adolescent physical development and heterosexual desire for the *shōjo* are brought together as motivating game goals, which establishes the thematic concerns of the game through a fast expository montage of characters and locations. The game's focus on liberating spatial negotiation within the natural environment is initiated through the depiction of an expansive, lush pastoral landscape, the camera descending slowly over a lengthy idyllic shoreline towards the sea's edge. This languid first shot cuts to a spacious rocky plain on which two male adolescents, Squall and rival trainee Seifer, begin an aggressive sword duel.

The connection is articulated between adolescent bodily ability and freedom of movement within the rural space, which the structure of the gameplay continues to bear out. Shots cut quickly between the faces, legs and arms of the teenagers, the natural rock arena and the their technologically augmented swords. As the symphonic score escalates in intensity and the duel becomes ferocious, Squall receives a slash to the face from the taunting Seifer, and is thrown to the ground.

Intercut with the conflict are brief shots taken from cutscenes that are presented in full later in the game, featuring maternal antagonist Ultimecia whom Squall eventually overcomes, and romantic interest, the *shōjo* Rinoa. In the final moments of the sequence, the editing becomes rapid and we see successive glimpses of the teenage lovers set against a vast open plain running towards one another, arms outstretched in desperate romantic anticipation. At a crux moment immediately before they reach one another, the scene is halted and temporarily incomplete as the image is replaced by the game title.

The cutscene's imagery articulates the interwoven goals of the wandering adolescent of furthering the storyline in order to reach the later point of romantic conquest of the female teenager, transcendence of an initial spatial restriction, and competitive mastery of the body through development of physical abilities. In the final cutscene, at the end point in which Squall has bested Seifer in combat, destroyed the monstrous Ultimecia and developed the ability to traverse the gameworld freely, we see the romantic scene in full, and this time the couple are shown embracing triumphantly. The two sequences are linked for the player by the total sum of experiences within

gameplay rather than just the unfolding 'storyline' imposed through non-interactive dialogue sequences and cutscenes.

FF10 develops the cutscene as a reward system as it acknowledges and plays to player interest in viewing narrative sequences by constructing an economic discourse around them. In *FF10*, cutscenes are given commercial value and collectible desirability, with image and spectacle commodified as a purchasable object. After a cutscene has been triggered by reaching the appropriate point in the game, a cinema-like building located in the urban commercial centre of Luca allows the player to purchase expensive 'memory spheres'. These data-storing objects give repeat access to an animated scene or a piece of music previously seen or heard at a specific instance in the game. Tidus enters the theatre and both avatar and player conjoin in the viewing of past events. The collectible spherical objects, as well as several other items strewn through the game, are reminiscent of real-world *gashapon* balls (containing collectible figurines) and articulate *otaku* set completion activities.

As enticement for the player to further their progress in the game, a chart shows how many spheres remain to be collected. As money is amassed through the successful negotiation of the game world and the vanquishing of monsters littering the idyllic countryside, so the player may purchase spheres and re-watch the sequences. There is gameplay reward and ludic impetus entwined within this process of economic gain and collection of cut-scenes, as additionally, obtaining all of the memory spheres gives subsequent access to a special attack performed by the character Auron, which in turn facilitates the quick dispatch of enemies in battle and more rapid traversal of the landscape.

Final Fantasy 7

In this section I would like to focus on the representation of Aeris Gainsborough in relation to player emotional investment in *FF7*, the interconnectedness of discourses within the structure of play and storyline and the graphical representation of the adolescent. In the *Final Fantasy* series from *FF7* onwards, a complex system of play and reward drives the player towards experiencing the game's lengthy storyline. The wandering teenager is here represented in a variety of interrelated ways that imbue the depiction of adolescent spatial negotiation and material acquisition seen in the action-adventure game with additional layers of complexity, in the form of the player-

controlled avatar, values within a numeric database and as animated spectacle in the games' cutscenes.

The *FF7* game experience comprises several distinct elements that are graphically different and make separate demands on the player. They include traversal of the three-dimensional 'world map' (a view of the game world's external surface); investigation of interior locations such as towns and caverns; textual and numeric menu screens displaying character attributes; battles with hostile entities and cutscenes communicating narrative events. Ludic, representational and narrative aspects combine to articulate the association between spatial liberation, material acquisition, economic manipulation and adolescent physical and psychological development.

In *FF7*, the player maps out and explores the external surface of the virtual planet in order to make penetrative entries into the enclosed spaces of cavernous underground labyrinths. These concealed environments are strewn with chests that contain material objects that facilitate further traversal of the game's space. This world map appears as a smooth, rounded three-dimensional surface representation of the game world's exterior surfaces, and in this arena no items are collected. Emphasising the game's pleasure of pioneering exploration, Cloud traverses a diverse variety of primitive natural terrain, including fields, forests, mountains, deserts and snow as he journeys between locations. The player observes the surrounding landscape for salient destinations and blockages to progress.

Like the action-adventure games discussed previously, the player guides the wandering adolescent through a trajectory from spatial restriction to autonomous free traversal of the expansive game space. Beginning on foot, the avatar accesses increasingly liberating modes of transportation as the storyline progresses, finances are acquired and abilities are improved, each providing access to previously closed-off areas. Improved vehicles are obtained in a predetermined order, with separate elements of the game's terrain (shallow water, deep rivers, mountains) negotiable in fixed sequential order. The most desirable method of travel available is the airship, which when eventually acquired enables the player to fly above the continents and seas of the game world and complete a comparably rapid circuit of the globe.

When the avatar makes contact with a location icon, gameplay switches to detailed tableaux which present largely a slightly-elevated, tilted side-on view (in game design called 'isometric') of the village, cave or city, and entryways into the areas beneath the world's surface are sought out as the player enters into a dynamic of the archaeological unearthing of desirable material objects. Huber notes the aesthetic

comparison between the 'isometric projection of domestic and public space' in *Final Fantasy* with *fukinuki-yatai* (traditional regal paintings) and *ukiyo-e* (paintings of public scenes), which both traditionally feature roofless views exposing building interiors.[871] There is a sense in these paintings and *Final Fantasy* of being permitted to view the intimate workings of private spaces, furthering the element of unrestricted spatial freedom in *FF7*, as the avatar is permitted to enter houses and intrude upon mundane familial domestic scenes.

Kirkland notes of survival horror games that while game environments might appear highly detailed, they are basically 'static tableaux', with little to meaningfully interact with that will produce progressive results.[872] This holds for *FF7*, whose main body of exploration occurs with the avatar set against inanimate backdrops, in which there are comparatively few beneficially interactive features despite the aesthetic richness of the location depictions. There may be an occasional operating mechanism that opens access to further spaces, but acquisition is the dominant aspect of play as internal spaces are littered with a plethora of collectible objects.

Huber notes the perception by the player in Japanese games featuring detailed background spaces into which the avatar enters, that 'the events of the world will occur and pass, and the spaces which are thought of as being marked by those events will remain after those events have terminated'.[873] With this comment, Huber acknowledges a sense that the Japanese videogame establishes the illusion of durable locations existing in space and time prior to and after the intrusion of the avatar/player. This concretises in *Final Fantasy* the sense of an expansive environment whose intricacies continue to exist even when not visible on the game screen.

The further the wandering adolescent avatar ventures into *FF7*'s labyrinthine caverns, the number of monstrous presences increases, as does a greater bounty of desirable material objects. Many significant items, such as more effective weapons, are guarded by monsters that are taxing to defeat. Expunging this monstrous presence from the world's interior enables acquisition of the item that will subsequently enable easier progress through the game world. A dynamic of the concealment and revelation of material objects within the game space defines this aspect of play, with secreted items to be unearthed and acquired through mapping out and spatial exploration.

The game deploys a framework of acquisition and statistical manipulation within a numerically-represented economic system of financial gain and commercial

---

[871] William Huber, 'Aesthetics', in Videogames and Art, ed. by Clarke and Mitchell, p. 214.
[872] Ewan Kirkland, 'Storytelling', in Horror Video Games, ed. by Perron, p. 71.
[873] William Huber, 'Aesthetics', in Videogames and Art, ed. by Clarke and Mitchell, p. 213.

exchange. Pleasurable landscape negotiation and an *otaku*-oriented amassing of material items are cyclically entwined, with gameplay at the representational level essentially reducible to spatial traversal which results in object acquisition which in turn enables easier progress through the landscape towards further objects to be collected.

Linked to this dynamic of object acquisition and spatial traversal is the manipulation of an economic system of relative numeric values operated through textual menu screens. Financial gain is necessary to the successful negotiation of the commodified game world, as essential items and weapons are purchased from ubiquitous tradesmen and shops. Money is acquired through collecting and selling valuable items, and as a result of success in battle with monstrous entities that populate the landscape. The player allocates weaponry, armour and magical items to each of the characters in the group, determining advantages and disadvantages in combat that are communicated through text and numeric computations that are adjusted for optimal outcome. Evincing an *otaku* aesthetic of data amassing, success is achieved in the Japanese RPG through extensive knowledge and manipulation of complex amounts of relative numeric information.

Battles occur both at random intervals and fixed as unavoidable narrative events, the game's storyline remaining unaffected by the methods and strategies employed by the player. With a frequency determined according to the relative hostility of a locale, the play-screen will freeze, with progress interrupted by the ringing of an alarum that signifies an attack by a monster and the commencement of battle.

In battles, the player issues characters with commands via text-based menus. The instruction (e.g. 'attack', 'magic') is highlighted and selected, with each character and enemy carrying out a single action in turn based on statistical values of speed and agility. The screen shows the outcome graphically and numerically. HP (hit points) refers to the number of points of damage an enemy or character may sustain before reaching zero, which indicates that the character is 'knocked out' and must be magically revived. The game ends if all three characters are knocked out. To calculate the number of HP deducted from the current total, 'strength', which denotes the amount the attacker will deplete, is mathematically compared to the target's 'defence' total. The total number possible in each of these categories increases with the allocation of 'experience points' gained through repeat battles. As discussed in relation to *Harvest Moon* and *Legend of Zelda,* tedium and repetitive tasks are built into the game experience as the player must increase these statistical values through continual battles in order to overcome increasingly taxing enemies.

After victory, a textual screen appears informing the player of monetary gain and experience points acquired, and the game returns to the state prior to the battle's intrusion. Interestingly, while battles are the play element over which the player has most influence, they figure as obstacles to the desirable free traversal of the game's space. Later the player can acquire an item that enables the 'No Encounters' command, which ceases the interruption of movement through the game landscape by attacking monsters, and gives the ideal state of free negotiation of the initially hostile space.

After a battle is won, experience points are allocated to the characters that took part in the fight relative to the size and number of enemies vanquished, and their strength as indicated by their mathematical statistics. This numeric system is influenced at the representational level with the player's augmentation of the wandering adolescent avatar's body with material objects facilitating successful play. As the values attributed to enemies increase exponentially as the game-world is explored, items which level out the mathematical relativity of character and enemy are obtainable. If the player then returns to previously taxing areas of play, the now relatively weak opponents are dispatched with ease. Spatial liberation and mastery over the game landscape is achieved with shorter disruptions to travel and the dominance of the wandering adolescent avatar over the monstrous inhabitants.

William Huber calls this complex numeric system which represents character development in *Final Fantasy* a 'kind of statistical *bildungsroman'*.[874] The adolescent's maturation and development is at one level of the play experience of *Final Fantasy* (in fact the most regularly accessed level) expressed as a database of interrelated statistics, a body reduced to mathematical computations that is consonant with Azuma Hiroki's conception of the *otaku* as 'database animals' in a commodified environment. This rather detailed consideration of the minutiae of play and its discursive parameters as the player experiences it alerts us to the demands placed by the game and allows us to observe consonance between its preoccupations and the preoccupations of the storyline and cutscenes as they depict the wandering adolescent at the representational level.

The death of the character Aeris Gainsborough in *FF7* complicates issues of interaction and the relationship between player and game. Aeris joins avatar Cloud early in the game, and takes part as a regular character in game-play elements (battles, item allocation and statistical manipulation) as well as playing an integral part in the developing storyline. Aeris possesses powers of healing unique to her character, and the

---

[874] William Huber, 'Epic Spatialities', in *Third Person*, ed. by Noah Wardrip-fruin and Pat Harrigan, pp. 373-384.

player will naturally invest time improving the girl's statistics and abilities through her participation in battles, using items and magic to resurrect her if she is knocked out. Around halfway through the game (nearly 50 hours of solid play) she is irrevocably killed by the villain, Sephiroth. As the event is communicated through a cutscene, the player will immediately infer that it is permanent and the usual available methods of revitalisation that are permitted during battle will not work.

In the cutscenes displayed during the game, depictions of technology and the *shōjo* characters are strongly favoured. The *shōjo*'s body is graphically presented as closed-off, rounded and smooth. Aeris' even-toned, smooth and unblemished appearance connotes an unbroken surface. When discussing the parameters of *moe* in *shōjo* representation, Huber calls upon Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the idealised female 'body without organs', whose surface articulates 'potential traits, connections and affects'.[875] The female body is here, 'both literally and figuratively denied organs', and is instead 'fluid and amorphous' in order to connote the burgeoning potential for becoming that inspires euphoric affect. *Moe* is, according to Huber, the excitement around virtual potential that the female offers in the liminal, developmental state of adolescence.[876]

Aeris is configured precisely in these terms of uncertain, tentative potential as she is continually visually and thematically linked to the landscape of the game world and its graphical representation. Through this, the wandering adolescent's trajectory towards mastery of the game world through material acquisition and economic manipulation is intrinsically linked to mastery of the *shōjo* as an equally contested space. Cutscenes positioned at the game's beginning, middle and end align her with the globe and its depths, so that the purification of the cavernous interiors and the extrication of Sephiroth and Jenova becomes a contest for possession of Aeris' commodified image and body. Like Zelda and *Ico*'s Yorda, Aeris becomes both character and game object, an extension of the player's interactions with the spatiality of the virtual environment.

Aeris' name suggests her association with the game's landscape as it is derived from the pronunciation of the Japanese characters comprising the English word 'earth'('E-a-ri-su'). Aeris is the first character introduced in the story, singled out in the sprawling industrial city that is depicted in the opening cutscene. Demonstrating an

---

[875] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, trans. by Brian Massumi, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 4
[876] William Huber, 'Epic Spatialities', in *Third Person*, ed. by Noah Wardrip-fruin and Pat Harrigan, pp. 373-384.

equal fascination for technology and the image of the adolescent girl, the then-advanced graphical capabilities of the Sony PlayStation console were demonstrated spectacularly in *FF7*'s opening cutscene through the bringing together of the sprawling technological consumer cityscape and the appealingly glamourised *shōjo* as impressive exposition of the new machine's capabilities for representation.

The scene begins with a suspenseful anticipatory track through a night sky before settling on Aeris' image in a darkened interior, the girl nervously casting glances around an apparently unfamiliar environment. Aeris follows the camera nervously as it tracks backwards out of the dark building and into a dense urban space that connotes spatial restriction and adolescent isolation. Vehicles move rapidly across the frame, drowning out the musical score with engine dirge. As the camera pulls away from Aeris to reveal a busy road crossing, a garish neon billboard tellingly displays the word 'Loveless', with the isolated girl quickly overwhelmed amid a crowded technological city signifying an exaggeration of contemporary urban Japan. Emphasising the game's interest in the transcendence of spatial restriction through landscape negotiation, the view zooms out and soars alongside an industrial tower-block and factory, reaches the peak, and reveals the city as darkly metallic, industrial and confined by a high, inaccessible circular perimeter. The city is introduced in a fluid, unedited tracking movement that visually associates Aeris with the industrial landscape. As the camera pans out, the girl's smooth, even skin and softened, rounded features extend into the city's curved pipes and soft-edged, curling smoke. *Shōjo* and landscape are visually linked and dramatised as component parts of the same visual spectacle. The image of Aeris and the city of Midgar are conjoined in this establishing sequence, and the game structure continues this trajectory as play leads to mastery over the female-associated game landscape.

Later in the game, when Cloud and his companions scale the inner wall of this perimeter and escape to the world outside the city, the expansive pastoral world map becomes available and a certain amount of space becomes freely negotiable. However, any apparent condemnation of the chaotic mechanised consumer environment at the representational level in this opening cutscene, and the subsequent privileging of the rural environment, is undermined by the strict focus on the wandering adolescent's material acquisition and use of technological apparatus to augment physical abilities as described previously.

The imagery contained in the series of cutscenes depicting Sephiroth impaling Aeris on his sword and Cloud depositing her body into a pool of water focuses on

Aeris' descent beneath the game world's surface and communicates her permanent assimilation into and association with the landscape. Emphasising the lack of player influence over the fixed narrative, authorial presence is foregrounded as Cloud is 'possessed' by Sephiroth immediately before Aeris is killed. Any combination of player input commands results in the avatar performing the same set of involuntary actions that precipitate the girl's demise.

A close-up of Aeris' body shows her slump forward as the sword penetrates her chest. As she falls, the ribbon in her hair breaks and releases a blue glass bead that decorated her plait. The view follows the glowing ball, which appears like a watery globe as it bounces down the steps to the enclosure, chiming as it makes contact with the reflective, gleaming floor. It rebounds off the stepping stones and submerges into the pool of water. The imagery, which focuses on a series of hard, impenetrable planes and culminates with the breaking of the water's glassy surface, symbolises Sephiroth's statement that Aeris' energy has been returned to the planet after her death.

The subsequent cutscene cements the logic of the girl's merging with the natural landscape. A close-up of Aeris' face moves down her body and pulls back to show her in Cloud's arms, suspended on the surface of the water. This liminal state of partial submergence is lingered on, emphasising the girl's movement from exterior to interior, and her symbolic association with the game landscape.

Cloud allows her body to gradually submerge, her face slowly moving below the undisturbed water. The frame is filled with a view from below of Aeris' sinking body, now the only image in a hazy expanse of blue water. The view switches to the girl from above as she descends into the seemingly infinite mass of liquid, becoming indistinct and appearing to merge with the natural landscape. An indistinct circle of light surrounds Aeris and closes on her, completing the suggestion of the scene as a return to the womb, the girl bathed in amniotic fluid, and a feminisation of the game space.

At the game's climax, when all areas of the game space are accessible to the player and the avatar's attributes developed to a degree that enables the defeat of Sephiroth and Jenova in a final battle, the player is rewarded with a cutscene depicting the storyline's conclusion in which the gameworld and Aeris' images are once again aligned. The characters are shown in concerned anticipation of the outcome of a spell they have cast that will counteract Sephiroth's intended destruction of the planet. As the spell takes effect, the action cuts to a shot of the globe, onto which the larger translucent, ghostly image of Aeris is projected as she regards it benevolently.

The circumstances are not made explicit, but it is implied that the spell has summoned Aeris' benevolent spirit from within the planet to purify the threat, and her ethereal presence remains conjoined with the world as a guardian figure. In the opening sequence, Aeris has been shown miniscule against the restrictive urban sprawl, overwhelmed and hemmed in by the vast technological landscape. At the game's conclusion after the wandering adolescent Cloud has transcended spatial restriction, uncovering and mastering the interior spaces of the world, he (and the player) exhibits a unique connection the totalising, all-encompassing image of the teenage girl who now has come to signify transcendence beyond spatial and temporal limitations.

In this final image and through the accretion of sequences which emphasise her connection to the game space and the natural landscape, Aeris is reified as an ethereal omniscient being. Now without physical presence and unobtainable as a heterosexual romance object, she occupies a place as an insubstantial, liminal representation of a *shōjo* who has shifted through the act of game play from entrapped denizen of the technological urban commercial space to a position connoting optimism for cultural reinvigoration. This is borne out by the epilogue cutscene that is displayed after the game's credits have rolled, which shows the effects of the teenagers' actions 1000 years in the future. The world is now fertile and verdant, the natural landscape dominating the now-ruined and abandoned urban sprawl of Midgar. The environmental agenda of the game expresses firmly the hope for cultural renewal and a rejection of commodification through the symbol of the *shōjo*. As benevolent and ecologically-minded as this conclusion that asserts the primacy of the natural over the technological is, however, it cannot ultimately negate the game's overarching representation of the commodified existence of the wandering adolescent embodied by the system of economic exchanges that dominates the experience of play.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to map out some of the complexities of the role of the adolescent in contemporary Japanese culture during a period in which, as I have shown, the adolescent rose to prominence in the public consciousness through extensive debates in the Japanese media. I chose to concentrate on *anime* and videogames, although, as I have shown, it would have been possible to examine the theme with reference to horror film or indeed other cultural phenomena.

In this thesis, I have suggested that Japanese culture is intensely preoccupied by the figure of the wandering adolescent. I made a number of suggestions about why this should be so in Chapter One as I provided an account of the 'discursive surround' and the specific cultural conjunctions I signaled as important to pursue. In successive chapters in the thesis, I looked at specific media, and analysed the ways in which, in *anime* and other forms, the adolescent figure was both the focus and the fulcrum of anxieties about gender and other issues. What I discovered was that *anime* and videogames had a great deal in common in the way the adolescent theme was modulated. They performed roughly similar cultural tasks, though it was evident that the different media affected the way in which those tasks were performed.

I found that the state of wandering in both the *anime* and videogames I investigated is articulated in a variety of ways ranging from detached alienation outside of mainstream society to a pleasurable autonomy. In Chapter Three, viewing *Evangelion*'s intersection with accounts of the *otaku* allowed me to observe how the series stages an intervention into the traumatic psychological state of the wandering adolescent figure redolent of the *otaku,* in which the type is considered unhealthy and in need of recuperation and the reticent, antisocial boy is socialised and rehabilitated. In the later *Welcome to the NHK,* an attempt is staged to conceptually disentangle the *hikikomori* shut-in from the *otaku* in a reorientation of discourses that chimes with the reconceptualisation in the Japanese media of the *otaku* as an active producer and positive cultural phenomenon, while onto the pathologised *hikikomori* is placed anxieties of cultural disintegration and atomism that were previously terms within which the *otaku* was considered.

A traumatic high school experience is represented in both series, engaging with the widely circulated accounts of a crisis in the Japanese school system. In *Evangelion*, the adolescent boy must stoically accept the problematic circumstances of adolescence as a necessary stage in the process towards maturity and social belonging, while in

Welcome to the NHK teenage high school trauma is proposed to be the root of the protagonist's *hikikomori* condition.

In *Evangelion,* I found the adolescent to be located liminally at a site of unresolved anxieties revolving around the inevitability of social change, the failure of cultural institutions and the simultaneous pleasures and pitfalls of consumerism in a technologically mediated world. The theme of rebirth in relation to the adolescent state of rootless wandering articulates a temporary cultural anxiety and uncertainty. While social upheaval is as painful as the maturation process, it is proposed as necessary and potentially reinvigorating within this key cultural text.

Looking at *Death Note* and *Natsume's Book of Friends* within the context of panics around monstrous adolescents and *Shōnen A*, enabled me to perceive a range of means through which an attempt to redeem the adolescent is staged in which representation of the dual monstrous nature of the teenage boy constitutes. While viewing *Death Note*'s Light at this conjunction revealed a morbid fascination with the figure of the teenage monster, Takashi of *Natsume's Book of Friends* represents an attempt to recuperate the adolescent and reinstate a wholesome, obedient and unalterably altruistic manifestation of adolescent masculinity. Consideration of the increased visibility in *anime* of *Shintō* concepts and folklore allowed me to consider the relationship between the wandering teenage boy and Japanese heritage signified through folklore. I found the liminal position of the gradually developing boy between the modern world and the *Shintō* realm in the series articulates an unqualified optimism for cultural reinvigoration and a successful transcendence of past anxieties around the adolescent.

In Chapter Four I explored the ways in which contemporary *anime*'s representation of the wandering female adolescent engages with the discourses of youth panics around female teenagers circulated by the Japanese media and debated intensely by sociologists and anthropologists. Consumerism and groupism were found to be key topoi that these *anime* explore through the figure of the wandering adolescent girl. The resonance of '*deru kui wa utareru'* ('the nail that sticks up is hammered down') is felt in the urban narratives of *Serial Experiments Lain*, *Witchhunter Robin* and *Boogiepop Phantom*, as all three series feature female adolescents who experience substantial pressure to conform to societal expectations and adhere to a prescribed notion of teenage femininity. Cast as wanderers in terms of a profound disenfranchisement from an increasingly bewildering urban space, this anxiety around conformity leads in these series to alienation and isolation for the three protagonists. Analysis revealed the *shōjo*

to be a site of fierce contestation, expressing the cultural uncertainty circulating around the high school girl in contemporary Japan as provoking an intense anxiety whilst simultaneously signifying optimism for cultural renewal. The wandering teenage girl was found to articulate a profound cultural ambivalence towards the *shōjo* as she is concurrently reified and scrutinised as an unsettling site of anxiety around threatening and unwelcome cultural change.

In the slice-of-life series *Azumanga Daioh!* and *K-On!,* concerns of conformity and entrapment through consumerism do not trouble the *shōjo*, who enjoys peer solidarity through group activities and the sporting of the *serafuku* uniform. The *otaku* ideal of *moe* that has come to dominate representations of the high school girl in *shōnen anime* and beyond is deployed in such a way that the dangerous, rebellious threat of the *kogyaru* is bypassed in the celebration of a chaste, infantile femininity predicated on a positive vision of consumption that facilitates social bonding and personal development. The perceived promiscuity, materialist greed and rebellious antiestablishment fears in discourses surrounding the *kogyaru* and other teenage female fashion subsections is also rerouted in a reassuring reconfiguration of the female teenager who is reconstituted unproblematically as a symbol of group solidarity and cultural regeneration.

In Chapter Five I examined representations of the wandering adolescent at a discursive conjunction with sociological and anthropological accounts of the changing nature of the family and the lack of space in contemporary Japan. Abandonment or parental separation was found to be a catalyst in several texts for the state of teenage wandering as rootless and in pursuit of cultural belonging and identity formation, and in inverse terms allowing a pleasurably self-reliant autonomy outside of the restrictions of the domestic sphere. The maturation process of the adolescent was found to be articulated through an interaction with space. Considering the wandering adolescent of *anime*'s interactions with the environment employing Benjamin and de Certeau allowed me to consider the tactical appropriation of public space performed by the teenager, which I found to be facilitated in the texts considered by technological apparatus. In *Evangelion*, *Last Exile* and *Initial D*, the adolescent engages with a machine in expressive displays within the environment. Emerging from this analysis, I found signifiers of consumerism and the commodification of the life of the adolescent to be strongly associated with the nomadic enjoyment of space and the concurrent maturation and socialisation process.

While the family in the *anime* series I considered may be fragmented at the outset, the circumstances of wandering and spatial negotiation lead to the adolescent's

formation of a surrogate family comprised of disparate acquaintances rather then blood relations. This can be read as both conservative and progressive as either a reassuring return to the domestic based around the *katei* family home, while the acknowledgement of the social significance of those outside the immediate family is challenging to traditional Japanese norms of the *ie* system.

In Chapter Seven I extended my investigations into the wandering adolescent into the representation of the teenager in relation to sociological debates on the commodification of childhood in contemporary Japan in the Japanese action-adventure game exemplified by *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* and in the open-world games *Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town* and *Animal Crossing.* The games that I discussed throughout the thesis exhibited a provocative ambivalence towards modernity, expressed particularly through the tension between the celebration of the expansiveness of fertile rural terrain as the game's space and the player's immersion in a capitalist system of object collection, consumption and manipulation. Considering the action-adventure game from the viewpoint proposed by Henry Jenkins that the videogame is preoccupied with the mastery of space and the pushing of the boundaries of the gameworld to gain deeper access, I found that the wandering teenager's spatial negotiations exhibited a consonance with representations in *anime* of the teenager's interactions with both the consumer landscape and the machine. The wandering adolescent of *The Wind Waker* viewed in conjunction with debates around the commodified experience of adolescence leads an existence predicated on interaction with material objects that are collected through exploration and implemented strategically in order to penetrate deeper levels of the game's space. Comparably in *Evangelion*, *Last Exile* and *Initial D* I found that the body of the adolescent is augmented thrillingly by the mechanical craft, which when considered within this framework of material acquisition and capitalist growth signifies an empowerment through a consumer object. This is especially true of *Initial D,* whose cars are heavily branded with manufacturer's logos.

Considering comparatively the representation of the wandering adolescent's environment in *anime,* I have argued that in, for example, *Evangelion* and *Natsume's Book of Friends* the expansive countryside locale is positioned in direct opposition to the capitalist excesses of the urban space, where in *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon*'s rural idylls, the commodified practices of the commercial environment are signified throughout.

In Chapters Eight and Nine I developed these enquiries into videogame

representation and play structure firstly through an exploration of the relationship foregrounded between the wandering adolescent *shōnen* videogame avatar and the *shōjo* as a non-playable character within the discursive parameters of the *otaku* feminine ideal of *moe*, and then to themes of adolescent spatial entrapment and liberation borne out by the *Final Fantasy* series. Referring to the work on gender in the videogame of Kinder, Skirrow and Kirkland, I discussed issues of gender representation in relation to the *The Legend of Zelda* and *Metroid* series and their construction of game space.

I then carried out an analysis of the *shōjo-shōnen* relationship articulated in the games *Ico* and *Lost in Blue*. Combining theoretical comprehension of the *otaku* as a consumer and producer of extensive information databases with the predilection for consumption of *moe* female chaste infantilism embodied by *Evangelion*'s Ayanami Rei, I have found the representation of femininity in the Japanese videogame to be strongly connected to the construction of the game world in both representational terms and within the mechanics of play. This can be in the form of a threatening antagonist who threatens the subject's identity stability and makes attempts to limit their ability to negotiate the game space, or in the form of a *shōjo* character who performs a role as an impetus towards player progress through the environment or acts as a passive component part of the game world herself that must be manipulated and nurtured by the active *shōnen* avatar. Again an insubstantial, liminal figure, the final image in the thesis' discussion of the ghostly omniscient *shōjo* Aeris Gainsborough of *Final Fantasy 7* brings us back to the complexities of the cultural epistemology of both male and female adolescent wanderers as has been pursued through the thesis' investigations, symbolic liminal figures poised between childhood and maturity, scrutinised as threats to the stability of the social order and traditional institutions of the family, education system and workforce, yet simultaneously reified as symbols of unrealised tentative potential for the regeneration of Japanese culture and economy.

The implications of this work are, I think, far-reaching. They stimulate us to think about the social and cultural function of marginal groups, and prompt us to ask why some cultures are acutely predicated on transitional figures like the adolescent. They make us think, too, about the issue of cultural resources and style. The texts that I have studied here are indubitably part of Japanese popular culture, and they share some discourses and styles. But what I hope I have demonstrated is that there are clear 'breaks', innovations and developments over time, and that there are also more conventional texts that give the audience a sense of security.

What I have found, too, is that no one theoretical model will provide us with an

explanation for the richness of this theme in Japanese culture. I have deployed an eclectic mix of theoretical approaches, and pay attention to the complexity (both stylistic and ideological) of these texts in order to analyse them.

I found that no one explanatory method would serve my case in this thesis. Although my analysis has of course been informed by, for example, feminist and psychoanalytic perspectives, this would not serve as a tool. Rather, it seemed better to look at the narrative structures, the types of character identitification, and the visual style in order to establish the kind of debate and settlement that these texts were offering. They are clearly engaging, with varying degrees of sublety and intensity, with media representation of crises and debates around traumatic events and phenomena in contemporary Japan, but rarely do they do this directly. They draw on their cultural roots, but rarely consistently. The *anime* and videogames I have investigated do allude to anxieties, but in an indirect and symbolic form, and it is within a symbolic form that they resolve them.

What was clear from all examples I investigated was that the cultural texts did not explicitly *contest* the social paradigms that had become dominant in contemporary Japan. They elaborated on them, but by and large they endorsed them. The consumerism that has incontestably become a salient feature of modern Japanese culture is enthusiastically written into the 'desirable' category in many of the examples I analysed. Moreover, the social anxieties about the dangers posed by the unfettered adolescent, caught on the cusp between childhood and maturity, are not allayed by the texts that I looked at. Rather, the *anime* and the videogames *rehearsed* and *intensified* the challenges offered by these social outsiders, and almost always the narratives brought them back, albeit tentatively, into the social fold.

My research for this project has certainly led me to an interest in future exploration of a variety of reception circumstances and precise audience configurations. As global enthusiasts of *anime* and videogames exhibit such a prolific online presence debating the relative merits of the latest games and TV series in countless forums, it might be revealing to conduct an ethnographic investigation into the discourses employed by fans in relation to issues of Japanese cultural specificity that I have attempted to investigate through the variety of conjunctions proposed in this thesis.

Of course, much remains to be done. I hope I have shown that this theme could be followed though in relation to other modes such as the horror film and videogame, as well as a range of other genres and cultural forms such as *manga*. And this type of analysis could be extended forward in time. For the moment though, I have

demonstrated the many layers of cultural work that these texts undertake, and that this will provide a stimulus for future work, and, to a certain extent, a springboard for it. I hope to have cleared some ground for future scholars in the field, and to have shown how suggestive, rich and selective popular Japanese culture can be.

Bibliography

Journal Articles

Abel, Jonathan, 'Can Cool Japan save Post-Disaster Japan? On the Possibilities and Impossibilities of a Cool Japanology' in *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, Vol. 20, Issue 1 (Nov. 2011), 59-72

Babic, Edvin, On the Liberation of Space in Computer Games', In *Eludamos: Journal for Computer Games Culture* [online], Issue 1 (2007), available at: <www.eludamos.org/index.php/eludamos/article/view/4> [Accessed 8.2.2011]

Bordwell, David, 'Film Interpretation Revisited', in *Film Criticism*, Vol. 27, No. 2-3, (Winter-Spring, 1993), 93-119

Bowman, Michael R., 'Beyond Maids and *Meganekko*: Examining the *Moe* Phenomenon', in *Cinephile: The University of British Columbia's Film Journal*, Vol.7, No.1 (Spring, 2011), 14-18

Brophy, Philip, 'Sound and Vision: Furi Kuri', in *Film Comment*, Vol. 38, No. 6 (November-December, 2002)

Chalfen, Richard and Mai Murui, 'Print Club Photography in Japan: Framing Social Relationships', in *Visual Sociology*, No. 16 (2001), 55-73

Furlong, Andy, 'The Japanese Hikikomori Phenomenon: Acute Social Withdrawal Among Young People' in *The Sociological Review,* Vol. 56, No. 2 (May 2008) 309-325

Gilson, Mark, 'A Brief History of Japanese Robophilia', in *Leonardo*, Vol. 31, Issue 5 (October/November 1998), 367-369

Kam, Thiam Huat 'The Anxieties that Make the '*Otaku*': Capital and the Common Sense of Consumption in Contemporary Japan' in *Japanese Studies,* Vol. 33, No. 1 (2013), 39-61

—, 'The Common Sense that Makes the *Otaku*' in *Japan Forum*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2013), 151-173

Kinsella, Sharon 'What's Behind the Fetishism of Japanese School Uniforms?', in *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (May 2002), 215-237

Klinger, Barbara 'Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the past in Reception Studies' in *Screen,* 38:2 (Summer 1997), 107-128

Lu, Alvin 'Horror Japanese Style' in *Film Comment*, Vol. 38, No. 1, p. 38

Metraux, Daniel, 'Religious Terrorism in Japan: The Fatal Appeal of *Aum Shinrikyo*', in *Asian Survey*, 35:12 (Dec., 1995), 1140-1154

Miller, Laura 'Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan' in *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, Vol. 20, Issue 1 (Nov. 2011), 18-29

Mulvey, Laura, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Screen 16* (3) (Autumn 1975), 6-18

Napier, Susan 'When the Machines Stop: Fantasy, Reality, and Terminal Identity in *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Serial Experiments Lain*' in *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 29, No. 3, *Japanese Science Fiction* (Nov., 2002), 418-435

Oda, Eiichiro, 'Fans Chat with Oda Sensei' in *Shōnen Jump* (VIZ media) #84. Vol. 7, Issue. 12. (Dec 2009), p. 33

Orbaugh, Sharalyn, 'Sex and the Single Cyborg: Japanese Popular Culture Experiments in Subjectivity' in *Science Fiction Studies,* Vol. 29, No. 3, 'Japanese Science Fiction' (Nov., 2002), 436-452

Routt, William D., 'Stillness and style in *Neon Genesis Evangelion*', in *Animation Journal*, Vol. 8, Issue 2 (Spring 2000), 28-43

Samuels, David, 'Let's Die Together', in *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 299, Issue 4 (May 2007), 92-98

Smith, Gavin, 'Pensees: Pretty Vacant in Pink', in *Film Comment*, Vol. 23, No.4. (Jul-Aug, 1987), 70-77

Sontag, Susan, 'The Imagination of Disaster', in *Commentary* (Oct., 1965), 42-48

Steuer, Jonathan 'Defining Virtual Reality: Dimensions Determining Telepresence', in *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Autumn 1992), 73-93

Winnicott, D.W., 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, Vol. 34, Part 2 (1953), 89-97

Online Resources

1up.com, 'The Method of Developing *Ico*', <http://www.1up.com/features/method-developing-ico> [accessed: 8.9.13].

'2nd Japan Media Arts Festival: Excellence Prize *Serial Experiments Lain*' (1998), available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20070426014853/http://plaza.bunka.go.jp/english/festival/backnumber/10/sakuhin/serial.html> [accessed 5.8.2013]

Adams, Ernest, 'Three Problems for Interactive Storytellers' (1999), available at: <www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/3414/the_designers_notebook_three_.php> [Accessed 8.2.2011)

Animenewsnetwork.com, 'Japan's 100 Favourite *Anime* Series', (2006), list made available at: <www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2006-10-13/japan's-favorite-tv-anime> [accessed: 13.7.13]

Animenewsservice.com, 'Light Novels Becoming the Basis for More Anime', (2005), available at: <http://www.animenewsservice.com/archives/jan07.htm> [accessed 12.08.2013]

Balmain, Colette 'Inside the Well of Loneliness: Towards a Definition of the Japanese Horror Film' in EJCJS (Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies) (2006), available at: <www.japanesestudies.org.uk/discussionpapers/2006/Balmain.html> [accessed 8.7.2013]

Burgess, Chris 'Maintaining Identities: Discourses of Homogeneity in a Rapidly Globalizing Japan' in EJCJS (Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies) (April, 2004), available at: <www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/Burgess.html> [accessed 8.8.2013]

Chen, Jason, 'Japanese *Initial D* Arcade Booth Features Actual Tofu Car', *Gizmodo.com* (2007), available at: <http://gizmodo.com/283946/japanese-initial-d-arcade-booth-features-actual-tofu-car> [accessed 9.9.2013]

Crunchyroll.com, '*Moe*-day Poll' (Oct., 2012), available at: <http://www.crunchyroll.co.uk/anime-news/2012/10/10/in-honor-of-moe-day-16000-japanese-fans-pick-cutest-anime-character> [accessed 20.7.2013]

Debord, Guy, 'Theory of the *Derive*' in *Les Levres Nues*, No. 9 (Nov., 1956), available at: < http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html> [accessed 15.8.2013]

Deitch, Jeffrey, Post Human Exhibit Catalog Essay (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 1992), available at: <www.artic.edu/~pcarroll/PostHuman.html> [accessed: 8.7.2013]

Denison, Rayna, Joo, Woojeong, and Furukawa, Hiroko, 'Transmedia Japanese Franchising Practices: Understanding Japanese Media Industries and their Products in Domestic and Transnational Frames' (First Report of '*Manga* Into Movies' project, 2013), available at: <http://www.mangamoviesproject.com/publications.html> [accessed 5.6.2013]

—, 'Japan's *Manga*, *Anime* and Film Industries' (Second Report of '*Manga* Into Movies' project, 2013), available at: <http://www.mangamoviesproject.com/publications.html> [accessed 17.6.2013]

Eisenberg, Rebecca L., 'Girl Games: Adventures in Lip-Gloss', (1998), available at: <http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/3252/girl_games_adventures_in_lip_gloss.php> [accessed 15.8.13]

Eskelinen, Markku, 'The Gaming Situation', in Game Studies 1.1 (2001), available at: <www.gamestudies.org/0101/eskelinen/> [accessed 8.2.2011]

Frasca, Gonzalo, 'Ludology Meets Narratology: Similitude and Difference between (Video)Games and Narrative' (1999), available at: <www.ludology.org/articles/ludology.htm> [accessed 8.2.2011]

Frasca, Gonzalo, 'Ludologists Love Stories, Too: Notes from a Debate that Never Took Place' paper presented at Level Up, DiGRA conference (2003), available at: <www.digra.org/dl/db/05163.01125.pdf> [accessed 8.2.2011]

Galbraith, Patrick, '*Moe* and the Potential of Fantasy in Post-Millennial Japan', in *EJCJS,* (2009), available at:
<http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/2009/Galbraith.html>, [accessed 24.7.2013]

—, '"Techno-Intimacy" and the Virtually Human in Japan', in *Game Studies,* Vol. 11, No. 2 (May 2011), available at: <http://gamestudies.org/1102/articles/galbraith> [accessed 26.8.2013]

Grassmuck, Volker, '"I'm Alone, but not Lonely": Japanese *Otaku*-Kids Colonize the Realm of Information and Media: A Tale of Sex and Crime from a Faraway Place' (1990), available at: <waste.informatik.hu-berlin.de/Grassmuck/Texts/otaku.e.html> [accessed 4.9.2013]

Hanley, Andy, 'Classics of Anime – Azumanga Daioh!', (2010), available at <http://www.uk-anime.net/articles/Classics_of_Anime_-_Azumanga_Daioh/2> [accessed 23.7.2013]

Iles, Timothy, 'The Problem of Identity in Contemporary Japanese Horror Films', in EJCJS (Oct., 2005), available at:
<www.japanesestudies.org.uk/discussionpapers/2005/Iles2.html> [accessed 8.2.2011]

Juul, Jesper, 'Games Telling Stories - A Brief Note on Games and Narratives' in *Game Studies 1.1* (2001), available at: <www.gamestudies.org/0101/juul-gts/> [accessed 8.2.2011]

—, 'A Clash between Game and Narrative' paper presented at *DAC (Digital Arts and Culture) conference* (1999), available at: <www.jesperjuul.dk> [accessed 8.2.2011]

Kirkland, Ewan, 'Maternal Engulfment in Horror Videogames', in Inter-Disciplinary Journal, (2009), available at: <www.inter-disciplinary.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/Kirkland-paper.pdf> [accessed 8.2.2011]

Kohler, Chris, 'The Obscure Cult Game that's Secretly Inspiring Everything', *Wired.com*, (2013), available at: <http://www.wired.com/gamelife/2013/09/ico/> [accessed 13.9.13].

Mays, Jonathan, *'Interview: Range Murata'*, (2005), available at: <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/feature/2005-02-28> [accessed 9.9.2013]

Mizuki, Nana, 'K-ON! by the Numbers: Sales of 'Phenomenom' Outlined', (2011), available at: <http://www.animenewsnetwork.co.uk/news/2011-11-06/k-on-by-the-numbers/sales-of-phenomenon-outlined> [accessed 8.8.2013]

McGray, Douglas 'Japan's Gross National Cool' in *Foreign Policy*, (May 2002). available at: <http://www.douglasmcgray.com/cool-japan.html> [accessed 9.6.13].

Morgan, Jonah, '*ANS* Exclusive Interview: The Drift King Keiichi Tsuchiya' (2005), available at: <http://www.animenewsservice.com/archives/driftking.htm> [accessed 10.4.2013]

Nagata Kazuaki, 'Exporting Culture via "Cool Japan"' in *The Japan Times* (online edition) (15 May 2012), available at: http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2012/05/15/news/exporting-culture-via-cool-japan/ [accessed 1.7.2013]

Nintendo.co.jp, 'Nintendo Japan Top-Selling Software Sales Units', (2013)*, available at: <http://www.nintendo.co.jp/ir/en/sales/software/3ds.html> [accessed 23.8.2013]

Parton, Rob, 'Japandemonium' on *RPGamer.com* (2004), available at: <http://www.rpgamer.com/news/japan/rp033104.html> [accessed 8.9.2013]

Rocketnews24.com, 'Japan's 30 Best-Selling Video Games of all time', *(*2012), available at: http://en.rocketnews24.com/2012/07/08/japans-best-selling-video-games-of-all-time/ [accessed 23.8.13]

Siliconera.com, 'Here's how *Harvest Moon* has fared on the Nintendo DS' (2011), available at: <http://www.siliconera.com/2011/04/19/heres-how-harvest-moon-has-fared-on-the-nintendo-ds/> [accessed 12.8.2013]

Surman, David, 'Notes on Superflat and Its Expression in Videogames', *Refractory: A Journal of Entertainment Media,* Vol. 13, (2008), available at: <blogs.arts.unimelb.edu.au/refractory/2008/05/23/notes-on-superflat-and-its-expression-in-videogames-david-surman> [accessed 8.2.2011]

Books

Aarseth, Espen, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Maryland, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press; 1997)

Allen, Robert, and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Methodology and Practice* (New York, London: McGraw Hill, 1985)

Allison, Anne, *Millennial Monsters* (London: University of California Press, 2006)

Althusser, Louis, *'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971), translated by Ben Brewster, pp. 121-176.

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983)

Aoyagi, Hiroshi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles: Idol Performance and Symbolic Production in Contemporary Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005)

Aoyama, Tomoko and Barbara Hartley, eds., *Girl Reading Girl in Japan* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010)

Ascione, Frank R. and Mika Maruyama, eds., *The International Handbook of Animal Abuse and Cruelty: Theory, Research and Application* (Purdue University Press, 2010), pp. 269-304 (p. 275).

Atkins, Barry, *More Than a Game: The Computer Game as Fictional Form* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2003)

Atkins, Barry and Tanya Krzywinska, *Videogame, Player, Text* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)

Azuma, Hiroki, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, trans. by Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)

Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994)

Balmain, Colette, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008)

Barrett, Gregory, Archetypes in Japanese Film: *The Sociopolitical and Religious Significance of the Principal Heroes and Heroines* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989)

Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project (Das Passagen-Werk),* trans. by Rolf Tiedemann, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999)

Bogost, Ian, *Unit Operations: An Approach to Videogame Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2006)

—, *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2007)

Bolton, Christopher, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. and Takayuki Tatsumi, eds., *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2007)

Bowyer, Justin, ed., *The Cinema of Japan and Korea* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004)

Brenner, Robin, *Understanding manga and anime* (Westport Conn.: Libraries Unlimited; Northam: Roundhouse dist., 2007)

Broderick, Mick, ed., *Hibakusha Cinema* (London: Kegan Paul International 1996)

Brown, Damon, *Porn and Pong: How Grand Theft Auto, Tomb Raider and other Sexy Games Changed our Culture* (London: Feral House, 2008)

Brown, Stephen T., ed., *Cinema Anime* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

Brumann, Christoph and Evelyn Schultz, eds., *Urban Spaces in Japan: Cultural and Social Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012)

Carter, Angela, *The Sadeian Woman* (London: Virago, 1979)

Cassell, Justine and Henry Jenkins, eds., *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT press, 1998)

Cavallaro, Dani, *Anime and Memory: Aesthetic, Cultural and Thematic Perspectives* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2009)

Chapman, James, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper, eds., *The New Film History* (Basinstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007)

Clammer, John, Contemporary Urban Japan: A Sociology of Consumption (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997)

Clammer, John and Michael Ashkenazi, eds., *Consumption and Material Culture in Contemporary Japan* (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000)

Clarke, Andy and Grethe Mitchell, eds., *Videogames and Art* (Bristol: Intellect, 2007)

Clements, Jonathan and Helen McCarthy, *The Anime Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese Animation Since 1917* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2001 revised 2006)

Clements, Jonathan, *Schoolgirl Milky Crisis: Adventures in the Anime and Manga Trade* (London: Titan, 2009)

Condry, Ian, *The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan's Media Success Story* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013)

Creed, Barbara, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993)

Cuddy, Luke, ed., *The Legend of Zelda and Philosophy* (Chicago, Illinois: Open Court, 2009)

Davies, Roger J. and Osamu Ikeno, *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle, 2002)

De Certeau, Michel, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. by Steven Rendall (California; London: University of California Press, 1988)

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987)

Doi Takeo, *The Anatomy of Dependence: The Key Analysis of Japanese Behaviour,* Eng. Trans. by John Bester, (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1973)

Donovan, Tristan, *Replay: The History of Video Games*, (Lewes: Yellow Ant, 2010)

Drazen, Patrick, *Anime Explosion!: The What? Why? and Wow! of Japanese Animation* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2002)

Driscoll, Catherine, *Teen Film: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Berg, 2011)

Durovicova, Natasa and Kathleen Newman, eds., *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010)

Dyer, Richard, ed., *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993

Dyer-Witherford, Nick, *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Bristol University Presses Marketing, 2009)

Edgington, David W., ed., *Japan at the Millenium: Joining Past and Future* (Canada: University of British Columbia Press, 2003)

Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Simon, *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction* (New York, NY; London: Routledge 2008)

Eiss, Harry, *Images of the Child* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994)

Ezra, Elizabeth and Terry Rowden, eds., *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006 [1999])

Foljanty-Jost, Gesine, ed., *Juvenile Delinquency in Japan: Reconsidering the Crisis* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003)

Forbes, Jill and Sarah Street, *European Cinema: An Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000)

Foster, Michael Dylan, *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai* (Berkeley, California, London: University of California Press, 2009)

Freeman, Laurie Anne, *Closing the Shop: Information Cartels and Japan's Mass Media* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)

Galbraith, Patrick and Karlin, Jason G., *Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

Gledhill, Christine, and Linda Williams, eds., *Reinventing Film Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Goodman, Roger, Yuki Imoto and Tuuka Toivonen, eds., *A Sociology of Japanese Youth: From Returnees to NEETs* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012)

Gramsci, Hoare and Nowell-Smith, eds. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970)

Greenfeld, Karl Taro, *Speed Tribes: Children of the Japanese Bubble* (London: Boxtree, 1994)

Gutman, Marta and Ning de Coninck-Smith, *Designing Modern Childhoods* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. press, 2008)

Hall, Stuart, *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1998)

Harootunian, Harry and Yoda Tomiko, eds., *Japan After Japan* (Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 2006)

Hashimoto, Akiko, and John W. Traphagan, eds. *Imagined Families, Lived Families* (Albany: State University of New York press, 2008)

Hjort, Mette and Scott Mackenzie, eds., *Cinema and Nation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000)

Hjorth, Larissa and Dean Chan, *Gaming Cultures and Place in Asia-Pacific* (London: Routledge, 2009)

Hu, Tze-Yue G., Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010)

Hurley, Adrienne, *Revolutionary Suicide and Other Desperate Measures: Narratives of Youth and Violence from Japan and the United States* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011)

Iida, Yumiko, *Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002)

Inness, Sherrie, ed., *Millennium Girls: Today's Girls Around the World* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998)

Ito Mizuko, Okabe Daisuke and Tsuji Izumi, *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected Age* (Yale University Press, 2012)

Ivy, Marilyn, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

Gibbs, John and Douglas Pye, 'Introduction' in *Style and Meaning: Studies in the Detailed Analysis of Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005)

Jones, Steven E., ed., *CyberSociety: Computer-Mediated Communication and Community* (London: Sage Publications, 1995)

Jones, Steven E., *The Meaning of Video Games: Gaming and Textual Studies* (New York; London: Routledge, 2008

Johnson-Woods, Toni, *Manga: An Anthology of Global Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 2010)

Juul, Jesper, Half-Real: *Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2005)

Kafai, Yasmin, Carrie Heeter and Jill Denner, eds., *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2008)

Kamada, Laurel D. *Hybrid Identities and Adolescent Girls: Being 'Half' in Japan* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2009)

Kaveney, Roz, *Teen Dreams: Reading the Teen Film from Heathers to Veronica Mars* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2006)

Kent, Steven L., *The Ultimate History of Video Games,* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2001)

Kerr, Aphra, *The Business and Culture of Digital Games: Gamework/Gameplay* (London: Sage, 2006)

Kinder, Marsha, *Playing With Power in Movies, Television and Video Games* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991)

King, Geoff and Tanya Krzywinska, eds.,*Tomb Raiders and Space Invaders: Videogame Forms and Contexts* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006)

King, Geoff and Tanya Krzywinska, eds., *ScreenPlay: Cinema/Videogames/Interfaces* (London: Wallflower Press, 2002)

King, Lucien, *Game On: The History and Culture of Videogames* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2002)

Kinsella, Sharon, *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000)

Kirkup, Gillian, *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1999)

Kline, Stephen, Nick Dyer-Witherford, and Grieg de Peuter, *Digital Play: The Interaction of Technology, Culture and Marketing* (Montreal, London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003)

Koeck, Richard, *Cine-Scapes: Cinematic Spaces in Architecture and Cities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013)

Kohler, Chris, *Power Up: How Japanese Games Gave the World an Extra Life* (Indianapolis, Ind.: BradyGames, 2004)

Kress, Gunther R. and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996)

Kuhn, Annette and Guy Westwell, *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Lamarre, Thomas, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)

Lebra, Takie Sugiyama, *The Japanese Self in Cultural Logic* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004)

Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space,* (UK: Wiley, 1991)

Lewis, Jon, *The Road to Romance and Ruin: Teen Films and Youth Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992)

Levi, Antonia, *Samurai from Outer Space* (Peru, Ill.: Open Court, 1996)

Lifton, Robert Jay, *Destroying the World to Save it: Aum Shinrikyo, Apocalyptic Violence and the New Global Terrorism* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999)

Lukàcs, Gabriella, *Scripted Affects, Branded Selves: Television, Subjectivity and Capitalism in 1990s Japan* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010)

Lunning, Frenchy, ed., *Mechademia 2: Networks of Desire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007)

—, ed., *Mechademia 3*: (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008)

—, ed., *Mechademia 4*: (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)

—, ed., *Mechademia 5*: (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010)

Lury, Karen, *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairytales* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010)

MacCabe, Colin, ed., *High Theory/Low Culture: Analysing Popular Television and Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986)

MacWilliams, Mark W., ed., *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime* (Armonk, New York; London: M.E.Sharper, 2008)

McCargo, Duncan, *Contemporary Japan* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000)

McCarthy, Helen, *The Anime Movie Guide* (Overlook Press, 1997)

McCarthy, Helen, *500 Essential Anime Movies: The Ultimate Guide* (Lewes: Ilex, 2008)

McClain, James, *Japan: A Modern History* (New York, NY.: W.W.Norton & Co., 2001)

McCloud, Scott, *Understanding Comics* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993)

McCreery, John, *Japanese Consumer Behaviour: From Worker Bees to Wary Shoppers* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000)

McDonald, Keiko, *Reading a Japanese Film: Cinema in Context* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006

McRoy, Jay, ed., *Japanese Horror Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005)

—, *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema* (Amsterdam; New York, NY: Rodopi, 2008)

Martin-Jones, David, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative Time in National Contexts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008)

Martinez, Dolores P., ed., *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture: Gender, Shifting Boundaries and Global Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Masao, Miyamoto, *Straitjacket Society: An Insider's Irreverent View of Bureaucratic Japan* (Tokyo, London: Kodansha International, 1994)

Masuzoe, Yoichi, ed., *Years of Trial: Japan in the 1990s* (Tokyo: Japan Echo, c2000)

Mayra, Frans, ed., *Computer Games and Digital Cultures Conference Proceedings* (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2002) Available at: <www.digra.org/dl/db/05164.50328> [accessed 8.7.2013]

McVeigh, Brian J., *Japanese Higher Education as Myth* (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 2002)

McVeigh, Brian J., *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Preservation in Japan* (Oxford, N.Y: Berg, 2000)

Mittell, Jason, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004)

Moeran, Brian and Lise Skov, eds., *Women, Media and Consumption in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995)

Morikawa, Kaichiro, Moeru Toshi *Akihabara: Shuto No Tanjo [Learning from Akihabara: The Birth of Personapolis]* (Tokyo: Gentosha, 2003)

Morley, David and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 1995)

Murakami, Haruki, *Underground* (London: Vintage, 2003)

Murray, Janet, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (New York; London: Free Press, 1997)

Napier, Susan, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005)

—, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995)

Newman, James, *Videogames* (Abgindon: Routledge, 2004)

Ng, Andrew Hock Soon, ed., *Asian Gothic: Essays on Literature, Film, and Anime* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2008)

Nitsche, Michael, *Video Game Spaces* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT, 2008)

Penley, Constance and Andrew Ross, eds., *Technoculture,* (Minneapolis: university of Minnesota, 1993)

Perron, Bernard, ed., *Horror Video Games: Essays on the Fusion of Fear and Play* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Compay, Inc., 2009)

Perron, Bernard and Mark J.P. Wolf, eds., *The Video Game Theory Reader* (New York, London: Routledge, 2003)

—, eds., *The Video Game Theory Reader 2* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009)

Phillips, Alastair and Julian Stringer, eds., *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007)

Pilling, Jayne, *A Reader in Animation Studies* (Sydney: Libbey, 1997)

Poitras, Gilles, *The Anime Companion: What's Japanese in Japanese Animation?* (Berkeley, CA., Stone Bridge Press, 1998, updated 2005)

Poitras, Gilles, *Anime Essentials: Everything a Fan Needs to Know* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2001)

Poole, Stephen, *Trigger Happy: The Inner Life of Videogames*, (London: 4th Estate, 2000)

Rankin, Aidan, *Shinto: A Celebration of Life* (Winchester: O-Books, 2010)

Rebick, Marcus and Takenaka Ayumi, (eds.) *The Changing Japanese Family,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

Richie, Donald, *100 Years of Japanese Film: A Concise History* (Tokyo; New York: Kodansha International: Distributed by Kodansha America, 2001)

—, *The Image Factory* (London: Reaktion, 2003)

Rutter, Jason and Jo Bryce, *Understanding Digital Games* (London: Sage, 2006)

Ryan, Marie-Laure, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001)

Sacchi, Livio, *Tokyo: City and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004)

Saito Tamaki, *Hikikomori: Adolescence Without End* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, c2013)

Saito Tamaki, *Beautiful Fighting Girl,* trans. by Keith Vincent and Dawn Lawson (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011)

Salen, Katie and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge, MA; MIT, 2003)

Schachtschabel, Nienke (ed.), *Cities and Eyes: Bronnenboek* (Amsterbam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005)

Schneider, Steven Jay, ed., *Fear Without Frontiers* (Godalming: Fab Press, 2003)

Schodt, Frederick L., *Inside the Robot Kingdom: Japan, Mechatronics and the Coming Robotopia* (New York: Kodansha International, 1988)

—, *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga* (Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press, 1996)

Seargeant, Philip, *The Idea of English in Japan: Ideology and the Evolution of a Global Language* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2009)

Shamoon, Deborah, *Passionate Friendships: The Aesthetics of Girl Culture in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013)

Shary, Timothy, *Generation Multiplex* (University of Texas, 2002)

Shoko, Yoneyama, *Japanese High School: Silence and Resistance* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 1999)

Standish, Isolde, *A New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York; London: Continuum, 2005)

Steinberg, Marc, *Anime's Media Mix* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012)

Stephens, Sharon, *Children and the Politics of Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995)

Sugimoto, Yoshio and Ross Mouer, *Images of Japanese Society: A Study on the Structure of Social Reality* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1986)

Sugimoto, Yoshio, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

Suzuki Akira, *Do Android Crows fly over the Skies of an Electronic Tokyo?* (London: Architectural Association, 2001)

Takahashi, Toshie, *Audience Studies: A Japanese Perspective* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010)

Tester, Keith, ed., *The Flâneur* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994)

Thomas, Jolyon Baraka, *Drawing on Tradition: Manga, Anime, and Religion in Contemporary Japan* (Honolulu, T.H.: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012)

Tobin, Joseph and Alberto Acereda, eds., *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokemon* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004)

Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975)

Von Borries, Friedrich, Steffen P. Walz, Mattias Böttger, *Space Time Play: Computer Games, Architecture and Urbanism: The Next Level* (Basel; Boston: Birkhauser, 2007)

Wada-Marciano, Mitsuyo, *Japanese Cinema in the Digital Age* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012)

Waggoner, Zach, *My Avatar, My Self: Identity in Video Role-Playing Games*, (Jefferson, N.C., McFarland, 2009)

Wardrip-Fruin, Noah and Pat Harrigan, eds., *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance and Game*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004)

—, *Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives*, ed. by Noah Wardrip-fruin and Pat Harrigan, (Cambridge, MA; MIT Press, 2009), pp. 373-384 (p. 373)

Warner, Marina, *Cinema and the Realms of Enchantment*, (London: British Film Institute, 1993)

Wells, Paul, *Understanding Animation,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998)

Wolf, Mark J.P, *The Medium of the Video Game,* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001)

—, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Videogames: The Culture, Technology and Art of Gaming* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2012)

White, Merry, *The Material Child: Coming of Age in America and Japan*, (CA: University of California Press, 1994)

Yano, Christine, *Pink Globalisation: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific,* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013)

Yoshimoto, Mitsuhiro, Eva Tsai and Jung Bong Choi, *Television, Japan and Globalisation,* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2010)

Zielenziger, Michael, *Shutting Out The Sun: How Japan Created its Own Lost Generation,* (New York; London: Nan A. Talese, 2006)

List of Anime Television Programmes Cited

Ah! My Goddess (A! Megami-sama!, AIC, OVA released: 1993-1994), (*manga* serialised: *Afternoon*, 1988-)

Amatsuki (Studio DEEN, originally broadcast: AT-X, 2008), (*manga* serialised: *Monthly Comic Zero Sum,* 2002-)

Ayakashi (Toei Animation, originally broadcast: Fuji TV, 2006)

*Azumanga Daioh! (*J.C. Staff, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 2002), (*manga* serialised: *Dengeki Daioh,* 1999-2002)

Beck: Mongolian Chop Squad (Madhouse, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 2004-2005), (*manga* serialised: *Monthly Shōnen Magazine*, 1999-2008)

Beezlebub (Pierrot, originally broadcast: NNS, 2011-2012), (*manga* serialised: *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, 2009-)

Bleach (*Burichi:* Studio Pierrot, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 2004-2012), (*manga* serialised: *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, 2001- ongoing)

Blue Exorcist (*Ao no Ekusoshisuto,* A-1 Pictures, originally broadcast: JNN, 2011), (*manga* serialised: *Jump Square,* 2009-)

Boogiepop Phantom (*Warawanai Boogiepop Phantom*, Madhouse, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 2000)

Chobits (Chobittsu, Madhouse, originally broadcast: TBS, 2002)

Death Note, (Desu Nōto, Madhouse, originally broadcast: NTV, 2006-2007), (*manga* serialised: *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, 2003-2006)

Dragon Ball (*Doragon Bōru:* Toei Animation, originally broadcast: Fuji TV, 1986-1989), (*manga* serialised: *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, 1984-1995)

Dragon Ball Z (*Doragon Bōru Zetto:* Toei Animation, originally broadcast: Fuji TV, 1989-1996)

FLCL (Furi Kuri, Gainax & Production I.G, OVA released: 2000- 2001)

Fullmetal Alchemist (*Hagane no Renkinjutsushi,* Bones, originally broadcast: Animax, 2003-2004), (*manga* serialised: *Monthly Shōnen Gangen,* 2001-2010)

Full Metal Panic! (*Furumetaru Panikku!,* Gonzo, originally broadcast: WOWOW, 2002), (*manga* serialised: *Monthly Comic Dragon,* 2000-2005)

Genshiken, (Palm Studio, originally broadcast: CTC, 2004), (*manga* serialised: *Afternoon*, 2002-2006)

Gurren Lagann, (*Tengen Toppa Guren Ragan,* Gainax, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 2007)

Hidamari Sketch (*Hidamari Suketchi,* Shaft, originally broadcast: BS-i, 2007), (*manga* serialised: *Manga Time Kirara Carat,* 2004-)

High School of the Dead (*Gakuen Mokushiroku Haisukuru obu za Deddo,* Madhouse, originally broadcast: AT-X, 2010), (*manga* serialised: *Monthly Dragon Age*, 2006-)

His and Her Circumstances (*Kareshi Kanojo no Jijō,* Gainax, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 1998-1999), (*manga* serialised: *LaLa*, 1996-2005)

InuYasha (*Sengoku Otogizōshi inuYasha*, Sunrise, originally broadcast: NNS, 2000-2004), (*manga* serialised: *Shōnen*, 1996-2008)

Initial D (*Inisharu Dī*, Pastel & Studio Gallop, originally broadcast: Animax & Fuji TV, 1998). (*Manga* serialised: *Young Magazine* 1995-2013)

Kekkaishi,(Sunrise, originally broadcast: Nippon Television, 2006-2008), (*manga* serialised: *Weekly Shōnen Sunday,* 2003-2011)

K-On! (Keion!, Kyoto Animation, originally broadcast: TBS, 2009-2010), (*manga* serialised: *Manga Time Kirara,* 2007-2012)

Last Exile (*Rasuto Eguzairu*, Gonzo, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 2003)

Love Hina (Rabu Hina, Xebec, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 2000), (*manga* serialised: *Weekly Shōnen Magazine,* 1998-2001)

Lucky Star (Raki Suta, Kyoto Animation, originally broadcast: Chiba TV, 2007), (*manga* serialised: *Comptiq, Shōnen Ace,* 2004-)

Mazinger Z (*Mazingā Zetto*, Toei Animation, originally broadcast: Fuji Television, 1972-1974), (*manga* serialised: *Weekly Shōnen Jump,* 1972-1974)

Mobile Suit Gundam (*Kidō Senshi Gandamu*, Sunrise, originally broadcast: Nagoya Broadcasting, 1979-1980)

Mobile Suit Gundam Wing (*Shin Kidō Senki Gandamu Uingu*, Sunrise, originally broadcast: TV Asahi, 1995-1996)

Mahōtsukai Sarī, (Toei Animation, originally broadcast: NET (later TV Asahi), 1966-1968), (*manga* serialised: *Ribon,* 1966-1967)

Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water, (*Fushigi no Umi no Nadia,* Group TAC, originally aired: NHK, 1990-1991)

Natsume's Book of Friends (Natsume Yūjin-chō, Brain's Base, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 2008), (*manga* serialised: *LaLa DX,* 2005-)

Naruto (Studio Pierrot, originally broadcast: Animax & TV Tokyo, 2002-2007), (*manga* serialised: *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, 1997-)

Naruto Shippuden (Studio Pierrot, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 2007-)

A Summer-Coloured Miracle, (Natsuiro Kiseki, Sunrise, originally broadcast: MBS, 2012), (manga serialised: Young Gangen, 2012-2013)

Neon Genesis Evangelion (Shin Seiki Evangerion, Gainax, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 1995-1996)

Nichijou (Kyoto Animation, originally broadcast: TV Aichi, 2011), (manga serialised: Shōnen Ace Comptiq, 2006-)

Nura: Rise of the Yōkai Clan (Nurarihyon no Mago, Studio Deen, originally broadcast: Yomiuri TV, 2010), (manga serialised: Weekly Shōnen Jump, 2008-2013)

Ore no Imōto ga Konnani Kawaii Wake ga Nai, (AIC Build, originally broadcast: Tokyo MX, 2010), (manga serialised: Dengeki G's Magazine, 2009-2011)

One Piece (Wan Pisu, Toei Animation, originally broadcast: Fuji TV, 1999-), (manga serialised: Weekly Shōnen Jump, 1997-)

Patlabor (Kidō Keisatsu Patoreibā, Sunrise, originally broadcast: NTV, 1989-1990), (manga serialised: Weekly Shōnen Sunday, 1988-1994)

RahXephon (Razephon, Bones, originally broadast: Fuji TV, 2002)

Ranma ½ (½ Ranma Nibun-no-Ichi, Kitty Films & Studio Deen, originally broadcast: Animax & Fuji TV, 1989), (manga serialized: Weekly Shōnen Sunday, 1987-1996)

Serial Experiments Lain (Shiriaru Ekusuperimentsu Lein, Triangle Staff, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 1998)

Softenni, (Sofuteni, Xebec, originally broadcast: AT-X, 2011), (manga serialised: Monthly Comic Blade, 2008-2011)

Tenchi Muyo!, (Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-ohki, AIC, OVA released: 1992-2005)

Tetsujin 28-Go (Tetsujin Nijūhachi-gō, Tele-Cartoon Japan, originally broadcast: Fuji TV, 1963-1966), (manga serialised: Shōnen, 1956-1966)

The Prince of Tennis, (Tenisu no Ōjisama, Trans Arts, originally broadcast, Animax, 2001-2005), (manga serialised: Weekly Shōnen Jump, 1999-2008)

The Vision of Escaflowne (Tenkū no Esukafurōne, Sunrise, originally broadcast: TV Tokyo, 1996)

The Big O (Tha Biggu Ō, Sunrise, originally broadcast: Animax, 1999-2000), (manga serialised: Magazine Z, 1999-2001)

The Rose of Versailles, (Berusaiyu no Bara, Tokyo Movie Shinsa, originally broadcast: Animax, 1979-1980), (manga serialised: Margaret, 1972-1973)

Sailor Moon (Bishōjo Senshi Seramun, Toei Animation, originally broadcast: TV Asahi, 1992-1993), (manga serialised: Nakayoshi, 1991-1997)

Space Battleship Yamato (*Uchū Senkan Yamato*, Academy Productions, originally broadcast: Yomiuri TV, 1974-1975)

Welcome to the NHK, (*N.H.K ni Yōkoso!,* Gonzo, originally broadcast: AT-X, 2006)*,* (*manga* serialised: *Shōnen Ace*, 2004-2007)

Witch Hunter Robin (*Wicchi Hantā Robin*, Sunrise, originally broadcast: Animax & TV Tokyo, 2002)

List of Videogames Cited

Animal Crossing (Nintendo, 2001)

Animal Crossing: New Leaf (Nintendo, 2013)

Animal Crossing: Wild World Nintendo, 2005)

Clock Tower (Human Entertainment, 1995)

Dragon Quest (Enix, 1986)

Dragon Quest III (Enix, 1988)

Dungeons and Dragons (TSR, 1974)

Final Fantasy (Squaresoft, 1987)

Final Fantasy IV (Square, 1991)

Final Fantasy V (Square, 1992)

Final Fantasy VI (Square, 1994)

Final Fantasy VII (Square, 1997)

Final Fantasy VIII (Square, 1999)

Final Fantasy IX (Square, 2000)

Final Fantasy X (Square, July 2001)

Grand Theft Auto III (DMA Design, 2001)

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City (Rockstar Games, 2002)

Harvest Moon (Pack-In-Video, 1996)

Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town (Marvellous Interactive Inc, 2003)

Ico (Sony Computer Entertainment, 2001)

Katamari Damacy (Namco, 2004)

The Legend of Zelda (Nintendo, 1986)

The Legend of Zelda: The Adventure of Link (Nintendo, 1987)

The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past (Nintendo, 1991)

The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap (Nintendo, 1998)

The Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time (Nintendo, 1998)

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker (Nintendo, December 2002)

Lost in Blue (Konami, 2005)

Mega Man (Capcom, 1987)

Metal Gear Solid (Konami 1998)

Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty (Konami, 2001)

Metroid (Nintendo, 1986)

Metroid II: Return of Samus (Nintendo, 1992)

Pac-Man (Namco, 1980)

Pandora's Tower (Nintendo, 2011)

Pokemon Blue (Nintendo, 1996)

Project Zero (Tecmo, 2001)

Project Zero II: Crimson Butterfly (Tecmo, 2003).

Resident Evil (Capcom, 1996)

Resident Evil 2 (Capcom, 1998)

Resident Evil 4 (Capcom, 2005)

Silent Hill (Konami Digital Entertainment, 1999)

Silent Hill 3 (Konami Digital Entertainment, 2003)

Space Invaders (Taito, 1977)

Street Fighter II (Capcom, 1991)

Super Mario Bros (Nintendo, 1985)

Super Metroid (Nintendo 1994)

Thrust (Superior Software, 1986)

Tomb Raider (Eidos Interactive, 1996)

Ultima (Origin Systems, 1981-)

Wizardry (Sir-Tech, 1981)

Filmography

Akira (Katsuhiro Otomo, 1988)

Battle Royale (Kinji Fukasaku, 2000)

Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003)

Cruel Story of Youth (*Seishun Zankoku Monogatari,* Oshima Nagisa, 1960)

Go (Yukisada Isao, 2001)

Godzilla (Ishiro Honda, 1954)

Gossip Girl (2007-2012)

Ghost in the Shell (Gōsuto In Za Sheru/Kōkaku Kidōtai, Mamoru Oshii, 1995)

Heathers (Michael Lehman, 1989)

Initial D, (Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, 2005)

Kisses (*Kuchizuke,* Masumura Yasuzo, 1957)

K-On! (Naoko Yamada, 2011)

Less than Zero (Marek Kanievska, 1987)

Neon Genesis Evangelion; Death and Rebirth (*Shinseiki Evangerion Gekijo-ban: Shito Shinsei*, Anno Hideaki, 1997)

Otaku no Video (*Otaku's Video*, Takeshi Mori, 1991)

Patlabor 2 (Mamoru Oshii, 1993)

Pretty in Pink (John Hughes, 1986)

Princess Mononoke, (Hayao Miyazaki, 1997)

Rebel Without a Cause (Nicholas Ray, 1955)

Ring (*Ringu,* Hideo Nakata, 1998)

Season of the Sun (*Taiyo no Kisetsu*, Furukawa Takumi, 1956)

Sixteen Candles, (John Hughes, 1984)

Spirited Away (Hayao Miyazaki, 2001)

Star Wars (George Lucas, 1997)

The Breakfast Club, (John Hughes, 1985)

The Grudge 2 (*Ju-on*, Takashi Shimizu, 2003)

The O.C (2003-2007)

The Wild One (<u>László Benedek</u>, 1953)

Tomie (Ataru Oikawa, 1999)

Typhoon Club (*Taifu Kurabu*, Shinji Somai, 1985)

Yojimbo (Akira Kurosawa, 1961)

Seppuku (Masaki Kobayashi, 1962)