Manga Histories:
Beyond the Paradigms of Modernization and Modernism

Annie Harrisson
East Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts
McGill University, Montreal
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Abstract

This thesis examines histories of manga written in Japan. The first part provides a critical overview of influential accounts of manga. A close analysis of how these accounts locate the historical origins of manga reveals two large paradigms for understanding manga history: a modernization paradigm and a modernist or postmodernist paradigm. It also allows for a general hypothesis: because manga is a relatively new object of study, the primary goal of manga history is to legitimate it as an object of social importance. Recourse to historical paradigms allows writers to situate manga at the heart of important cultural and historical debates. Unfortunately, it also tends to flatten the diversity and specificity of manga. Thus the second part turns to two manga offering very different historical visions with the aim of showing how manga themselves may contribute to developing new perspectives for writing manga history.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine l'histoire des mangas telle qu'écrite au Japon. La première partie donne un aperçu critique des récits influents concernant les mangas. Une analyse détaillée de la façon dont ces récits situent les origines historiques des mangas révèlent deux principaux paradigmes : un paradigme de modernisation et un paradigme moderniste ou postmoderniste. Ceci permet une hypothèse générale : puisque les mangas sont un objet d'étude relativement nouveau, le but premier de l'histoire des mangas est de légitimer le manga en tant qu'objet d'importance sociale. Le recours à des paradigmes historiques permet aux auteurs de situer le manga au cœur d'importants débats culturels et historiques. Malheureusement, cela tend à réduire la diversité et la spécificité des mangas. Ainsi, la deuxième partie se tourne vers deux mangas proposant des visions historiques différentes afin de révéler comment les mangas pourraient contribuer au développement de nouvelles perspectives concernant l'écriture de l'histoire des mangas.

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Introduction

For someone used to the relatively marginal status of comics culture in the North America or Western Europe, the vast scale of manga and the pervasiveness of its imagery in Japan may be difficult to conceive. Comics culture is ubiquitous in Japan, from the usage of cute characters within political campaigns intended to encourage the younger electorate to vote, to the oversized images of Pokémon that adorn some of airplanes of the All Nippon Airways. What is more, the diversity of manga is as impressive as its abundance. Although a significant portion of manga in Japan are produced within large-scale commercial ventures (or the "manga industry"), a large number of works are produced by individual creators and even by fan themselves in the case of *dōjinshi*. In addition, manga are commonly situated as one form of media expression within a multimedia franchise including video games, anime, and a vast array of other related products. Such multimedia franchises, often called "media mix," are at the heart of what is loosely dubbed "otaku culture," but are not limited to it.

Despite its popularity, academic research on manga remains a rather marginal phenomenon. While some universities offer programs on manga, as in Kobe Design University or Kyoto Seika University, their programs are mainly geared toward technical education, and their principal objective is the formation of artists possessing a practical knowledge of manga expression rather than scholars who will study the medium. Although there is an improvement in the perception of manga as a valid object of research since the academic symposium on manga held in May 1998 by the Japan Society for Art History,[1] manga, as well as popular culture in general, still tends to be shunned by the academic community, especially in Japan.

Alongside the lack of scholarly interest in manga, the association of manga with otaku

[1] Jacqueline Berndt, "Concidering Manga Discourse: Location, Ambiguity, Historicity," *Japanese Visual Culture: Exploration in the World of Manga and Anime,* ed. Mark W. MacWilliams (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2003), 300.

culture has encouraged pejorative stances toward manga. In particular, the arrest of the notorious child-murdered Miyazaki Tsutomu in 1989 contributed to the stigmatization of otaku, for his room was alleged filled with manga and anime, encouraging the idea that the excessive consumption of works aimed at children had the capacity to transform consumers into unproductive and even criminal individuals: a mix of hikikomori and NEET.[2]

At the same time, due to the economic scale and cultural impact of manga within Japan as well as the global boom in popularity of Japanese manga, anime, and games, there has been increased governmental interest in these "contents industries" in recent years, with efforts to make manga and anime into a cultural trademark of Japan and accord them a prominent place in construction of Japanese cultural identity. Above all, government policies aim to profit from and build upon the popularity of manga outside Japan. As Lamarre observes:

> […] because otaku consumption has gradually been identified as a large and profitable market, new governmental policies have been developed under the notion of 'Cool Japan', which pushes in the other direction, striving to strip otaku subjectivity of its perceived creepiness toward the formation of a new majoritarian subject.[3]

In other words, as the commercial and cultural importance of manga has made it increasingly impossible to ignore, there is a perceived need to legitimise the medium, and one of the most common ways of doing so is to provide an illustrious or at least respectable origin. Similarly, the pejorative perceptions of manga — as childish, vulgar, violent — spurs efforts to purge the

[2] Ōtsuka Eiji, *Mikkii no shoshiki* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2013), 6.
[3] Thomas Lamarre, "Cool, Creepy, Moé: Otaku Fictions, Discourses, and Policies," *Diversité urbaine,* 13, no.1 (2013): 149.

medium of its more degrading elements. Frequently, these two impulses work together: the search for the origin of manga readily becomes the point of departure for defining, that is, for constructing a "proper" sense of Japanese identity. It is this problem that provides the focus for this thesis.

In these pages, I propose to examine the ways in which "origin stories" about manga are inevitably entwined with stories about Japanese identity, or more precisely, "discourses on Japaneseness," known in Japanese as *Nihonjinron*. As such, the goal of this thesis is not to determine what the real origin of manga is. Rather I will look at how the establishment of an origin tends to produce a certain kind of history as well as a story about Japan. Perhaps because manga is a relatively new and little explored field, historical accounts of manga do not change how we perceive Japan or Japanese history. On the contrary, histories of manga tend to draw on already established paradigms for understanding Japan. Two histories paradigms have proven particularly important in the context of manga histories. On the one hand, there is the paradigm of modernization in which Japan is portrayed in terms of its capacity for building prosperity. In such histories it is above all the self-made man who provides the model of success. On the other hand, there is the paradigm of a Japaneseness that resists modernization and even runs counter to it but is nonetheless essential to the establishment of a modern Japanese identity. This paradigm might be called "modernist" or "postmodernist" (or even alternative modernity) in that it aims to articulate Japanese difference or uniqueness vis-à-vis modernity.

My study is divided in two parts. In the first part, I will show how Japanese accounts of manga tend to adopt one or the other of the above two paradigms. I should mention, however, that these accounts of manga are not written by scholars or recognized historians. The general lack of academic interest in manga means that those who have taken on the task of writing

histories of manga tend to either to have some involvement with manga production, whether as writers, editors, or artists; or they are individuals who have developed their profound knowledge of manga through collecting and connoisseurship. One of the major voices, Ōtsuka Eiji, for instance, has worked as a manga editor, script writer, and critic. Another major writer of manga histories, Shimizu Isao, began his studies as a collector. In this study, although I voice some criticism of their approaches, my critique is not intended to disparage their contributions but rather is intended to highlight the problems inherent in the two paradigms mentioned above. Let me return to those paradigms, then.

Before I focus specifically on the case of Japan, I would like to raise some differences about how Modernity and Modernism are perceived in Japan and in the West. From the standpoint of the West, modernity is based on values inherited from the Enlightenment the most important of which being the idea of progress. This emphasis was fueled by the impressive developments in science and technology symbolized by urbanisation and widespread industrialisation.[4] This movement spread through Europe not merely through the intrinsic merits of rationalism, but through its use in capitalism and colonialism.[5] Modernism arose as a reaction to the consequences of modernisation. The rapid industrialisation created a feeling of alienation that led many to believe that there was a need to oppose the supremacy of rationalism and go back to the traditional values that were lost to modernity.

Within modernization theory, Europe is often seen as the central point from which modernity spread, while Japan is placed on the periphery and thus on the receiving end of modernity. One of the main reflexes of the western modernization theory was to turn to what was considered "primitive" cultures; a non-European "other" that had not yet achieved

[4] Rajeev S. Patke, *Modernist Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 4.
[5] Patke, *Modernist Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 9.

modernisation. For many, those primitive people held the key to the crisis of modernity and were the guardian of lost traditional values. This context explains the rise of several movements in the 19th century that found a renewed interest in non-Western cultures such as Japonisme or Chinoiserie.

In Japan, there was both resistance to and recuperation of these discourses. While there was a will to raise the perception of Japan to the eyes of the West and demonstrate that Japan, unlike neighbouring countries, had fully modernized, there was also a resistance to imposing Western modernization values onto Japanese culture, which made for a form of modernist discourse that strived to rework what was now cast as traditional culture. As a result, histories of manga tend to adopt either the modernization paradigm or the modernist paradigm.

The modernization paradigm is especially prevalent in writers who claim that the true distinction between manga and other types of comics occurs early after World War II. Postwar Japan, then, is when we see the birth of the modern manga as we now know it. Such histories tend to gravitate toward the figure of Tezuka Osamu, and Tezuka is often lauded as the father and even the god of manga. In histories centered on Tezuka, ideals of modernity play a major role. Tezuka is portrayed as a successful entrepreneur and innovator whose work contributed to build the manga industry we know today. As such, he embodies many of the values linked to modern progress and prosperity and stands as an example of the self-made Japanese genius. Such histories tend to hinge on the idea of a radical historical break immediately after World War II. They thus adopt the perspective of *sengo*, a term referring to postwar Japan. Sengo itself evokes the paradigm of modernization, for postwar Japanese generally is thought to mark a new beginning or second chance for modernization in Japan. Modernization according to a Western

model was said to remain incomplete or to have gone astray during the wartime era, but the postwar offered another opportunity.[6]

In his account in *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, Harumi Befu explains the significance of Japan's defeat in WWII in this way:

> [The] disastrous defeat in the Pacific War meant not only military defeat, but total undermining of Japanese cultural values. […] Traditional Japanese values and institutions, which were mobilised for fighting the war, were now all object of criticism.[7]

The country was then seen as medieval and backwards, and ideas of Japanese tradition and uniqueness were perceived in a negative light.[8] The American historian of Japan Carol Gluck makes a similar point but notes the violence of the Japanese reaction against the war and the events leading to it. Japanese traditions were construed as one of the causes of a "war of peculiar savagery."[9] The need to rebuild the nation was not only material but also social. This new Japan implied "an inversion of the old."[10] Among the new values of the postwar, one of the most important was the emphasis on the pacifist nature of Japanese people. By breaking up with their military past, there was a hope for Japan that "history could begin as if anew."[11]

The possibility of starting history anew would allow Japan to take back its progress from the point where its course derailed and have "a second chance to get the modern right."[12] Even if

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[6] Carol Gluck, "The Past in the Present," In *Postwar Japan as History*, ed. Andrew Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 79.
[7] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of "Nihonjinron*" (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001), 135.
[8] Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity,* 135.
[9] Gluck, "The Past in the Present," 83.
[10] Gluck, "The Past in the Present," 64.
[11] Gluck, "The Past in the Present," 69.
[12] Gluck, "The Past in the Present," 79.

the war trials held in Japan after World War II did not entirely purge Japan of the individuals responsible for the war, it did provide scapegoats which allowed the population of Japan to take the role of victims who had merely been "embroiled by their leaders."[13]

The framework of sengo provided an escape from the war guilt, laying the blame for the wartime atrocities on bad leadership and defective modernization. Although the "will to start anew" did inspire a genuine change of attitudes, the break also served to camouflage the profound continuities between the prewar and postwar regimes, creating a false feeling of innocence and preventing a deeper evaluation of Japan's wartime legacy.

What interests me about how histories centered on Tezuka is their tendency to assume this postwar modernization paradigm: while they celebrate the ability of Japan to progress and to get modernity right, they distance Japan from its imperialist past. In this context, Tezuka's 1947 manga *Shin Takarajima* has played a key role in adapting the sengo modernization paradigm to suit manga history. In particular, I will look at how two very different writers have situate this manga. First, I will consider the work of Natsume Fusanosuke who proposes to ground our understanding of Tezuka's work in a formal analysis, giving priority to those elements deemed specific to the medium of comics.[14] I will focus especially on Natsume's 1992 book, *Tezuka wa doko ni iru* (Where is Tezuka). The interest of approach lies in his attempt to rectify a tendency he observed in studies on manga: making themes and stories into the main objects of analysis had encouraged writers to focus on exclusively political ideas or ideologies, avoiding any account of the medium of manga. While Natsume does complicate the paradigm of sengo, he nonetheless proves unable to move beyond it. Second, I will consider Takeuchi Ichirō (also known as Sai Fuumei), and in particular his 2006 book *Tezuka = sutōri manga no kigen* (Tezuka

[13] Gluck, "The Past in the Present," 86.
[14] Natsume Fusanosuke, *Tezuka Osamu wa doko ni iru* (Tokyo: Chikuma Library, 1992), 11-12.

= The Origin of Story Manga) in which he draws on his background as a playwright, director and critique to shed light on Tezuka. He finds in Tezuka in a perfect exemplar of his argument for the ability of Japan to assimilate modernity, suggesting that it is only through the interaction with Japanese traditions that the modern form of manga and all its innovation could arise.

The modernist paradigm, which readily transforms into a postmodernist paradigm, takes a different stance on Japanese history. Instead of positing a radical break between prewar and postwar, the modernist approach posits a radical break between Japan and the West, or more precisely, between Japanese traditions and Western modernization. The works of Murakami Takashi and Okada Toshio are prime examples. Contrary to histories centred on Tezuka that emphasise a break between war and postwar periods, Murkami's and Okada's accounts situate the origin of manga (and Japanese popular culture more generally) in Edo Japan, also called Tokugawa Japan. These thinkers evoke the existence of Japanese qualities that allow for aesthetic continuity between the traditional past and contemporary manga and anime. Such continuity, however, is predicated on establishing the aesthetics differences between Japanese traditions and Western modernity. Ultimately, however, this paradigm does not reject modernity so much as modernization, and as a result, such an approach implies a desire for a modernist alternative to Western modernity. Nonetheless, the risk of such an approach is that it reinforces received discourses on the uniqueness of Japan, known collectively as Nihonjinron. Let me briefly introduce some of the basic parameters of these discourses.

Among the recurring ideas of Nihonjinron is the importance of the unique geography of Japan. The country's insularity is considered an important factor in the transmission of a Japanese worldview by protecting Japan from external influences. Insularity also leads to a distinctive language that possesses a unique vagueness which can only be understood by native

speakers. The usage of kanji also provides a visual aspect to the language that allows for puns and other plays on words that characterise Japanese writing. As a result of the insularity of Japan and the Japanese language, other social values or behaviours arose whose influence also contributed to create an unparalleled formation.

The ideas behind Nihonjinron have undergone historical transformation. From its earlier form observed in the National Learning school (kokugaku) to what Befu calls the "ascendancy of cultural nationalism,"[15] Befu notes that the tone of Nihonjinron has alternated between positive and critical appreciation of Japanese values.[16] For my purposes, it is the postwar formulation that is of interest. This formulation arose a decade after the war to compensate for the wholesale endorsement of and unthinking enthusiasm for everything American.

In contrast, an impulse arose to search for what was uniquely Japanese, something that existed before the arrival of the West, but also fell outside of the influence of China. On the one hand, because this unique Japaneseness is supposed to continue into an unbroken line throughout history, Nihonjinron is deeply concerned with the past. On the other hand, such a search for unique Japanese characteristics must posit an "other" in order to discover traits specific to Japan. Thus, instead of focusing exclusively on Japan's own history to understand this putative Japaneseness, writers arrive at their findings through comparison with Asian or Western histories, which histories shape the understanding of this past. Such comparisons are often based on a linear conception of history that creates a timeline where nations are placed according to their perceived progress. Cultures that appear less "evolved" are labelled backwards, while the allegedly advanced ones become a referent for the present. Comparisons are mainly made with the West, but other East Asian nations and cultures are frequently evoked as well, since they

[15] Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, 139.
[16] Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, 123.

share common roots and history with Japan. Generally, however, because Japan has undergone modernization, many Nihonjinron writers consider it as more advanced than the rest of Asia.

There is also a distinct emphasis on purity of the Japanese identity, but this doesn't exclude the possibility of Japanese hybridity, for one of the unique characteristics of Japan is allegedly its ability to assimilate influences. In this way, hybridity itself is taken as evidence of uniqueness. Not only is such hybridity beyond the comprehension of other cultures, but it also situates Japan as unique mediator between East and West. Because Japan is hybrid, it can understand cultures of the East and the West, yet these cultures cannot understand each other. Conversely, Japan cannot be grasped by either East or West because they both lack part of what makes up Japanese culture.

Much of the Nihonjinron literature, rather than aiming for exclusive elite scholarship, is produced for the general public.[17] Consequently, while some works are rigorous, others often rely primarily on intuition and experience. For the latter, words fail to describe Japaneseness. It is something that is internalised by all Japanese and sometimes just too obvious to be explained. Such a stance allows the author to make claims for an exclusively Japanese understanding that needs no further justification. Because foreigners were not born in Japan, they did not undergo the complex process of enculturation from birth, and cannot properly grasp Japaneseness much less speak Japanese fluently. Indeed, the language itself is part of the unique Japanese worldview. For many Nihonjinron authors, there exists a historically transcendent Japanese nature that is expressed through an unchanging set of values and attitudes, and sometimes knowledge, which assures continuity between past and present.

[17] Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, 60.

Although the modernist paradigm does not adopt all these features of Nihonjinron, it presents a similar overall stance and shares the basic aim of differentiating Japanese culture by reference to the "Other," either the West or China, and usually both. In this study, I consider two authors who strive to establish the uniquely Japanese characteristics of contemporary manga culture by articulating the vision of a postmodern Japanese popular cultural aesthetics directly descended from the Edo period. On the one hand, I look at Murakami Takashi's theory of superflat, and on the other hand, at Okada Toshio's account of the distinctive features of otaku culture. An analysis of the works of these two authors shows how their criticism of Western modernity is deployed at once to define Japaneseness and to modern Japanese society itself.

Interestingly enough, a yet third possibility arises in the context of manga and anime. Takahata Isao, for instance, in his book *Jūni seiki no animēshon* (Animation in the Twelfth Century) discovers the origin of manga in the scrolls of the Heian period or classical Japan. His account adopts a modernist stance similar Nihonjinron yet also insists on the paradigm of modernity. Takahata thus gestures toward a Japan that developed its own experience of modernity as early as the Heian period. Here I propose to examine critically the assumptions he brings to bear on his construction of an always already modern Japan.

In the second part of this study, in order to consider other ways of thinking about manga history, I turn to a close analysis of two manga by female creators set in the Edo period. As I mentioned previously, the historical study of manga does not yet have sufficient resources or intellectual autonomy to produce its own perspective on Japanese history. This is why those who seek to establish and legitimate the study of manga tend to draw on familiar yet simplistic and problematic historical paradigms in hopes of situating manga favourably alongside other respectable objects of study. In this part of the study, I wish to experiment with another

approach, to look more closely at how manga themselves offer modes of historicisation that differ from the modernization and modernist paradigms. While it is beyond the scope of this study to transform these manga modes of historicisation into an actual history of manga, I would like to consider some tentative directions and concerns.

Thus I turn to works of female artists who have written manga dealing with the condition of women in Edo Japan, as a way to understand and test the possibilities of the medium to convey history. First, to discuss the use of primary sources in manga as well as the problems of the use fiction and historical violence, I explore Anno Moyoko's *Sakuran* (2001-2003). The visual nature of manga not only allows Anno to present sources in a way that would be impossible using only words, but also serves to introduce distinct layers of content, which enables her to explore the divide between fiction and history. I will focus specifically on how her ability to separate fiction from facts helps her maintain a sense of objectivity and to deeply change the reader's perception of history.

I will then turn to Sugiura Hinako's 1986 manga compilation *Futatsu makura* to analyse how manga enables her to produce a different understanding of manga and Edo kibyōshi through the juxtaposition and play of aesthetic elements of both media. Drawing on readers' knowledge of those two media, she emphasises their differences through decontextualization and disjunction. In this way, contrary to Takahata and Murakami, she contests the idea of an artistic continuity between Edo artworks and contemporary manga. With those two examples, I hope to demonstrate how such an approach to manga may make a significant contribution to our understanding of manga as a medium while establishing the validity of manga not only as a way of transmitting historical evidence, but also as a powerful instrument for fostering changes in attitudes toward and reflections on the nature of history itself.

Chapter 1

Historiography of Manga: The Search for Origins

Generally speaking, accounts of manga show little interest in tracking the broader historical transformations in manga as such. Where one might expect a survey of the artists and writers who contributed to the formation of manga at various times, accounts of manga tend to focus on one or two rather narrow instances or to address manga at a highly abstract level without much reference to actual works. Interestingly enough, the question of the origins of manga commonly takes precedence over other equally valid concerns, and this emphasis on origins frequently adopts a comparative perspective, which is to say, trying to determine the characteristics of manga by way of comparison with other forms of expression or media. Because such a focus has dominated the study of manga and has narrowed its focus to an unfortunate degree, I propose in the first part of this study to take a closer look at the motives or concerns that have encouraged this approach to manga. Needless to say, the actual choice of an historical moment as the origin for manga — postwar (Tezuka), or Edo Japan, or courtly Japan (the Heian court) — follows from the concerns of the writer in question. Each of these origins implies a very different tonality to the history of manga. As I work through these different accounts with their different origins, I will not only highlight but will also offer a critique of their distinct concerns, with the aim of indicating how one set of concerns tends to close off others.

Tezuka Osamu and the Postwar Ideal

"Tezuka Osamu. There is no one who doesn't know his name; he is the god of manga."[18]

[18] Takeuchi Ichirō, *Tezuka Osamu = Sutōrī manga no kigen* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2006), 1.

It is with these lines that Takeuchi Ichirō opens his book *Tezuka Osamu = sutori manga no kigen.* Tezuka looms so large in the history of manga that some account of him is inevitable. His legacy is indeed impressive, not only for the astonishing number of pages he drew during his career (over fifteen thousand),[19] but also for the claims made about his contribution to the development of the medium. The acclaim accorded to Tezuka is not at all surprising in this respect. What interests me, however, is how Tezuka and his artistic legacy have been mobilised to impart value to manga by confirming a postwar Japanese identity that insists on a peace-loving and culturally rich Japan grounded in modernity. To set the stage for my discussion of how Natsume Fusanosuke and Takeuchi Ichirō deal with Tezuka, I wish first to consider the legacy of Tezuka's 1947 manga *Shin Takarajima*, for it is above all this work that has been used to situate Tezuka as a paradigmatic figure of *sengo*.

The Myth of Tezuka

Accounts of Tezuka commonly stress two factors. On the one hand, accounts tend to emphasize both his pacifism and his willingness to work hard, even to the limits of his health. On the other hand, he is depicted as a revolutionary artist who thoroughly transformed manga expression by adapting cinematic techniques to manga. In this latter context, it is the publication of *Shin Takarajima* or *New Treasure Island* in 1947 that is considered a turning point not only for Tezuka as an artist but also for manga expression in general. Commentators call attention to how this manga expands or stretches the temporal duration for actions and perceptions by augmenting the number of frames to express a single scene. This expanding or stretching of elapsed time makes the scene feel more dramatic and amplifies the expression of emotions. In

[19] Takeuchi, *Tezuka Osamu*, 1.

addition, commentators note how the fluidity of the drawings contribute to heightening the sense of movement.

While the manga does indeed use such techniques, two points merit closer attention. First, Tezuka was not the sole creator of *Shin Takarajima*. The work was, in fact, a collaboration with Sakai Shichima, whose contribution is often overlooked, even though it had a considerable impact on the form of expression. Indeed Sakai subsequently claimed that "the cinematic techniques in [*Shin Takarajima*] were his own innovation."[20] As his biographer, Nishigami Haruo, explains it, "Sakai wrote the story, breaking it down to different scenes and making rough panel layout, and passed it on to Tezuka. Then Sakai designed the cover to finish it up."[21] In her account of Tezuka, Natsu Onoda Power adds: "Tezuka's draft was cut down from 250 pages to 60 pages by Sakai. Sakai even changed some of the drawings without consulting Tezuka."[22] Although it remains uncertain who actually contributed what, it is important to bear in mind that Sakai's role in the creation of *Shin Takarajima* was probably far greater than what is usually attributed to him. Indeed, many texts on Tezuka do not even mention his name.

Second, it should be noted that Tezuka redrew *Shin Takarajima* for his 1987 anthology. He not only claimed that the reproduction method at the time did not do justice to his original drawings, but also that he wanted to reinsert the panels removed by Sakai.[23] Thus Tezuka positioned himself as the sole creator of the work and of its innovations. The transformation of *Shin Takarajima* are worthy of closer attention, but in this context, I simply wish to call attention to the historical tendency of commentary on Tezuka to overlook any factors that seem to detract from the image of a solitary genius.

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[20] Onoda Natsu Power, *God of Comics: Osamu Tezuka and the Creation of Post-World War II Manga* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 43.
[21] Nishigami Haruo; cited in Power, 43.
[22] Power, *God of Comics*, 43.
[23] Power, *God of Comics*, 43.

Now, both of the authors who interest me in this context, Natsume and Takeuchi, question the received tendency to situate *Shin Takarajima* as *the* central event in the history of manga histories due to its introduction of cinematic techniques. Each in his manner strives to dismantle the myth of Tezuka. As I will discuss in greater detail below, however, they nonetheless contribute to the formation of another kind of myth about Tezuka. If the figure of Tezuka seems to retain a quasi-mythic power even in less boosterish accounts of his work, it is because the general image of Tezuka serves to stabilise a certain way of thinking about the history of postwar Japan more generally. As Lamarre points out:

> Historical inquiry in postwar Japan has thus gravitated toward and selected those figures and events that mesh with the macrohistorical paradigm of *sengo*. The history of manga, for instance, finds a perfect fit with the *sengo* paradigm in the figure of Tezuka Osamu as the originator (or god) of manga, or of anime, or both. What Gluck calls the long postwar is repeated in the establishment of a radical break in manga and anime history by insisting on Tezuka as an origin.[24]

Indeed, as I will show in subsequent analysis, Tezuka continues to be the pivotal point of reference in manga histories that adopt the overall perspective of postwar modernization to structure their accounts. As soon as Tezuka enters the picture, the historical dimension of analysis shifts, often not so subtly, from a focus on actual manga and manga creators to focus on ideals associated with modernization.

[24] Thomas Lamarre, "Speciesm, Part II: Tezuka Osamu and the Multispecies Ideal," in *Mechademia 5: Fanthropologies,* ed. Frenchy Lunning (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2010), 54.

Natsume Fusanosuke and Postwar Self-Consciousness

Before writing his famous book, *Tezuka wa doko ni iru*, Natsume Fusanosuke worked both as a manga artist and as a freelance illustrator. Given such a background, it is not surprising that Natsume would centre his discussion on an analysis of the visual language of manga rather than on narrative alone. Although written some two decades ago, his analysis of manga forms of expression remains fresh and insightful today, even for manga creators who wish to expand their repertory of visual narrative techniques. The interest of his work in this context comes of his acknowledgement of the degree to which he had internalized the conventions of the manga he read growing up, particularly those of Tezuka. Indeed he expresses some concern that the visual language of Tezuka has become so ubiquitous and pervasive that he might not be able to achieve sufficient critical distance from it.[25] Yet the same may be said of the influences on Tezuka. Tezuka's manga show the impact of the visual vocabularies derived from numerous sources, among them cinema, animated films, and Takarazuka drama (an all-female, usually musical theatre). It is difficult to determine the degree to which such influences are deployed consciously or not. This is precisely the question Natsume raises at the outset: to what extent can we consciously determine where Tezuka is in manga, and where he is not. In effect, Tezuka is everywhere and nowhere.

Still, even though Natsume wishes to acknowledge Tezuka's contributions to the medium of manga, he proceeds cautiously, first observing that Tezuka's contribution should be sought neither in his use of cinematic conventions nor in his themes or stories. Natsume argues that Tezuka's techniques for rendering a multilayered temporality were far from new, and in fact, prior artists had already surpassed him in their creative use of cinematic techniques. He writes:

[25] Natsume Fusanosuke, *Tezuka Osamu wa doko ni iru* (Tokyo: Chikuma Library, 1992), 10.

> In other words, Tezuka Osamu was not a god who created it all from nothing. Indeed the panel techniques in *Shin Takarajima* do not appear all that innovative. We find more innovative drawings and techniques not only in *Supīdo Tarō* but also in works such as *Kasei tanken* (1940, A voyage to Mars), with drawings by Oshio Noboru and story by Asahi Tarō (Oguma Hideo).[26]

In Natsume's opinion, Tezuka merely popularised already existing developments in manga.[27] Ultimately he believes that Tezuka's principal achievement lies elsewhere: Tezuka broke new ground with characters, endowing them with a soul, with a *self-consciousness*.[28]

Natsume looks, for instance, at how Tezuka depicts the eyes of characters. He notes how Tezuka's use of highlights in the eyes of characters imparts the sense of an "overflowing interiority," which distinguishes his characters from those in other works, in which eyes look like "black lumps of coal."[29] This portrayal of self-consciousness also occurs in Tezuka's early crowd scenes, in which "each of the figures asserts something of their own and something together."[30] Each one has individuality and self-will.[31] When the main character is thrown into the mob scene, the result is a "shaking of self-consciousness."[32] These new self-conscious characters also reflect a new awareness on the part of their creator, Tezuka, and on the part of manga readers.

[26] Natsume Fusanosuke, "Where is Tezuka? A Theory of Manga Expression," in *Mechademia 8: Tezuka's Manga Life,* ed. Frenchy Lunning (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2010), 98.
[27] Natsume, "Where is Tezuka?" 98.
[28] Natsume, "Where is Tezuka?" 103.
[29] Natsume, "Where is Tezuka?" 103.
[30] Natsume, "Where is Tezuka?" 103.
[31] Natsume, *Tezuka Osamu wa doko ni iru*, 34.
[32] Natsume, *Tezuka Osamu wa doko ni iru*, 36.

Natsume's reference to prewar and wartime manga stands in contrast with prior histories of manga centred on Tezuka, which largely ignore anything published before 1945, relegating them to the stage of immature expression, lacking polish and sophistication. In the tendency to avoid prewar works, we can also sense a certain strategic move to suppress the deeper history of the use of cinematic techniques in manga, precisely in order to attribute all innovations to Tezuka and the postwar period. Natsume aptly shatters this strategy, and yet his account seems intent nonetheless on positioning Tezuka as the origin of contemporary manga, but in the form of techniques for producing self-conscious characters instead of the use of cinematic techniques. Ultimately then, Natsume remains as intent on positing a break between prewar and postwar manga as these other manga histories. Now, however, the break takes the form of the birth of a soul or the arrival of interiority, which is indicative of a new way of perceiving and thinking about the world. In fact, when Natsume looks at Tezuka's prewar or wartime works, he finds traces of the same self-consciousness and claims it to be untimely: "It is only my opinion, but I believe that Tezuka was the too early self-consciousness of wartime manga."[33] In other words, in the soulless world of wartime Japan, Tezuka stood apart from others; he possessed a soul. This is why Tezuka proved capable of steering postwar manga toward pacifist ideals. The radical break in manga history in Natsume's, then, is in agreement with the ideals of the postwar modernization initiative: Tezuka put manga on the right (ideological) track.

Natsume mentions that, right after the war, when Tezuka started his professional career as a manga artist, there was a craving for manga. There was also, I believe, a craving for heroes like Tezuka who could incarnate this change. This longing for cultural heroes has persisted long after the immediate postwar must, as the ideas behind sengo and Nihonjinron, have persisted.

[33] Natsume, *Tezuka Osamu wa doko ni iru*, 9.

The archetypical hero of shōnen manga possesses such inspiring qualities: pureness heart, an innate destiny, the will to accomplish what no one has ever accomplished before, and the will to risk his life for justice. Tezuka is often portrayed in a similar manner. Tezuka generally is depicted as an incredibly hard worker, always struggling to get his pages by deadline, suffering (happily) under the burden the colossal amount of work he undertakes. Accounts of his contributions never fail to note how he left his career in medicine as a doctor to become a mangaka. This decision not only makes of him an outsider but also implies a sense of innate destiny. It is as if Tezuka was destined to transform manga history, to become something larger than himself. What is more, at the time of his conversion to mangaka, manga and manga artists were not held in high esteem, and indeed, manga was not considered a viable career. There were no training schools for learning the trade. Nor were there any established pathways for embarking on such a career. As such, Tezuka's success appears a consequence of pure will and determination, and his willingness to sacrifice a respectable career for the sake of manga provided a model for ideals of self-transcendence. Thus, on a larger scale, Tezuka's pathway meshes beautifully with the ideal scenario for postwar economic reconstruction, for moving beyond the wartime era through hard work and self-sacrifice. Tezuka's life readily becomes a prime example of modernization values.

Given the power of such a model in that sociohistorical context, it is not surprising that children who grew up reading Tezuka (as did Natsume and Takeuchi) would come to associate Tezuka with Japan's postwar "miracle." While Natsume goes to great lengths to focus attention on the medium of manga, on its forms of expression, he nonetheless repeats the sengo paradigm of a radical break in postwar era. This is surely because the image of Tezuka had become so thoroughly imbued with the logic of sengo and new beginnings that, for Natsume, Tezuka's style

of manga of expression (his characters and stories) would ultimately remain enmeshed with the inspiring ideal of the great innovator and entrepreneur as well as with the values of postwar modernization.

Takeuchi and Japanese Hybridity

Takeuchi also dethrones *Shin Takarajima* from its pride of place in the history of manga. But he takes a different approach from Natsume. Takeuchi stresses the hybrid quality of Tezuka's education, which is indicative of the hybridity of Japan at a deeper level, where Japan is alleged poised between the putative "East" and "West." This approach reflects Takeuchi's experiences as well: he himself was something of a hybrid artist in that he worked in theatre as a stage director and dramaturge, only to become a manga critic and manga creator. In his capacity as a theatrical writer, Takeuchi has a particular interest in what he considers Tezuka's principal innovation: the introduction into manga of the skeletal structure of drama.[34]

In Takeuchi's opinion, modern manga begins with the advent of a certain conception of storytelling, which first appears in story manga. In contrast with manga published in newspapers, which generally consists of a series of small anecdotes, story manga allows for large narrative arcs that may last for as long as several hundred pages. While story manga do not exclude humour, it is not the principal aim, as in wartime series such as Tagawa Suiho's *Norakuro*. With story manga, humour becomes subordinated to the larger story. This sort of expansive drama or epic narrative has its roots in the Western tradition that begins with Greek theatre. Takeuchi argues that Tezuka drew on these narrative codes, combining them with Japanese dramatic forms, in particular Takarazuka theatre (consisting of musical revues with all-female casts) and *kamishibai* (a form of storytelling theatre using sequential illustrations on cardboard panels;

[34] Takeuchi, *Tezuka Osamu*, 8.

panels were pulled through a wooden frame while a performer added dialogue and narrative explication). For Takeuchi, it was Tezuka's education in wide variety of entertainment forms that is the key to his success: Tezuka was able to draw elements from diverse traditions in his manga, producing an integrated form of storytelling with hybrid sources. Takeuchi concludes that, "to integrate this [diversity of influences] on such a scale, there is no mangaka superior to Tezuka."[35]

Takeuchi conceives of hybridity as something that arises at the junction of the Japanese and Western cultures. Indeed, Tezuka was a great fan of popular culture from America and Western Europe, which encouraged him to explore its techniques and language. Takeuchi reminds us: "[Tezuka] admit[ted] he watched Walt Disney's *Bambi* eighty times."[36] Tezuka also produced the manga adaptation of *Bambi*. Takeuchi notes how this combination of different forms of dramatic storytelling resulted in a specific narrative temporality in Tezuka's manga: "through the chain reaction of 'posteriorized moments,' Tezuka's manga functions similarly to the heightened staging of kabuki theatre while simultaneously incorporating Disney's skill at building suspense".[37] The result in Takeuchi's opinion is a distinctive dramatic rhythm that occurs neither in American comics nor in French BD (*bandes dessinées*).[38]

Even as Takeuchi lauds the genius of Tezuka, his goal is not to reconfirm the agency of the great artist. On the contrary, he stresses the circumstances that allowed for the emergence of Tezuka's genius. The very key to Tezuka's brilliant contribution, hybridity, turns out to be a characteristic of Japan. Thus Takeuchi asks: "Why was story-manga culture established in Japan? The accepted answer is: 'Because Tezuka was born in Japan.' But why was Tezuka born

[35] Takeuchi, *Tezuka Osamu*, 5.
[36] Takeuchi, "Tezuka and the Origin of Story Manga," *Tezuka: The Marvel of Manga* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2006), 91.
[37] Takeuchi, "Tezuka and the Origin of Story Manga," 89.
[38] Takeuchi, *Tezuka Osamu*, 2.

in Japan?"[39] Takeuchi explains that, just as Mozart could only have appeared in Austria because of the particular context it provided with respect to musicality, so Tezuka could only have been born in Japan.[40] Thus Takeuchi reverses the received understanding of genius in which the great innovator seems to stand outside his culture and to bring innovation into it, as if from outside. For Takeuchi, however, Tezuka's greatness is predicated upon his being born in Japan. "If Mozart had not been surrounded by the musical context in which he was born, would he have been able to compose such great masterpieces?"[41]

Takeuchi believes that, in the case of Mozart as well as Tezuka, context is primordial. The implication of his approach is that it is not only (or not primarily) Tezuka who is exceptionally innovative in the context of manga, but also (and primarily) Japan. Such a discursive stance downplays the agency of Tezuka, subordinating it to Japanese culture, whose underlying hybridity made it possible for Tezuka to draw inspiration from *kamishibai* and Takarazuka as well as Disney animation and science fiction. In effect, Tezuka's greatness stems from his ability to channel or harness such hybridity, revealing and expressing it in manga form. Such an interpretation allows Takeuchi to invert received relations of cultural authority wherein Western culture is deemed primordial and thus is taken as the arbiter of taste and quality. In contrast, Takeuchi slyly implies that something may be lacking in the work of Western comics artists.

> It is said that Japanese manga took its influence from French BD and American comics. However, story-manga is a culture unique to Japan. In Japan, what is

[39] Takeuchi, *Tezuka Osamu*, 4.
[40] Takeuchi, *Tezuka Osamu*, 4.
[41] Takeuchi, *Tezuka Osamu*, 4.

> fundamentally important to the story-manga in commercial magazines is the tempo at which one turns the pages. In shōnen and seinen magazines, the feeling of speed and story are considered to be the most important. In French and American comics, authors are not as fundamentally preoccupied with tempo and speed.[42]

Although he previously acknowledged that the French and Americans were the first to draw comics, it is on the Japanese soil that the medium took on a distinctive sensibility to rhythm, a distinctively *Japanese* sensibility which Takeuchi describes in a rather superficial fashion. His account rests content with the idea that the West fundamentally lacks the sensibility necessary to developing the manga's combination of rhythm and monochrome (that is, black and white) images.[43] In this context, he also proposes that the tradition of *sumi-e* or ink painting offered a fertile ground for the cultivation of manga. The prevalence of oil painting in the West proved to be a handicap, for Western artists learned to value colour images and stand-alone pictures. In Japan, on the contrary, the use of simpler monochrome images allowed artists to focus their attention on more fundamental aspects of comics such as "tempo and speed." As for China and Korea, he eliminates them in a cursory manner:

> Here I am getting even deeper into this question: If the sumi-e contributed to the birth and establishment of story-manga, why wasn't manga born in China or Korea which had a longer traditions of sumi-e than Japan, and where it is still popular today?"[44]

[42] Takeuchi, *Tezuka Osamu*, 2.
[43] Takeuchi, *Tezuka Osamu*, 2.
[44] Takeuchi, *Tezuka Osamu*, 3.

He does not answer this question. Yet, his overall argument about hybridity suggests that Korea and China would prove deficient due to the very prevalence of sumi-e, which would be tantamount to a lack of hybridity. It is easy to imagine an affirmation of Japanese supremacy on the basis of its unique position between these large cultural tendencies called "East" and "West," which goes hand in hand with an ability to assimilate various techniques successfully, to hybridize. Other Asian cultures could only expect to emulate Japan if they wish to do manga, to catch up.

Through such an emphasis on hybridity, Takeuchi shifts the history of manga from the question of authors (or author, Tezuka) to the level of the nation, where a highly abstract notion of hybridity allows him to embark on a comparative evaluation of the aesthetic potential and contributions of various other nations to the development of manga. In this respect, his account feels complicit with the "old" colonialist gaze, which is to say, looking at other countries from a transcendently Japanese position in order to rank them. The light shed by this transcendent gaze pushes manga and their actual history (or histories) into the shadows. While his notion of tempo and rhythm, of monochromatic images and line in manga art are interesting, he evokes such techniques only to drop them, hinting at something which remains unexplained yet which allows him to detect flaws or lacunas in non-Japanese comics.

Both Natsume and Takeuchi initially seem to pose a profound challenge to the centrality of Tezuka in manga history, but only to reinstate his authority in another form, one that is more historical diffuse yet more in keeping with narratives of postwar Japan. In this respect, it would seem that the figure of Tezuka is evoked primarily to stabilize a certain story about postwar Japan, namely, the modernization paradigm wherein Japan reaches a second chance after WWII

to get modernization right. In effect, Tezuka's success as an artist and entrepreneur becomes conflated with the postwar Japanese recovery, the so-called economic miracle, as if the postwar miracle were embodied in Tezuka.

The Death of Tezuka and the Crisis of Modernity

Natsume offers an interesting explanation for the formation of the image of Tezuka as the father or god of manga. He suggests that the source of this image were the many mangaka who learned the trade from Tezuka or felt inspired to enter the manga business due to his example. Popular manga artists, such as the famous Fujiko Fujio team, admired Tezuka's work and continually expressed their admiration and appreciation to their readers.[45]

The impact of Tezuka on the first postwar generation of mangaka cannot be underestimated. The surge of articles and retrospectives published shortly after Tezuka's death may arguably be attributed to commercial interests building a new wave of interest in Tezuka, and yet the sense of loss within the community of manga creators was surely genuine. Indeed, in his introduction of *Tezuka wa doko ni iru*, Natsume writes a touching account of his conflicted feelings at that time. Although Natsume rather stubbornly resisted the temptation to contribute to the swell of commemorative writing, he attributes his reticence to his anguish over the loss of Tezuka, which so troubled him that he felt unable to deal casually with requests to contribute to the retrospectives what he felt could only be a superficial gloss. Natsume felt the need to impart a sense of the full extent of Tezuka's genius, yet words failed him. He felt thoroughly hollow, a great emptiness: "February 9th, 1989. Tezuka has left us. Writing this line, I felt as if all was over."[46] Takeuchi expresses a similar sentiment: "I can't forget the day Tezuka died. It was

[45] Natsume, "Where is Tezuka?" 99.
[46] Natsume, *Tezuka Osamu wa doko ni iru*, 7.

February 9th, 1989. With the end of the Showa period, Tezuka too had gone away."[47] For many people, Tezuka's death truly felt like the end of an era.

Both Natsume's and Takeuchi's comments reinforce the association between the death of Tezuka and the end of the Shōwa era (December 26, 1926 to January 7, 1989). Tezuka died at the same time that the Shōwa emperor (or Hirohito) had been ill for months and had not long to live. Ultimately the two men were to die in the same week, which coincidence surely served to reinforce the feeling that Tezuka had somehow embodied the ideals of the Shōwa era, or more precisely, the ideals of economic recovery and prosperity of the postwar Shōwa era. Both the Shōwa emperor and Tezuka became associated with the postwar transformation of Japan, with the emergence of a non-militarized modernized nation. Interestingly enough, both men were also associated with scientific knowledge: Tezuka with medicine and biology, and the Shōwa emperor with marine biology. What is more, much as Tezuka has been portrayed as a peace-loving humanistic at odds with the wartime mobilization, so the Shōwa emperor was retroactively depicted as an unwilling collaborator in the wartime effort, as a puppet of the military powers, and credited with putting an end to the war as well. Ideals of "correct modernization" become closely associated with both men, and the media commonly linked both to the values of hard work and innovation to produce economic and cultural advances.

As was the case with Tezuka, a large number of retrospectives were published upon the death of the Shōwa emperor, linking his personal history with national history, as if he were the embodiment of the era itself. Gluck describes the moment in terms of a feeling that Japan had finally achieved modernity:

[47] Takeuchi, *Tezuka Osamu*, 1.

> Rhetoric and vision, so highly focused for most of Japan's modern history, now seem afflicted by scatter. Meiji pursued progress, Taisho and prewar Showa called for reform or reconstruction, and postwar Japan flung itself headlong toward democracy — all in the name of the modern and all now allegedly achieved.[48]

Needless to say, with the sense of an ending comes a certain degree of uneasiness about what comes next, and it is about this time that discourses on the "end of history" became popular. In this respect, the end of Shōwa and the death of Tezuka become conflated in the sense of an end of history itself, that is, an end of modernity. If Tezuka's career was that of an innovator and moderniser as it were, his death signals both the fulfillment of modern innovation and its demise. In such a context, it is easy to understand how Natsume might feel that 'everything was over," even manga itself.

As such, the pain and anguish felt by Natsume and Takeuchi surely refers to their personal experience of this larger end of things. Both writers came to manga as children through the works of Tezuka, which marked them deeply. For Takeuchi it was the dramatic structure of Tezuka's manga that encouraged him to become theatre critic.[49] For Natsume, it was the act of reading and re-reading Tezuka's manga that shaped his very experience of manga: "Tezuka's framework is my unconscious."[50] Evidently, the trend toward styling Tezuka as the father of manga is not only a matter of what he actually created but was also a matter of the close relationship the next generation of readers and creators felt with his works.

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[48] Carol Gluck, "The Idea of Showa," *Daedalus* 119.3 (1990): 19.
[49] Takeuchi, *Tezuka Osamu*, 7.
[50] Natsume, *Tezuka Osamu wa doko ni iru*, 9.

What merits attention in this context are the ways in which the personal becomes the political. Carol Gluck's essay, "The Idea of Showa," is useful in such a context for she calls attention to the ways in which personal experience has served a means for organizing historical memory: "For decades, the Japanese have emphasized personal experience of the war (*senso taiken*) as the common coin of memory and the best insurance against forgetting the lessons of the past."[51] Needless to say, this reliance on personal experience also presents certain risks. Yet we might think of the Tezuka effect or the Tezuka experience in such terms. In remembering their experience of Tezuka, writers are perhaps striving to keep a certain kind of historical memory alive. As such, the Tezuka experience may be opened into more critical perspectives. Where Natsume and Takeuchi tread lightly with the Tezuka myth, subsequent critics such as Ōtsuka Eiji and Itō Gō challenge the Tezuka apparatus boldly and directly. Not surprisingly there is a generational effect of distance as well. Ōtsuka, who is closer to Takeuchi's generation, is not as bold as Itō Gō who, born a decade later, provocatively announced the death of Tezuka definitively in the title of his book, *Tezuka is Dead*. In Ito's youth, the works of mangaka such as Matsumoto Reiji would probably have had a greater impact than those of Tezuka.

If Gluck is correct in saying "[…] recollections of the war have little meaning for those who have no war experience themselves,"[52] then the same may be said of Tezuka's legacy. But I wonder if the central contradictions that emerge in accounts of Tezuka will be so quick to vanish. After all, the idea of contradiction between Western modernization and the Japanese mindset remains a staple of Nihonjinron publications, which continued unabated. Similarly, the contradiction between a militarist and non-militarized Japan remains a key political issue in the contemporary context with proposals to revise the postwar constitution. Such contradictions are

[51] Gluck, "The Idea of Showa," 21.
[52] Gluck, "The Idea of Showa," 21.

not fortuitous; they are the motor of national history. They set forth the terms for conflict, where villains and heroes may be identified.[53] Their persistence means that the West must continually be simultaneously challenged and internalised, challenged in order to internalise. Maybe this is why it remains difficult to go beyond the myth of Tezuka as the god of manga: the modernization paradigm feeds on contradictions, and the greater the better.

The Modernist Edo

In sharp contrast with the modernisation paradigm centred on Tezuka that posits a radical break between wartime and postwar periods, histories positing the origins of manga in Edo Japan (or the Tokugawa period, 1603-1868) strive to situate manga before or outside modernity, or more precisely, Western modernity. They insist on continuity in Japanese forms despite modernization. It is as if Japanese forms were able to transcend historical transformations. In this paradigm, which I shall call the "modernist paradigm," the point of departure is a resolute opposition between Japanese traditions and Western (modern) modes of thought, which are commonly defined quite narrowly, in terms of the Western rationalism and above all Cartesianism.

In this context, the value of manga derives from its kinship with the woodblock prints (ukiyoe or nishikie) and other visual arts related Edo chōnin or townspeople culture. In some accounts, contemporary otaku culture is portrayed as a direct descendent of chōnin practices. Parallels have been drawn between their modes of consumption, as I will discuss subsequently. Significantly, chōnin cultural production is situated prior to or outside of Westernization and modernization, which is associated with the advent of the Meiji period in 1868. As such, chōnin culture lends itself to a modernist paradigm in which the values and practices associated with

[53] Gluck, "The Idea of Showa," 69.

Westernization and modernization are challenged and critiqued, yet instead of a rejection of modernity tout court, chōnin culture promises a different vision of modernity, an alternative modernity, which has yet to fully arrive but which persists in distinctively Japanese practices related to popular culture.

It was Kuki Shūzō who first developed a truly modernist vision of Edo chōnin culture, and his vision has proved perennially compelling. Japanese philosopher Karatani Kōjin takes a similar stance, for instance. Looser succinctly explains:

> […] nineteenth-century Japan — which is to also say contemporary Japan — has in some essential way always already deconstructed modernist Western formations of meaning and man. In other words, Japan in a sense has always already stood outside of the modern.[54]

It should be noted, however, that numerous scholars, including Karatani, have questioned the veracity of such a depiction of Edo. Carol Gluck, for instance, characterises Kuki's text in terms of a hallucination of a whole new Edo,[55] while Japanese media theorist and philosopher, Azuma Hiroki, sees it as an attempt to construct a version of Japan without the Western influence. This *hallucinated* Edo might also be characterised as a form of auto-Orientalism, in which stereotypes and exotic ideas about Japan are taken up and affirmed as essentially Japanese traits. Auto-Orientalism is a process of self-othering or self-exoticism in which the point of reference is the West, explicitly or implicitly.

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[54] Thomas Looser, "Superflat and the Layers of Image and History in the 1990s Japan." in *Mechademia* 1: *Emerging Worlds of Anime and Manga,* ed. Frenchy Lunning (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 96.
[55] Carol Gluck is cited in Marc Steinberg, "Otaku Consumption, Superflat Art and the Return to Edo," *Japan Forum* 16, no. 3 (2004): 453.

Marc Steinberg reminds us that references to Edo may take on a reality of their own, and rather than sustaining a reference to or critique of the West, simply become a mode of self-definition. Edo culture, then, serves as a mirror for understanding the contemporary condition. In his essay, "Superflat and the Layers of Image and History in the 1990s Japan," Looser adds to such an insight, showing how reference to Edo Japan may be used to stabilise the present order, to posit an origin for the status quo. In other words, he reminds us that such a process of self-definition entails a desire to stabilise and to purify Japan by rejecting traces of Western influence. The Edo period is a good candidate for such a desire, because, as Steinberg indicates, chōnin culture not only retains a broad appeal and a sense of nostalgia but also stands in for the alleged isolation of Japan from the world under the Tokugawa shōguns prior to the arrival of Commodore Perry and the rapid modernization of Japan.[56]

In the context of manga and manga-related cultural forms such as anime and video games, I would like to begin with the example of Murakami Takashi's conceptualisation of Superflat art, or the Superflat movement. Murakami's approach explicitly adopts the stance of postmodernism, which in this context may be considered an intensification of modernism in that it poses modalities that are critical of modernization and yet do not claim to stand outside modernity. At stake is something like a different modernity, another modernism. I will subsequently turn to one of the sources of Murakami's argument, Okada Toshio's *Otakugaku nyūmon* (Introduction to Otakuology), which draws parallels between Edo chōnin culture and contemporary postmodern otaku consumerism.

[56] Steinberg, "Otaku Consumption," 450.

Murakami and Superflat

Murakami Takashi wishes to connect his artwork directly to contemporary Japanese popular culture, especially to anime and manga. He calls on visual techniques and media forms associated to otaku culture to create artworks, especially paintings, which are at once cute and off-kilter, somehow disturbing. He launched the Superflat movement in art, which became widely known through the *Super Flat* exhibit held in Nagoya in 2000. To discuss his ideas, I will draw on the exhibition catalogue of the same title, *Super Flat*. In his written contributions to the catalogue, Murakami adopts a stance reminiscent of Nihonjinron discourse, promulgating a critique of Western modernity in order to delineate his superflat lineage of Japanese art. Murakami pushes this critique to its logical "postmodern" conclusion, submitting that modern ways of conceiving the world are simply outdated, and the solution lies in the postmodern visuality of otaku culture.

Murakami wrote the opening essay to the catalogue, entitled "The Super Flat Manifesto," a short text in which he summarises the essential ideas behind Superflat. First, he proclaims a transhistorical Japanese artistic sensibility. Its continuity lies in the use of flatness in images, which tendency is also indicative of a unique worldview. He writes, "[the flat sensibility] in the art […] has been flowing steadily beneath the surface of Japanese history."[57] In this way, he situates flatness in art as the sign of an unchanging worldview possessed by the Japanese people, and this manner of apprehending the world remains consistent from one era to the next. His conceptualisation of superflat is built upon similarities he detects between two art formations: on the one hand, there is the contemporary otaku culture of video games, manga, and anime, and on the other hand, the "eccentric art" of the Edo era.[58] Murakami calls attention to techniques of

[57] Murakami Takashi, *Super Flat* (Tokyo: Madora Shuppan (2000), 5.
[58] Murakami, *Super Flat*, 9.

layering with both formations, which he then styles as a uniquely Japanese way of controlling the gaze of the viewer over the image. While he acknowledges the Westernization of Japan in the intervening centuries, he nonetheless emphasises continuity in the form of transformation: "this Super Flat sensibility [has] metamorphosed."[59] He argues that anime and video games culture present an evolution of the Edo art formation. In other words, behind Japan's modernization or Westernization, or more precisely before and beyond them, Murakami finds a genuinely Japanese sensibility that has escaped the influence of the West as well as modernity.

The distinctive worldview of Japanese art derives from its emphasis on flatness, or more precisely, a series of two-dimensional planes. The result is a planar image that directs the viewer's eyes across the composition, allowing for violent accelerations, decelerations or even zigzagging across the image. The viewer sees only one element of the image at a time yet reconstructs the visual whole from them.[60]

In such planarity, which occurs in Japanese artworks of the past and of the present, Murakami detects the operations of a uniquely Japanese way of seeing the world. This worldview may lie dormant for centuries only to be reawakened. Indeed he likens this Japanese mindset to a biological property, that is, DNA.[61] In sum, for Murakami, non-linear perspective and layered images constitute a genuinely Japanese way of understanding the world.

Built into the conceptualisation of superflatness is an opposition to Western linear perspective. In his contribution to the *Superflat* catalogue, theorist Azuma Hiroki conceptualises this opposition. Azuma explains that, linear perspective, through the representation of a location seen from a specific point in space using horizon line and vanishing points, folds the spectator

[59] Murakami, *Super Flat*, 5.
[60] Murakami, *Super Flat*, 15.
[61] Murakami, *Super Flat*, 25.

into the artwork by assigning him a specific location in front of the artwork, thus creating a unitary subject.[62] This kind of image is highly organised and is created to be seen as a whole at once. In contrast, in the planar image, as Looser explains, there is no such unitary organisation:

> Superflat pictorial space instead allows for the layering of different surfaces, and each surface can be thought of as its own production of identity, with its own relation to an origin (in a way, each layers an origin). There is no hierarchisation of space or privileged gaze of the eye that might create a stable unified subject position or create a singular depth.[63]

It is also part of Murakami's ambition to situate this superflat sensibility in the context of global culture. In his opinion, the contemporary world is entering an era of flatness due to digital media. For the Superflat artists, the arrival of digital media is a radical change that implies a "repositioning of the modern subject."[64] Looser offers this explanation: in analog media such as photography, the subject of the photograph is an existing space and is the point of origin and complexity of the resulting image. In digital media, this relation is different. The final image is not produced through the impact of a subject on a film or another medium, but through the reinterpretation of the binary code into which it was encoded. The origin of the digital image is thus not directly the representation of a complex subject, but a manifestation of the code, the resulting image then becomes the real space of complexity. "Real complexity and identity lie at the level of the surface, not some interiorized point of origin."[65] When the digital is construed in

[62] Azuma Hiroki, "Super Flat Speculation" in *Super Flat* (Tokyo: Madora Shuppan, 2000), 143.
[63] Looser, "Superflat and the Layers of Image and History in the 1990s Japan," 99.
[64] Looser, "Superflat and the Layers of Image and History in the 1990s Japan," 97.
[65] Looser "Superflat and the Layers of Image and History in the 1990s Japan," 98.

such terms, Japanese flatness, or rather, superflatness appears as the key to reconfiguring the modern subject. Its way of bringing the artwork and viewer in relation becomes indicative of postmodernity, positing Edo Japan as postmodernity before the fact, as it were.

For Murakami, modern Western art and Japanese art are diametrically opposed. Elsewhere in the catalogue, he writes, "Japanese painting and Western painting have not been able to crossover, but have developed in parallel without coming into contact with one another"[66] Such an opposition allows Murakami to conflate aesthetic differences with geopolitical differences, which construes Japan and the West into two irreconcilable ways of seeing the world.

Strangely inconsistent remarks crop up from time to time, however. For instance, Murakami includes *Star Wars*, which was obviously not made in Japan, in the lineage of Superflat. Such moments serve as a reminder that the boundary between Japan and the West is not as clear as claimed elsewhere. What is more, to sustain his oppositional categories, Murakami finds himself obligated to split Japanese visual artists into two categories: the (truly) Japanese artists and the westernized Japanese artists. Apparently, some artists, although born and raised in Japan, may be considered as Western because of the visual influences appearing in their works. Murakami thus gives the impression that national artistic characteristics may construed fairly independently of the nationality of individual artists. The appearance of such "inconsistencies" in his geopolitical conceptualisation of superflat suggests that Murakami's critique is not only about Japan versus the West.

In effect, Murakami's target is not Western art versus Japanese art in general, but the Western legacy of high art versus popular culture. Superflat is not only a sign of Japaneseness

[66] Murakami, *Super Flat*, 21.

but also of pop culture, such as manga and anime. As such, westernised Japanese artists may be characterised as those who sustain a modern distinction between high and low art, while films like *Star Wars* find a place in superflat because they belong to popular culture. Seen in this light, Murakami's effort to promote superflat art may also be read as an attempt to raise the value of pop art. Indeed, he deliberately invites comparison to Andy Warhol. Yet Murakami can make a gesture Warhol could not: he can draw on Edo art and culture, which possesses a kind of historical artistic value. Today Edo art has moved into museums, and its creators are considered to be artists in the full sense of the term, even though the actual forms were produced within the framework of what we would today call popular culture, and many of the artists worked within guilds. Consequently, Murakami may be justified in claiming that, if artists like Hokusai had produced art in the contemporary context, they would be labelled artisans, and their works would be characterised as popular culture rather than art.

Implicit in such provocative comments is a critique of Japan and the global art market, however opportunistically motivated. In this respect, perhaps inadvertently, Murakami invites us to see his promotion of a Japanese lineage of superflat as a product of the global art market, where refashioning lineages of popular art for elite audiences is both a conceptually provocative and financially productive gesture.

Okada and Otaku Consumption

Like Murakami, Okada also writes in defence of popular culture and takes issue with the hierarchical implications associated with Western art, that is, the idea of high art or Art. But Okada's argument unfolds at a very different level. He recounts his visit to a small studio of female artists in France. When he asked them about the artistic value of video games as such *Mario* or *Sonic*, he found their responses very old-fashioned. One woman, named Laurence,

replied that such video games were not art because intended for children, and children felt naturally drawn to them.[67] Okada uses this response as a point of departure for criticising the Western conception of art, which, as the response of the women in France attested, assumed a kind of refinement that would appeal primarily to adults. Here I propose to consider how Okada constructs a notion of Japan and Japanese culture as an alternative to this putatively Western understanding of art.

Okada suggests that the hierarchical distinctions made by the women ultimately derive from a form of symbolism rooted in Christianity and Greek philosophy, which conspire to generate an opposition between Cosmos and Chaos. The Christian tradition linked the goodness of God to the organisation of the city, while the Greek legacy found what is right upon the belief in rationality. The combination of the two makes for Cosmos, in opposition to which appears Chaos, or the act of the devil, exemplified by the disorderly and irrational mind, whose evil must be tamed.[68] Okada sums up the situation thus: "[…] in western art, the creator is God."[69]

Okada sees the long arm of this opposition at work in the distinction between high and low arts within Western art, or between elite arts and childish arts. Such an opposition strikes him as abnormal, aberrant. In his opinion, the formation of an elite consisting of noble and prosperous people were responsible for sustaining such a divide and dictating what counted as Art. Those who remain able or unwilling to appreciate this imposed culture are duly relegated to the lower classes.[70] The result is a situation in which a select group of wealthy art patrons (and their artists) sit atop the hierarchical structure, passing judgment on what is worthy of the name Art. Similarly, artists become caught up in the process of distinguishing high from low, refined

[67] Okada Toshio, *Otakugaku nyūmon* (Tokyo: Ohta Publishing, 1996), 214.
[68] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon,* 217.
[69] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 225.
[70] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 215.

from vulgar. Thus the elite imposes its worldview. If audiences do not accept what is proposed, they run the risk of losing social status. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that this worldview also results in a response of the part of those excluded from Art: they create a culture of their own, a counterculture.[71] In Okada's view, such countercultures are also forms of power, and when successful, they represent the undomesticated nature of their creators, with the potential to disrupt established values.

In the context of America, where Okada claims that the problem of social classes is non-existent, the opposition between high and low transforms into an opposition between adults and youth. Thus it falls to youth to resist the culture of the establishment.[72] Children and youth, then, are constrained by this power relation to the role of representing the chaos to be tamed or domesticated. Thus there emerges a type of art for children, distinct from that for adults, which is geared toward educating children to be model citizens, to become domesticated, rational individuals.[73] This children's culture is imposed on them by adults, that is, by the establishment culture.[74] In sum, Western art has come to serve as a tool for indoctrination, gradually settling in the American context on the imposition a set of power relations calculated to control children.

Much like Murakami, Okada finds a rather fantastical solution to this problematic Western worldview in the Japanese tradition of art. Above all it is otaku culture that he poses as an alternative to it. Thus Okada situates otaku culture not primarily as a form of resistance within Japan but as a counterculture operating at an international level, which promises to breath new life and energy into the flagging values of the old modern world. Otaku culture, in Okada's account, builds on a unique feature of Japanese society: its acceptance of children. Okada claims

[71] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 220.
[72] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 220.
[73] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 216.
[74] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 218.

that children have always been accepted in Japanese society and art, neither as subjects to be domesticated nor as incomplete adults, but as individuals who have yet to lose their purity of heart.[75] It has always cheered the kabuki audience when a child unexpectedly jumps onto the stage. Japanese society always had a "tolerance" for children.[76] Although the importation of Western ideals and culture into Japan eroded something this tolerance, traces of it persist in otaku culture.[77]

Okada stresses that the boundary between childhood and adulthood is fuzzy in Japan, and as a consequence, anime, for instance, are not really made for adults or for children; they are made for individuals.[78] Anime have appeal for both audiences: the dramatic content appeals to older audiences, while young audiences will also find pleasure in them. Yet, he adds, "[anime] do not create good citizens;" they tend to be vulgar or to ignore educational values.[79] Nonetheless, he also underscores the possibility for audiences to return to the same work again and again, each time grasping it at a higher degree of complexity.[80] This sort of reception is consonant with Okada's characterisation of the relationship between artists and publics in the otaku context. Otaku culture encourages a craftsman-like knowledge, which results in a better understanding of the works themselves.[81] Otaku develop an expertise, becoming adept at evaluating the artistic merits of various creators. Okada writes: "This is called sophistication."[82] Through such sophistication, they begin to speak a common language and to develop shared values with the creators, which breaks down the hierarchy between producer and consumer.

[75] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 222.
[76] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 222.
[77] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 221.
[78] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 223.
[79] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 216.
[80] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 224.
[81] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 225.
[82] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 224.

His emphasis on consumer knowledge allows him to contest the bias that video games are unrefined because geared toward children. On the contrary, he strives to show that otaku knowledge is highly refined and sophisticated, comparing such specialized appreciation to the notion of *dō* or "way" that is used to characterise in highly demanding, ritualised practices such as *kendō* (the way of the sword) or *chadō* (the way of tea). Okada contrasts dō with *gaku*: where gaku presents a kind of knowing based on studying and learning, dō involves more than "mere" knowledge; it demands perfection of the spirit. Okada thus proposes the existence of a genuine *otakudō* or the way of the otaku.[83]

Okada links the otaku way of art appreciation to the culture of the chōnin or townspeople, and in particular to the figure of the "player" (*tsū*), sometimes styled as the dandy of the Edo period. He sees similar kinds of specialist knowledge of popular art forms in play in both cultural contexts. The chōnin became connoisseurs of easily reproducible, mass-distributed art forms such as ukiyoe, whose subjects ranged from landscapes, to urban scenes, to portraits of famous kabuki actors. In this latter instance, it seems that chōnin art culture also presented a form of media mix, in which works are intended to consumed across different media, which is considered characteristic of contemporary manga and anime culture. Indeed, Okada does not hesitate to characterise Edo consumption as an early stage of postmodernism, unique to Japan. Building on these general observations and similarities, Okada gradually makes the case for continuity between the cultural traditions of Edo and contemporary otaku culture. At stake in such a view of otaku culture is a desire to discover a mode of appreciation whose sophistication matches that of the Western art elite without repeating its hierarchical implications. As such, Okada continually highlights the inclusive aspects of anime culture, how it appeals to different age groups, how it

[83] Okada, *Otakugaku nyūmon*, 226.

presents a broad and diverse range of topics. Thus otaku culture becomes equipped to stand alongside Western conceptions of art, and to stand against it in the sense of offering an alternative worldview.

It is essential to take into consideration the fact that Okada is not writing for an academic audience. Despite the position he held as a part-time lecturer at the University of Tokyo and his involvement as a visiting scholar for the Osaka University of Arts and the Soai University, his work is aimed at a general public. Instead of relying on a typical argumentation to make his point, Okada likes to play a game of calculated provocation in order to force the reader to reflect on received ideas about the perception of manga and Japanese culture. This is why it is important to signal some of the lapses of his account, not to discredit per se, but rather to gain a better grasp of what is at stake in such histories of manga. First, his account of so-called Western art is monolithic in the extreme, ignoring deep traditions of contestation as well as powerful alternatives to the High Art tradition. Second, Okada claims that Japan is more tolerant of otaku culture than the West is, but in fact there is good reason to believe that the reverse may be true. Indeed, if we consider the strong anti-otaku discourses in Japan, we begin to see Okada's account in a different light: Okada is mobilising Nihonjinron in order to challenge Japanese stances vis-à-vis otaku. His opposition between Japan and the West may be read as an opposition between Japanese otaku and the Japanese elite, or between Japanese youth and the older generation in power. As such, we might more productively read his account in terms of its challenge to modes of "social domestication" of youth in Japan. Third, oddly enough, Okada's evocation of an opposition between Japan and the West situates otaku culture in a colonial context, within an imperial legacy. Consequently, although his account does not pursue them, it

nonetheless renews long-standing questions about the relation between imperialism, colonialism, and popular cosmopolitanism in the context of cultural globalisation.

The Role of Edo in Manga Histories

Both Murakami and Okada produce compelling and even entertaining accounts of Japanese history and popular culture, and perhaps due to the dearth of studies of manga and anime, their voices take on greater authority than the authors probably intended. Playful though they be, their accounts run the risk of introducing such a high degree of continuity between the Edo and the postmodern that their accounts unwittingly play into larger and more problematic sociohistorical stances. Two historical moments in particular easily disappear from their purview: the Fifteen-Year Asia-Pacific War and the Allied Occupation that followed Japan's defeat in 1945. In Okada's account, such concerns simply do not have a place. In Murakami's account, reference is made to the war but only in the context of the bombing of Hiroshima, which gesture tends to reinforce the paradigm of "victim consciousness" (*higaisha ishiki*) rather than address the more difficult questions of war responsibility and postwar complicity with the American world order.

Looser makes an interesting suggestion about this gesture of returning to Edo. He interprets it as a form of solipsism. He argues that the search for an origin is not first and foremost a matter of interest in actual historical origins but is an effect to reach beyond history itself to a transcendent origin that might act to stabilise historical narratives. Looser explains this gesture with the example of the World Trade Center:

> Obviously, this is a site of real trauma, and the World Trade Center buildings will inevitably inscribe this traumatic event into a specific kind of history. As

> originally planned, the Daniel Libeskind design called for a unitary tower – the "freedom tower" — to be built on the site, with a spire attached to it so that it would reach precisely 1776 feet. Less memorial to the 2001 event, this figure of 1776 would return the World Trade Center to a more mythical kind of origin. [84]

Looser argues, we can see a similar pattern in superflat. To begin with, he notes, Azuma already used the term "Ground Zero" in the context of superflat.[85] This Ground Zero signals the start of the superflat movement: the first superflat exhibition. Significantly, this exhibition coincided with the end of the Shōwa era and the beginning of the Heisei era.

Both the starting point of the Heisei era and the starting point of superflat movement seem to reprise the idea of the postwar origin. The characters chosen to render the Heisei era evoke the completion of peace, as if the announcing the end of the postwar, a completion of Japanese prosperity. As for superflat, as Looser notes, its origin lies in postwar capitalist culture.[86] Yet this is precisely what the superflat movement elides, by referring itself to Edo culture. This act of linking superflat to Edo stabilises its origins in what Looser calls "a mythical moment of happy coherence."[87] It stands in sharp contrast with the act of linking the postwar to the construction of a new Japanese identity, grounded in peace and prosperity in the context of the Allied Occupation and Pax Americana. As such, superflat runs the risk of encouraging its audiences to act as if the war and the subsequent occupation, indeed, imperialism itself, did not really happen or at least did not matter so very much.

[84] Looser, "Superflat and the Layers of Image and History in the 1990s Japan," 95.
[85] Looser, "Superflat and the Layers of Image and History in the 1990s Japan," 95.
[86] Looser, "Superflat and the Layers of Image and History in the 1990s Japan," 94.
[87] Looser, "Superflat and the Layers of Image and History in the 1990s Japan," 107.

Takahata and Heian Scrolls

Schematically speaking, two solutions to the problem of constructing a non-militarist history of Japan have proved important. On the one hand, like Murakami and Okada, it is possible to envision a Japanese lineage based on continuity between Tokugawa period and contemporary Japan, while avoiding reference to the Tokugawa shogunate and focusing attention on the culture of townspeople; townspeople, not samurai, are the origin of Japanese culture. On the other hand, it is possible to avoid reference both to samurai and townspeople and turn to another cultural locus, that of the imperial court. Thus court culture becomes the origin of Japanese culture. This is precisely the strategy adopted by Takahata Isao.

Takahata is renowned as a director, producer, and writer of animated films. Together with Miyazaki Hayao and Suzuki Toshio, he founded Studio Ghibli and directed such films as *Grave of the Fireflies* (1998) and *The Tales of the Princess Kaguya* (2013). Takahata situates the origin of manga and anime in the courtly culture of the Heian period. In his book *Jūni seiki no animēshon* (Twelfth-Century Animation), Takahata provides a close analysis of the visual modes of expression of the Heian scrolls, comparing them to contemporary manga and animation in order to show the deep continuity between courtly culture and modern animation. As I shall discuss in greater detail subsequently, however, unlike Murakami and Okada, Takahata carefully avoids forms associated with otaku culture. When he refers to manga and animation, he has a mind a narrower slice of popular culture, namely, art animation films like those produced at Ghibli. Thus his choice of Japan's courtly traditions goes hand in hand with his preference for what Okada would surely call high art and high culture.

Takahata sees anime and manga developing naturally from techniques found in twelfth-century scrolls associated with the Heian court. He suggests that Japanese have a natural

predisposition for visual storytelling, which derives from the particular challenge posed by the use of Chinese characters or *kanji* in Japan. The resulting complexity of the Japanese writing system made it difficult to learn, which made for low literacy rates, which in turn encouraged the use of images to convey information.[88] What is more, the highly visual nature of Chinese characters invited and grounded techniques for combining text and images in a variety of manners: in the use of calligraphy, in the prevalence of word puzzles, and pictography.[89]

Above and beyond such functions of the character, Takahata introduces the notion of "traditional preference," which is his way of suggesting that certain preferences remain consonant over time within a nation.[90] In other words, he not only assumes the underlying homogeneity of the Japan nation but also links to an aristocratic social formation that held sway only intermittently, and whose cultural production might well be consider only one option among many. In any case, Takahata signals two traditional preferences. On the one hand, he feels that the Japanese have always loved visual narratives using caricatures and rebus-like image effects related to Chinese characters. On the other hand, the Japanese have consistently preferred flat colours of the sort seen in animation and in contour drawings (similar to manga images).[91] As a result, when modern Japanese animators confronted budgetary constraints, it was only natural for them to return to their own tradition. In contrast, for Western animators, such limitations were simply limitations, not opportunities.[92] Indeed Takahata claims that Japan has always loved animation and has always excelled at it.[93] It consists a national heritage. With this general framework in mind, I propose to look at some specific examples from *Jūni seiki no animēshon* in

[88] Takahata Isao, *Jūni seiki no animēshon: Kokuhō emakimono ni miru eiga-teki anime-teki naru mono* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shōten – Studio Ghibli Company, 1999), 6.
[89] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 6-7.
[90] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 97.
[91] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 97.
[92] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 97.
[93] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 5.

which he focuses largely on the visual techniques used in *emakimono* (also *emaki*) or illustrated handscrolls.

Takahata occasionally notes differences between emaki and anime. For instance, where scrolls may depict two men wearing the same clothes, anime would avoid such a situation, for anime carefully differentiates characters visually to avoid confusion.[94] But it is not such differences that interest him. His book is largely a compendium of similarities and commonalities between the two forms of expression. Some of his examples bear weight, as with the example of contour lines and flat colours. Yet others are rather dubious: in sheet thirteen of *Ban Dainagon Ekotoba*, Takahata takes the contours of a fog to be analogous with the speech bubbles of modern manga.[95] A good number of the similarities he notes are related to the depiction of characters. He calls attention to the vividness with which their emotions and actions are captured, and to the sense of dynamism in scenes of agitation and action.[96] Because his examples of illustrated handscrolls are narrative scrolls, the movement of people and objects is depicted. We find drawings of a man falling from his horse, or the fluttering of curtains at the back of a carriage. A cartoonish quality is evident here.

Takahata's claims for such similarities are grand: he sees in them evidence of a Japanese modernity predating Western modernity. Yet his argument runs into trouble when he draws analogies between the technical organisation of labour in animation and movies studios and that of the teams of court artisans who produced handscrolls. What is more, the points of comparison often expand to include other media, such as cinema and television. In the context of *Ban Dainagon Ekotoba*, Takahata remarks of the removal of the ceilings from rooms in emaki in

[94] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 76.
[95] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 74.
[96] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon,* 54.

order to present actions from above that it resembles the use of sets in television and film production.[97] Such examples evoke a series of counterfactual arguments. In film and television production, the camera is indeed situated outside the room being filmed, but filming tends to adopt a lateral view rather than an overhead view. The open ceiling is designed for the placement of microphones and lights, to remove them from the frame. Such decisions are at once functional and aesthetic.

Takahata repeatedly discovers commonalities at the level of narrative temporality as well. Both emaki and cinema, in his opinion, produce a sense of the viewers' being present to the action while experiencing a unique sense of temporal passage.[98] He also feels that the scrolls begin in a manner similar to cinema, in that they present visual information that the viewer is to retain in order to build a sense of suspense.[99] In *Ban Dainagon Ekotoba*, he notes how the opening scene dramatically prepares us for the fire. Initially we see a crowd of people in commotion. Men on horses rush toward the left of the scroll, and as the reader unrolls the scroll (moving right to left), officials appear, running with hat in hand. The chaotic scene builds as people rush through the main gate, where a crowd of people is gathered. The crowd slows the gaze of the viewer. Nearly everyone in the crowd seems to be reacting to something, something occurs to the left, something yet to be discovered. Such techniques serve to create a feeling of suspense, spurring the readers to wonder what is the cause of all this commotion. Only then do we unroll the scroll to find that a brazier has set the roof of a building afire.

Such sequences indeed provide evidence of a skilful and sophisticated use of techniques. Yet do such techniques really prefigure the invention of cinematic techniques, or more precisely,

[97] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 77.
[98] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 71.
[99] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 71.

the temporal flow of movies? In cinema, at least in the classic cinema to which Takahata refers us, what the viewer perceives is function of what is in front of the camera at a given time. In emaki, visual techniques are used to guide the eyes across the page, but the overall movement is less controlled: such techniques also invite readers to explore other pathways or to linger on some details. Again, while the comparison is provocative, it invites so many counterfactual interpretations.

Takahata also finds similarities between montage in cinema and formal techniques to indicate transitions in emaki. For instance, a character may be drawn twice, to indicate that he or she has moved. The reader is to assume that the two instances are not different characters, but the same one at different points in time.[100] Thus the reader is invited to fill in the gap between the two moments in the action of the character. Likewise, when two buildings are depicted facing one another, the effect is not one of depth in accordance to linear perspective; instead, in Takahata's opinion, the effect is like that of horizontal camera movement from one building to the other.[101] In addition, he suggests that the thick mist covering large expanses of *Ban Dainagon Ekotoba* scroll serves to isolate and focus on portions of the image, in the manner of cinema. He pushes the analogy: the mist is akin to a cut between scenes in cinema, for it arrests the flow of the story and redirects attention.[102] Similarly he feels that the act of rolling and unrolling the scroll in the process of reading constitutes cinema-like cuts.[103] With such examples, Takahata introduces the notion of montage into emaki, which allows him in turn to find modernity in the distant past.

[100] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 75.
[101] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 15.
[102] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 81.
[103] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 86.

Empirically, his analogies tend to break down as soon as we acknowledge the work done by the actual reader or readers of the scroll. In effect, Takahata is positioning himself as a modern reader who is able to read emaki in the cinematic fashion, but traditional readers may not have conformed to his conventions. Takahata persuasively makes the case that reading emaki entails active participation on the part of the reader who makes an effort to discover what will happen in the not-yet-unrolled portion of the scroll. Also, the reader must actively select and follow the protagonist from scene to scene, and must actively decipher the emotions and actions of characters. Takahata likens this mode of reading to cinema: the reader lingers on a character as in a close-up and then adopts a larger view, in the manner of an establishing shot. At the same time, as the reader makes various cuts between segments, the result is like cinematic montage. It is such montage that Takahata also see at work in the panel layout of manga.[104] Takahata offers an example in which he cuts and pastes scenes from an emaki and lays them out in the style of a manga.

Ōtsuka Eiji offers one of the most pointed critiques of this link between emaki and manga, calling attention to the historically different temporal functions of each form of expression. He notes, for instance, that Takahata does not offer any explanation for how he chose the particular cuts he chose in making the manga from the emaki. In fact, Takahata had to repeat some portions of scroll in order to make his manga version coherent.[105] Ōtsuka deduces that Takahata made his cuts by imagining a baseline for the gaze, an imaginary line presenting the trajectory of the reader's eyes, which process differs profoundly from the actual process of reading. Such observations lead Ōtsuka to conclude, "we can make [the emaki] feel like a

[104] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 85.
[105] Ōtsuka Eiji, *Mikkii no shoshiki* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2013), 22.

manga, but it is not one."[106] In other words, Takahata's manga does not prove that manga and emaki share a visual language, but rather that one can make an emaki into a manga if one wishes to do so. In the process, however, many interesting and distinctive elements of the emaki are eliminated, such as the use of mist for transitions from scene to scene (discussed above) or the use of small groups of trees.[107] Ōtsuka also notes that Takahata's manga ultimately does not feel all that much like a manga, particularly its static quality. As a point of reference, Ōtsuka includes an alternative adaptation of the emaki into manga, made by one of his students, which is far more dynamic in its rhythms. Although Ōtsuka does not go into much detail, he mentions that the student in question has actually experience and training with manga techniques, which serves to remind us that Takahata may not know as much about manga as he implies, and certainly not enough to support his argument.[108]

Not only do I agree with Ōtsuka on both of these points but I would also like to add that Takahata's way of dealing with layout feels closer to the classic Franco-Belgian style of comics than it does to the style of Japanese comics. His layout adheres to the classic sequencing of panels — establishing shot, medium shot, close up — to provide unambiguous orientation in space for determining the relative positions of characters and then to focus attention on the main character. Such a layout does not rely on the kinds of cinematic techniques identified in the context of the Japanese story-manga. Rather Takahata's approach is classic to comics in general.

Ultimately, Takahata's demonstration of a concrete link between emaki and manga fails in that the emaki does not naturally or spontaneously become manga-like. On the contrary, a good deal of violence to the emaki form is needed even to approximate the classic form of

[106] Ōtsuka, *Mikkii no shoshiki*, 22.
[107] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 91.
[108] Ōtsuka, *Mikkii no shoshiki*, 20.

comics. In fact, probably because his account relies so heavily on formal resemblance, Takahata is really proposing a sort of universal language of forms, or more precisely imposing it onto emaki.

Takahata's covert appeal to a universal language of forms in the context of Japanese court culture constitutes an attempt to universalise those conventions and to make them compatible with received conventions for producing high art. Indeed, Takahata's objective as a producer and director has been to produce Japanese art animation for the global cinema market. His studio, Ghibli, explicitly rejects all that is redolent of otaku culture — television animation, video games, and other fan-related products — and proposes that its animated films are not anime at all but rather *manga eiga* or "cartoon films" in the lineage of feature-length animated films produced by animation branches of film studios, especially that of Tōei Dōga, a Japanese animation studio that "envisioned making animation films to rival those of Disney."[109] Like Tōei Dōga and Disney, Ghibli aspires to make high quality animation that would rival art films. In this line of thought, Studio Ghibli "[insists] on animation that, in the manner of high art and pure art, affords aesthetic distance and allows for contemplation rather than thrills and obsessions."[110] It makes sense, then, that Takahata would turn to the court culture of the Heian period rather than the chōnin culture of Edo Japan. In contrast with Murakami and Okada, he wishes to establish a non-militarist lineage of Japanese art that does not have the consumerist connotations of popular culture, although he might be said nonetheless to adopt something of the "craftsman's perspective" espoused by Okada.[111] As Lamarre notes: "Above all, Ghibli wants to distinguish its manga films from television anime and to avoid association with 'subculture' audiences

[109] Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 186.
[110] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine*, 98.
[111] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 11.

(otaku) who become obsessed with them."[112] In fact, Takahata's account of emaki and manga shows the same desire: to expunge anime and manga from the lineage of art animation or manga film.

Unfortunately, however, for all his efforts to prove the continuity of emaki and modern forms, Takahata unwittingly shows the reverse, and as such, as Ōtsuka demonstrates, his account is more indicative of the will to impose modernity on the past in order to overcome the sense of groundlessness introduced by modernity. In fact, manga and anime arise in Japan through a more complex play of forces, among them the various waves of cultural forms from other countries, under conditions of imperialist reach. Even if we feel justified in claiming that the seeds of modern forms of temporality lie within courtly forms such as emaki, we must also recognize that such seeds germinate only under conditions alien and even anathema to court culture. As consequence, in his effort to find a noble and illustrious origin for manga and animation, Takahata tends to erase the concrete strangeness of the past, simply pressing it into the service of the present. Despite his resistance to the a-historical qualities of popular culture, he likewise risks the production of an eternal present. This is surely why Takahata opts for a fantastical structure of depth: he remarks that these techniques for the visual depiction of time in Heian emaki suddenly disappeared with the end of the Heian court yet persisted deep within the Japanese subconscious.[113]

It should also be noted that, like Murakami and Okada, Takahata deliberately strives to produce a non-militarist lineage. The Heian period has long been perceived in Japan as a golden age of classical culture that stands in contrast to the Japan's militarist legacy, as represented by the rise of the samurai government. This is a laudable gesture in some ways, and yet it is also a

[112] Lamarre, *The Anime Machine*, 98.
[113] Takahata, *Jūni seiki no animēshon*, 10.

gesture that tends to erase the legacy of Japanese empire and the postwar Pax Americana. Connecting manga and anime to a distant past is calculated to let us skip lightly over the war, indeed to skip lightly over the entire 20th century. In this respect, what initially seems to be a gesture toward affirming pacifist values begins to feel more like a deliberate suppression of history, a calculated amnesia. The legacy of war is treated as ground zero, a trauma to be overcome.

The Challenge of Manga History

While my account has aimed to expose some of the cultural nationalist assumptions implicit in histories of manga, I do not mean to imply that that is the only or primarily reason why they were written. Cultural critics and creators such as Natsume, Takeuchi, Murakami, Okada, and Takahata surely do not write with the express intention of erasing war responsibility or promoting the image of a postmodern Japan beyond history. At a basic level, all of them work within the milieu of cultural production in Japan, and in that capacity, have a stake in the world of manga and animation. Not surprisingly then, each writer, in his way, makes an effort to affirm the value of these forms of cultural production (manga and animation), which are generally ignored or dismissed within intellectual and academic circles, and considered beyond the pale in political terms. Takahata's agenda is perhaps the narrowest, for he truly believes in the superiority of art animation and cinema, and indeed his films with Studio Ghibli testify to his commitment. In contrast, while both Natsume and Takeuchi are willing to embrace commercially popular forms of manga and anime, their accounts strive to ground the value of these forms through the figure of the great god-like creator, Tezuka. Murakami Takashi's approach is more opportunistic in the sense that, although he seems to legitimate otaku culture by drawing inspiration from it, it is only through his artistic genius that the true value of such pop art

becomes evident. Interesting enough, Okada is perhaps the broadest in his acceptance of Japanese popular culture, for he strives to show the value of the otaku culture on its own.

Histories of manga, regardless of the complex and multifarious motivations of its writers, enter into the larger world of value production, where studios, museums, publishers, journals, and other institutions jockey for position. Under such conditions, legitimating manga is inseparable to some extent from a self-legitimating act. While this self-legitimating gesture may be more evident in the instances of Murakami and Takahata (and more humorously in Okada's adoption of the title of "otakingu" or "otaku king"), it is true of all accounts of manga. What is interesting about the historical claims that appear in such accounts is the tendency to assume that historical origins may somehow be arbitrated or adjudicated neutrally, by reference to facts, documents, and archives. At this stage in histories of manga, it is precisely this neutral empirical dimension that appears to receive the least attention. There are two reasons for this bias.

On the one hand, it is not clear yet where manga demands or offers a distinctive historical perspective, distinctive from the history of Japanese cultural production as it has thus far been treated. At least no such history has yet been written. As a result, we do not really know what the boundaries (both external and internal) of the manga archive might be. On the other hand, as I have demonstrated in this first part of my study, given the perceived need to justify the seriousness of the materials (manga), writers tend to draw on received paradigms for organizing Japanese history, for these paradigms feel authoritative and promise to situate manga within key debates about Japanese culture. This is why, as I have shown, writers tend to adopt either the modernization paradigm or the (post)modernist paradigm for understanding Japanese history. These paradigms promise to lend credence and importance to manga by aligning with familiar discourses and paradigms.

In the process of positioning manga within authoritative paradigms, however, these accounts must also take on the same sort of structural violence. In this respect, we might consider these accounts to be successful: they have invited both controversy and criticism, precisely because they repeat the mechanisms of historical amnesia, trauma, and erasure at work in their paradigms. Indeed two powerful critiques of these histories of manga have already emerged in Japan, and it is to these critiques that I wish to turn by way of conclusion to part one.

Manga writers and critic, Ōtsuka Eiji, has become one of the strongest opponents of what he sees as the re-emergence of nationalism around manga and anime.[114] He has written numerous essays and even a book showing how received accounts of manga and anime have tried to eliminate completely the legacy of wartime formation of these forms as well as the postwar impact of American pop art and popular culture. In effect, he argues for yet another origin: the wartime origin of Japanese popular culture. Thus his narrative serves as a sort of counter-narrative or even counter-memory, especially vis-à-vis the paradigm of modernization that generally espouses the postwar Tezuka miracle. Reductively speaking, his history is a kind of anti-modernization history, exposing the structural violence and exclusions implicit in modernization, in the very form of charismatic leaders and appreciative followers, or winners and losers. We are invited to read the figure of the "manga god" as a figure of violent oppression.

Taking a very different tack, Itō Gō pronounces the death of god in the very title of his book, *Tezuka is Dead*. Itō remarks that the notion of a god of manga has had a normative effect, not only on manga creators but also on historians and critics, for the assumption that Tezuka is the norm has discouraged the development as an actual framework for analysis.[115] He writes, "This lack of framework has limited our perspective and kept us from dealing with reality. In

[114] Lamarre, "Speciesm, Part II," 55.
[115] Itō Gō, *Tezuka izu deddo: Hirakareta manga hyōgenron* (Tokyo: NTT Shuppan, 2005), 70.

turn, this inability to deal with reality makes it hard to create an opening for how to construct a theoretical framework in the first place."[116] Itō, then, announces a kind of dead end to the present way of historicizing manga, and calls for a fresh approach based on looking at a broader historical range of actual materials and practices. Itō himself does not address the history of manga per se, but clears way for his analysis of the postmodern condition of manga.

In sum, both Ōtsuka and Itō highlight the structural violence implicit in the modernization paradigm: where Ōtsuka calls for closer attention to the wartime origins of manga and anime, Itō moves toward a postmodernist paradigm but one that differs from Murakami's superflat in that it calls for a reconsideration of what actually counts as a document and enters the archive. For my part, drawing on both these accounts, I would like to introduce a third dimension of analysis, that of manga itself. If we are to develop a distinctive historical perspective for manga, then we also need to work from manga. That is what I propose to do in part two: provide some preliminary guidelines for an inquiry into the ways in manga themselves propose to "do history."

[116] Itō, *Tezuka izu deddo*, 79.

Chapter 2

Alternatives Views on History in the Works of Anno and Sugiura

In this chapter, I propose to look at the medium of manga itself by analysing two works that explore the reality of the life of Edo courtesans and their relation with their clients. While each work has its unique intention, they both attempt to reach their goal by relying on distinctive manga techniques. First, I will study *Sakuran*, a manga series created by Anno Moyoko, after which I will turn to Sugiura Hinako and her compilation *Futatsu makura.* The reason why selected to those works in particular is that I wanted to explore manga coming from outside of the shōnen industry, but also to bring to the front the perspective of women, a point of view often absent from history. Looking at those alternative works can help us, I believe, to find leads to a different way of making history.

If I decided to discuss works that explore the history of Edo prostitutes, it is not because I believe that histories of manga centered on the Edo period are more accurate than the others, but mostly because the use of works revolving around a same topic makes it easier to highlight the similarities and differences in their approaches. Another reason why I chose those manga is because each of them reflects on one aspect of the historical issues we discussed in the previous chapter. Anno's work uses a type of narrative that is closer to conventional manga based on a central fiction and a main character. Despite this, she is able to question the ideas of historical reality and violence. Sugiura, on the other side, uses manga's formal characteristics as a way to contest the idea that manga is the direct descendant of Edo art. Lastly, I also found interesting to look at the works of women that, similarly to the authors of the previous chapter, deeply cared about changing the perception of their readers. Instead of focusing on macrohistorical discourses and origins, those women created a different perception of courtesans by providing an intimate

knowledge of their subject by focussing on the participation of the reader and concrete experience.

The Play of Evidences and Fiction in *Sakuran*

Manga is not something that comes first to one's mind when it comes to reading or writing *serious* history. In fact, it is easy to discard fiction when thinking about what constitutes the fabric of historical authenticity. Effectively, works like history novels can vary a lot in their degree of faithfulness to history. However, as Munslow remarks, there are issues in official histories as well, among which, the problem of emplottment:

> When we place events […] In a particular order […] we are emplotting their sequence. We shape the historical narrative by invoking evidence and causality blending them together to constitute a plausible and truthful explanation […]. In doing this, we usually fail to acknowledge the functioning of our (Western) culture's primary forms of emplottment - romance, tragedy, comedy, satire. That failure permits us to argue that we have discovered the referential connection between the narrative and the evidence.[117]

Seen under this light, narratives of sengo and Nihonjinron act as a structure over which some histories of manga are laid, but, as Munslow observes, it is because we "fail to acknowledge" those patterns that claims about the origins of manga revolve so much around the same ideas of war and Japaneseness. There is an appealing dramatic quality in the history of manga told through Tezuka and Edo and because they resonate so well with those values it gives the impression of having reached a truth. Looking at it from a certain angle, this emplottment is no

[117] Alun Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 83.

less fictive than the narrative in historical fiction. It is an interpretation of the past, with the difference that the historical fiction acknowledges its fictive nature while official history stakes a claim for the truth.

Of course, historians are aware of this issue and need to display a greater rigour and have less freedom with historical facts than fiction writers. Meanwhile, it is not true that because it is called a historical *fiction*, the author has full liberty over the facts. Readers have certain expectations when presented with historical fictions. Even if they accept that the story itself never actually happened, the accuracy of the surrounding settingsremains necessary. Historical research behind artistic works is thus a factor that cannot be neglected by any author.

However, fiction can still be used as a different way to understand history. One advantage is that, because it is often character driven, fiction seems to be naturally adapted to deal with microhistories — the history of everyday life, as opposed to the macrohistories discussed previously concerning more common historiographies of manga. Microhistory has multiple advantages. Its limited scope allows for a deeper engagement with a given period and locale. At the same time, it also partially gets around the problem of the lack of consensus on historical interpretation, staying closer to the sources and evidence than the documents that constitute more traditional social histories.[118]

Another advantage of fiction is that, instead of merely listing historical facts and analysing them from afar, it reveals the more subtle implications of major events or social contexts. It allows both the reader and the creator to immerse themselves in a situation and experience a different reality. Furthermore, stories stick with us and become engraved in our imagination. They build curiosity and interest, which is an advantage for the diffusion and

[118] Sigurður G. Magnússon and István Szíjártó, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 210.

retention of historical knowledge but also a great tool to raise the awareness to certain historical biases.

Tezuka Osamu believed in the power of fiction to convey history and had a thought-provoking stand about the relation between emotions and historical perception. Here is what he said about World War II and history:

> Today, the war is far away; it is now part of history. Critics and intellectuals below forty years old can't write anything on this period that is based on a concrete personal experience. Because of this, what we learn about this war loses its strength; what adults can pass on to their children about this horror becomes less and less concrete, more objective, and slowly becomes closer to fiction.[119]

To Tezuka, the emotional experience of the war renders a more accurate form of knowledge production whereas the lack of emotional experience of an event makes it romanesque. There is a different kind of truth that lies in the emotional understanding of an event. It makes it concrete in a way that is impossible through an objective account of it and reveals personal experiences that would otherwise remain hidden. The fiction forces its reader to gain a deeper understanding historical issues and how they played out at the personal level. This is the power of drama. To exemplify this, I will now discuss how *Sakuran* uses the symbiosis between the reader and the main character to create a willingness to *try out* history and adopt a different perspective on it.

Sakuran is a manga series published in the magazine *Evening* from 2001 to 2003. Its author, Anno Moyoko, has published several works mainly aimed at women and is successful both as a mangaka and as a fashion writer. *Sakuran* features the story of Kiyoha, a young maid

[119] Tezuka Osamu, *Ma vie manga* (Bruxelles: Kana, Dargaud-Lombard s.a., 2011), 98.

who was sold as a child to a brothel in the red-light district of Yoshiwara. Despite her surly character, Kiyoha learns all the skills needed to seduce men and grows up to become a powerful oiran — the elite of Edo courtesans.

Throughout the story, Anno attempts to give a glimpse into the daily lives of the Edo courtesans and the unique power tensions occurring between them and their male customers. The close attention to all the small details of daily routines and familiar objects surrounding their quotidian gives a valuable insight into the past of those Edo women, which is certainly harder to depict through a written historical account. Yet, it is by her clever use of fiction that Anno manages to bring her reader to think about history. To do this, she deploys an important aspect of manga: the participation of the reader.

In manga, the concept of closure is at the root of the reader's engagement with a work. In *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art,* Scott McCloud defines closure as an ability to "mentally complet[e] that which is incomplete based on past experience."[120] To explain this, he gives the example of a slightly turned Pepsi bottle on the shelf of a supermarket. While walking in the alley, we usually see only part of the logo of the, but because we saw the entire logo in the past, we can mentally complete it and recognise the object as a bottle of Pepsi.[121]

Closure is used by storytellers to create effects and stimulate the audience's curiosity, but for McCloud, what is unique to comics is that the reader is a willing and conscious collaborator to the work.[122] Because the reader decides on the subject and can stop at any time, he is free to participate in the fictional experiment. Furthermore, manga is an accessible format and, contrary to a long and dry historical text, promises an effortless and pleasurable experience

[120] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994), 63.
[121] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics,* 63.
[122] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics,* 65.

through the use of fiction and images. McCloud notes that, in comics, closure operates in a distinctive way: "Comics panels fracture both time and space, offering a jagged, staccato rhythm of unconnected moments. But closure allows us to construct a continuous, unified reality."[123] Thus, the reader must recreate what happens between each frame and fill in the gaps in the work in order to produce a smooth and coherent reality.

If we take the example of two panels, the first being the image of a character looking at a window situated in the opposite corner of a room, the second showing the same character standing beside the window looking outside. By looking at those two panels, the reader can deduce that, between the two images, the character must have moved from the back of the room to the window. However, reality is more complex than that. Was the character walking or running? If he was walking, was he swift or clumsy? Did he have to avoid any obstacles? The reader doesn't reflect verbally to himself, saying: "the character has moved to the other end of the room." Instead, he recreates the movement based on the context surrounding the action, but also on his experience of walking. The reader is then not only creating the action but is also performing it. A similar interaction applies to sound. When reading a speech bubble, the reader produces a voice for the character based on the character's physical looks and personality. He will also decide on a specific tone depending on the dramatic context and the expression of the character. If a character is happy, the reader will imagine a cheerful voice, but if the context tells him the joy might not be sincere, he will nuance the tone accordingly. An attentive reader will attribute a different voice through the understanding of the character's inner conflict based on his own reaction to similar situations. Again, in manga, it is not the character who speaks, but the

[123] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics,* 67.

reader who performs its voice. Reading a manga implies an intricate work of re-enactment and interpretation from the part of the reader. Without this involvement, the work cannot take form.

In the case of *Sakuran*, Anno counts on the participation of the reader to make her point. An important element to consider in this instance is that the story is set in Edo. Of course, the reader has no concrete experience of Edo, and he or she cannot bring anything else than one's personal experience of the present and knowledge of the diverse representation of Edo previously encountered. Because manga relies so much on the reader's participation to build a smooth reality, a history set in Edo will prompt the reader to summon his knowledge of the era together with all its vagueness and assumptions. Once it has been brought to consciousness, Anno can actively confront the readers' experience by giving life to a past that differs from the one the readers imagined. In the case of Edo, the historical imaginary is rich and often the product of a masculine gaze. Courtesans are often depicted as soft-spoken and gentle, cultivated and talented. To this Anno opposes the image of cruel and ambitious women, but also reminds us that their training is long, demanding and that many women will never enjoy the prestige and luxury of the higher courtesans. The knowledge invoked by the readers to fill the narrative gaps is thus immediately deconstructed by a new reality that doesn't match it, and the reader becomes a participant in his own change.

The second element, the identification with the character, also have interesting uses for history. We saw previously how history could become a form of violence against the past and the present. I now want to look at how, through identification between the main character and the reader, *Sakuran* reverses this relation allowing history to inflict violence on the reader.

Although the context of Edo brothels seems to stick with the historical evidence, there is something that is not quite right with the protagonist. Unlike her female colleagues, Kiyoha finds

that the treatment of courtesans is unacceptable and, for this reason, she does not abide by the code of conduct of her house. She repeatedly breaks the rules and tries to escape despite the cruel corporeal punishment inflicted on her. However, she never complains about her situation as long as her mind is free. She even finds some consolation in living as if the rules do not apply to her. When she is asked to take the place of the oiran, she refuses and answers: "I would have to carry this teahouse on my shoulders, and all the stress and worries, and need to take a good for nothing lover? No thanks."[124] She later adds: "I like things the way they are. I don't care if I'm #2 or #3! I like to be able to whine!"[125] She knows that the few liberties she is still able to enjoy would be taken away from her, and the prestige of the position would only mean more obligations. Although she does not explicitly say it, Kiyoha certainly knows that accepting the position means not only accepting the system that created her, but also reproducing it by having to train other young girls to play a game she despises. This is the reason why, when she reluctantly accepts the role of oiran, she continues to live by her own set of rules.

She is radically different from other women of the tea house to the point that one can often feel that she belongs neither in that place nor in that time. I believe that although Anno offers us many insight into Edo history, the protagonist is not made to be part of that era. She rather acts as a time capsule that allows us to visit the past. If we have the feeling that she does not belong there, it is because her thoughts and values are much closer to ours than to that of an Edo oiran. Kiyoha seems to have a knowledge that is unavailable to the people around her. She has lived as a captive all her life and yet, instead of the resignation displayed by most of her colleagues, she acts as if she somehow knew that there is something better out there for her. She expresses her surprise of how she instinctively knew how to act with men or many other details

[124] Sugiura Hinako, *Sakuran* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2003), 28.
[125] Sugiura Hinako, *Sakuran*, 30.

through the book showing how, without being consciously accessible, this knowledge is still part of her. It explains why she does not fit in but is also what allows Kiyoha to become the best of her peers: inside of her lies the experience of another soul, that of the contemporary reader. To her, what is happening is naturally wrong and when she contests, she expresses a contemporary disgust at the situation. She is the reader reacting and revolting to this world.

I will again turn to Scott McCloud to illustrate what is particular with this process. He notes that "[when] you look at a photo of a realistic character, you see it as the face of another. But when you look at the face of a cartoon, you see yourself."[126] He calls this, the universality of characters. The simplification of traits in comics makes the representation of a face less specific and this allows more people to identify with it.[127] As we have seen earlier, the static characters drawn on the pages of a comic themselves are lifeless, but through the intervention of the reader, the character moves, thinks, exists. For this reason, McCloud writes that "the cartoon is a vacuum into which our identity and awareness are pulled an empty shell that we inhabit which enables us to travel in another realm. We don't just observe cartoons, we become it!"[128]

Through this identification with the protagonist the reader is not just confronted by the situation, he is also acted upon. When Kiyoha is punished or shunned by others, it is us, the reader, who is punished and shunned. While reading the work, the reader is symbolically beaten up and held captive, sent in a time proposing values to which he cannot adhere. Because the reader undergoes the violence of an unfair system, he cannot deny it, neither can he deny the pain of its victims.

[126] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 36.
[127] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 31.
[128] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 36.

A point that is worth attention is that, although Anno mostly wrote josei manga, *Sakuran* was published in a seinen magazine, which is aimed at young men. Although the reality of the readership of manga doesn't exclusively obey this demographic classification, Anno probably knew she was writing for a mostly male audience. Despite this, she still decided to create a female protagonist. Kiyoha is robust, determined, and displays the same will for freedom and doing things her way than many of the main male characters encountered in shōnen manga. However, Kiyoha never reaches this liberty since she is tied down by social chains that she is unable to break because she possesses the body of a woman. By living the situation through a woman's perspective, men experience the social limitations put on them and need to confront the gaze of other men. On the cover of the tankobon, Kiyoha is depicted as a rebellious beauty, an object of desire. This same desire that lured the reader in reading the book to get to know this exotic woman is reproduced onto them, and the powerlessness Kiyoha feels becomes their own.

Through the identification with the main character, Anno is able to implant in the mind of the readers the strength of the feelings lived by the oiran making the experience very concrete for them. It gives Anno the possibility to rectify a historical perception in which the distance created by time allowed for a fictionalised and sometimes idealised image of the Edo prostitute. Anno attempts to restore the lost emotional experience of the oiran, which, as Tezuka would tell us, is also a valid truth.

Another advantage of manga when it comes to history is the visual aspect of the medium. When only using words for history writing, is it relatively easy to express general tendencies, describe events or give names, but objects, places and people cannot all be described in details. They stay as an abstract idea in the head of the reader that he needs to fill, consciously or not,

with his own knowledge or experience. However, media like cinema, anime and manga can both show and tell history providing visual clues on lifestyles of the past.

This type of presentation of history is closer in nature to some type of historical or archaeological data related to physical objects or with their usage. Among advantages specific to manga, we can argue that because of its hybrid nature between images and text it has the potential to deal in a faithful manner with both physical and textual evidence. Of course, Anno needed to look at the archeological evidence – the rich furniture and the objects of luxury owned by wealthy courtesan as well as more mundane objects such as lamps or food trays – in order to represent them in her work. However, because it is easy in manga to superpose all types of information without taking the reader out of the story, she is also able to display textual evidence. To contextualise Kiyoha's training, for example, Anno inserted the following extract: "Apprentices study the arts alongside the master and mistress of the teahouse – Hokuri-Kenmonroku."[129] By inserting this quote in an ornamented box, she separates the text from the rest of the fiction creating another layer of knowledge.

Contrary to manga, cinema or other media that convey images, but also movement and sounds need to extrapolate elements that can't be known with certainty through sources when dealing with the distant past. The exact nature of a ritualised movement such as the *docchu* procession can only be deduced from static sources. The stillness of the image in manga and the lack of actual sound naturally correspond to the nature of the evidence that can be found before the arrival of more recent media using sound or moving images. It is, of course, not always pertinent or useful, but an author conscious of this similarity can potentially take full advantage of it.

[129] Sugiura Hinako, *Sakuran*, 101.

Manga allows Anno to nuance her work in an interesting way through the opposition of two aesthetic styles. In his work, McCloud adds to the idea of identification with iconic characters the effect that they can achieve when opposed with realistic backgrounds. "This combination allows the reader to mask themselves in a character and safely enter a sensually stimulating world. [There is] one set of lines to see. Another set of lines to be."[130] Because Anno lures the reader into identifying with the main character, she can insert the reader into the body of an Edo courtesan, allowing her to express an interpretation of history through the use of the iconic visual style of the character. On the other side, the realistic backgrounds that surround the character provide a more archaeological experience allowing the reader to be surrounded by the artefacts of Edo period and see how their usage. The use of two different types of lines creates delimitation between historical interpretation and knowledge based directly on primary sources.

Sugiura and the Aesthetics of the Kibyōshi

If Anno invites the reader to identify with the main character to confront him with an alternative version of history, Sugiura uses alienation to change the perception of the reader. In *Futatsu makura*, Sugiura does not merely copy ancient works of art; she also enters into an aesthetic conversation with them. If Murakami sees an artistic lineage through the eccentric artists, Sugiura instead sees two different media. She confronts manga and Edo style drawings in a discussion that puts in evidence their unique functioning. To understand the complexity of her approach to history, I will first quickly look at the problem of the perception of the kibyōshi by manga historians. Then, I will explain how Sugiura avoids the possible pitfalls of linking manga and Edo art and how she uses the reader's knowledge and participation to create a critical distance through a feeling of alienation.

[130] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics,* 43.

To facilitate the understanding of her complex play between visual languages, I want to look at what I consider the type of publication to be the closest to manga in terms of consumption and visual language: the kibyōshi. The kibyōshi is a type of woodblock print book widely distributed in the Edo period. They touch on a wide array of topics from the caricature books to illustrated fictions. Similarly to manga, Kibyōshi were printed on inexpensive paper and were meant to be read once then discarded. As Kern observes, the paper was often roughly recycled and then reused for various purposes.[131] At the formal level, kibyōshi and manga also have a lot in common such as the succession of images used to tell a story, the interdependency between images and text, the box framing the illustrations and many other visual elements. It also relies on the centrality of the characters and their activities showing them in various positions from one frame to the next.

Those similarities between manga and kibyōshi have often been used to link contemporary manga to an Edo origin. Here is a section of *Manga from the Floating World* where Adam Kern states his reasons for discussing modern manga in relation to kibyōshi:

> Nonetheless, to the extent that the kibyōshi is often designated as the progenitor of modern manga, and since no small numbers of cultural commentators have tried to ground the modern manga in Japan's premodern tradition of visual culture, an exploration of the relationship between the two art forms is in order.[132]

Later Kerns adds: “Shiokawa Kanako has similarly argued that the aesthetics of the kibyōshi and allied genres of mid-Edo literature 'governs comic books today.'”[133] As we have seen in the

[131] Adam L. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 40.
[132] Adam L. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World,* 129.
[133] Adam L. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World,* 129-130.

previous chapter, this relationship based on a linear conception of art history poses a problem in that it presupposes that one established the basic rules for the other distorting the reality of kibyōshi to make it a suitable precursor to manga. This relation of governance creates the idea of manga and kibyōshi both relying on a similar original code, which reduces both media to their common traits.

To give an example of this, we need to look no further than the type of storytelling. In manga, the high intensity of emotions and the focus on the psychology of the character are the main devices used to move the story forward giving the impression of being in the action. This kind of narration is far from that found in kibyōshi where events and circumstances are the primary moving force and where the reader is placed in the seat of a witness of the events. It denotes a real change in mentalities and interests between the kibyōshi and the manga readers that justifies a greater attention to each medium.

The aesthetics of Sugiura's work is probably the most striking feature of her work. In "Hatsune", her style is so close to that of the ehon and woodblock print that it feels at if ancient art had come alive. Not only she skillfully reproduces the fluid style of the characters, she even took the pain to represent those characters in an isometric perspective background. She refers to past aesthetics extensively, going as far as reproducing an illustration from *Fūryū nakute nanakuse* from Hokusai as the cover page of one of her stories. She also draws clever parallels with the way mainstream manga is constructed today using the typical full spread illustration present in the first pages of many stories published in manga magazines as a space to reproduce the format of the ehon publication usually consisting of framed images filling whole pages. She is not claiming manga and ehon are the same. Instead, by using a style close to that of traditional

illustrations, she highlights the differences between manga and those ancient visual exposing their complexities and particularities instead of equating them to a past version of the present.

On the presentation of history per see, we can compare Sugiura's approach to that of a precise type of kibyōshi, that of the guidebook. Guidebooks were often used by travellers and provided information about points of interest in each region. However, it was not expected of them to be faithfully truthful, and the place and attractions were naturally embellished. This manner of representing reality is similar to the way we understand historical fiction: we demand from the author a certain degree of authenticity, but it is accepted that the events are dramatised and manipulated in a way that arises emotions in the reader. Guidebooks also served as manuals educating the reader about how to behave in certain places or situation, about the etiquette or about what was fashionable. They opened the door to the Floating world[134] which is in a sense what Sugiura does through her works providing information that help us understand the world of the oiran. In a way, we can say that both art forms can be seen as a loose form of documentary.

Like the guidebooks, which deals with one locale at a time, Sugiura's work too documents only one aspect of the oiran's in each of her stories. The result is close to a case study. Each story is only a small fragment, but those fragments are not without interest. Together they construct a historical imaginary allowing the collection of stories to represent history from different angles. Each section represents the case of a woman occupying a certain place and situation in the profession and provides the reader with a different view of the world of the oiran. Furthermore, as we have seen, the texts of Murakami or Takahata rely on a grand narrative to explain history. Instead of a plain series of facts, knowledge is expressed as an explanation of interconnections between events and a justification of these links. Through this construction,

[134] Adam L. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World,* 94.

they attempt to construct a justifiable origin to manga. Sugiura's work, on the other side, only looks at fragments of history. Each story has its own set of characters, its own intrigue, and the whole is only connected through the space and the daily reality of the brothels. While we can think of many manga that are published in fragments, yet also serialised such as *Naruto or One Piece*, the case of Sugiura is different for although all theses stories happen in the same environment, they are not narratively connected. This refusal of serialisation is significative since by doing this, Sugiura stays at the level of small narratives and avoids providing a grand narrative for Edo history.

In history, the reality of Edo is something the reader cannot access in full. Sugiura pushes the reader to reconstruct it through the consumption of small narratives. Each viewpoint in history gives access to only a part of the whole while at the same time acknowledging the incompleteness of what is knowable about the past. The surface thus becomes a manifestation of this incompleteness. A similar mechanic of fragmentation is also at work inside of each story. When the forces of the characters even out like in some of Sugiura's pieces, the reader is not limited to a single interpretation. Because of her strong characters, she can provide the point of view of men as well as that of women. As an author, she can and need to explore both sides of the story herself and is able through fiction to express many of those realities simultaneously. As for the reader, because of the nature of the medium of manga, he needs to perform the case presented to him. Since the conclusions to be drawn are not always clearly stated the reader needs to ponder each side carefully and form his own opinion. This need to play both roles is not part of the tradition of historical writing. Instead of imposing a reading of the situation, the manga enriches the perception of the relationship between and women. Of course, a lot of this is

only a potential and far from being a rule, but manga has many elements that can facilitate a new approach to history and leaves a place for the reader where he can inhabit and try out history.

If the lives of the main characters are tinted with fiction and interpreted through our own standpoint, the background and voiceless characters such as the men waiting at the door or filling the oil lamps reproduce those carefully researched customs in a close to objective manner. Pillows, vases or wall paintings also have more in common with an archaeological reconstruction of a site than with a fictional construction. However, Sugiura goes further than merely depicting an aspect of the life in the pleasure quarters; she also made the aesthetic choice of mimicking the art style popular at the time which, interestingly comprise a fair amount of narratives and illustrations dealing with the same topic

Up to now, I have mainly dealt with style, the format of the stories, and how they convey historical information. However, Sugiura holds a discussion at yet another level, that of the media of manga and kibyōshi themselves. In this section, I want to look at how Sugiura's work is consumed as a double-layered structure and how it is used as an alternative to historical emplottment.

Of course, both media do not function in the same manner, and Sugiura is aware of this, but instead of stating it in words as a scholar would, she pushes the reader to discover it through the reliance on his previous knowledge. This knowledge is, first, that of Edo representations and kibyōshi and, second, that of the reader's manga literacy. Although the reader is not an expert or even a consumer of kibyōshi, the style Sugiura uses is well known. In a society overflowing with images, those witnesses of the past are at the same time familiar and exotic referring to a long lost Japan, or at least, a very different one. She relies on this knowledge and familiarity to bring the reader into her fictional world. However, the reader is not simply bringing his knowledge of

the visuals, but also all the surrounding ideas graphed on them. On the other side, manga is better known. By bringing the static and ancient kibyōshi closer to a visual language that readers know very well, she can touch her readers more efficiently.

Manga's mechanisms are already internalised by the reader to the point that he is not even aware of them anymore. I argue that in Sugiura, it is not the surface narrative of her work that holds the real meaning, but how she plays with the different codes of each medium. In her work, she tries to overlay two graphic syntaxes: that of the codes of Edo kibyōshi and that of the codes of manga.

Through this play, she exhibits a sensibility to the nature of history. History is clearly not the past. It is, just like manga, a hybrid medium. It lies at the junction of historical evidence and our present understanding of them. As such, there is no access to the actual past. Sugiura's work, like history, is also hybrid. Manga and ehon are two realities that speak in different languages. For this reason, she does not limit herself to the available register of the Edo period. When the dramatic need arises, she draws quite freely in the visual vocabulary of manga adding distorted expressions, onomatopoeia, impact lines or other elements. She also relies on the beloved "cinematic language" of manga to stretch time and give space to reflection. She demands of her readers a manga literacy that was not available to their Edo counterparts. Her work is a hybrid between a past medium and space located in Edo and today's manga. Doing this she deconstructs the assumption of correspondence between the past and the present while also giving the reader the liberty of understanding history rather than being told what to think of it.

Sugiura uses this ability to bring our attention to the differences between kibyōshi and manga. Once overlaid, the two languages do not quite fit. When they do share a similar grammar, the reading goes quite smoothly, but when elements of the two media are taken from parts where

their grammar do not coincide, an uneasiness arises. For example, the characters are drawn in kibyōshi style usually have slanted eyes. Even when depicting emotions, the effect relies more on the eyebrows and the lower part of the face. In manga, the large eyes are the principal vectors of emotions. When intense emotions are expressed through the combination of large eyes and Edo style drawing there happens a switch between one code to the next that result in an image that the reader doesn't quite recognise as kibyōshi or manga, bringing the attention to this difference between both visual languages.

This technique is not new and was used by kibyōshi artists themselves who often re-used previous stories, fictional worlds or characters. This play on reproduction and variation putting an emphasis on differences, since in a familiar story where everything is known in advance, the small changes appear as novelty or even as disruptions. Those differences thus become the subject of the new work. Similarly, in Sugiura, knowledge of manga and kibyōshi relies on one another to produce meaning.

Instead of playing on the immersion of the reader into the work, Sugiura creates a feeling of alienation to keep the reader at a distance, separating him from the fiction. While reading the work, the reader can effectively feel a strange discrepancy compared to popular manga. There is a feeling that something is not quite like in other works. Her manga are not as immersive, they are not designed to cause a deep identification with the characters or events, quite the opposite, it feels like the whole work aims to push the reader back to the surface and outside of the fictional world. She creates a distance that always makes us somewhat aware of the fact that we are facing an artwork. The heavily stylised drawing style of the characters with its even technical lines gives an impression of staticity. Most of the time the characters are lying down or moving slowly which contributes to this effect. The isometric perspective in which the

characters evolve also creates an impression of estrangement from this distant, alien world where the laws of representation are different than that of their contemporary counterparts. The relation between text and image is also quite different. While it was in symbiosis in the kibyōshi because of the similarity of the traits composing drawing and words, the choice of using typesetting typical of manga instead of the flowing calligraphy like in kibyōshi also contribute to the awareness of the gap between the world of the two art forms by juxtaposing past aesthetics to present practice. Because the style of the text and images do not blend as well, they give the feeling of belonging to different pictorial levels, the current technological world floating over the past. This discrepancy makes the reader aware the presence of an invisible wall between both time periods just like the reflection on a window makes us conscious of the glass between the observer and the outside reality. This creation of distance is an intentional act that also appears within the drawing themselves. Often, in moments of high emotion, Sugiura leaves the face of the characters blank. The eyes and the mouth to which we would naturally turn to try to decipher the internal emotional state of the characters are absent. Removing those features denies us the access to the character's interiority. It's a forbidden world we can't enter. Is it simply to force us out of the fiction at a moment when we can't assume to know how those far remote strangers would have felt? It could be, and it is a skilful way to express a historical reserve on topics that are not knowable.

She also demonstrates that the relation between images is also very different in manga and kibyōshi. Instead of using only full page illustrations where characters appear to be approximately the same size from one page to the next, Sugiura decided to adopt the conventions of manga entirely adding to the kibyōshi the notion of page layout, but also of framing. In each work, the characters are represented at different moments of the action, but in the case of manga,

instead of representing the character once per scene, it is represented at closer intervals. While depicting scenes puts the emphasis on events and organises the action into themes or locale giving a slideshow effect, the repetition in manga emphasises the representation of time. A frame can be reproduced with few or no modification multiple times to give an impression of slowness. It's an accepted fact that it is not a representation of a character in different locations, but in different times.

Instead of a discussion on the origins of a medium, Sugiura helps us understand how both media function and uses manga as a way to go into the mechanism of Edo kibyōshi. In some aspects, it is evident how both media coincide. They represent characters and stories, but also use a mix of text and images. For other aspects, Sugiura highlights the differences and limitations of kibyōshi compared to manga by disrupting the Edo aesthetic she follows throughout her work to suddenly revert to manga conventions. This intervention disrupts the homogeneity of the style forcing our attention on the differences and at the same time at the specific functionality that differs such as in the case of more violent displays of emotions.

Sugiura and Anno propose a different way to look at history that is not based on words, but on images and feelings. They play with the readers' knowledge and confront it forcing the reader to reconsider his own assumption. Although Sugiura compares past and present visual media like Murakami or Takahata, she relies on direct comparison of narrative and visual techniques. She doesn't point verbally at the differing element but is sufficiently confident in the manga literacy of the reader to know he will get her message. As for Anno, she uses the power of fiction to lure the reader into an historical context and confront him with a feminine historical perspective. Each author in her own way is able to convey a message that is not mediated through words. The ideas are directly understood though one's feelings and experiences which

gives them a distinctive power that can compete with strongly established historical narratives such as the ones revolving around the Edo period.

Conclusion

The analysis of manga histories in the first chapter of this study permitted a general hypothesis about the tendency to situate manga within received historical paradigms such as the modernization paradigm and the modernist (or postmodernist) paradigm: because manga is still not considered a valid object of study (despite its extensive commercial and social impact), writers try to position manga (and manga-related products) at the heart of currently important social debates. Such a treatment of manga has succeeded in creating a series of intellectually provocative and methodologically generative arguments, and yet at the same it has tended to discourage a fuller account of manga as a medium, or more precisely as a multimedia form of expression. The academic treatment of comics may indeed be worse in Japan than in American or Western Europe, and yet even in the latter contexts, the terms like *graphic novel* have been introduced, precisely to counter the pejorative connotations of the word *comics*. Comics studies has a long way to go to gain the same kind of recognition afforded by cinema, for instance.

The second chapter of this study aimed to show that manga are indeed well suited to make a powerful contribution to our understanding of history. The examples of *Sakuran* and *Futatsu makura* attest that manga may not only convey history but also provide new ways of thinking about methodological rigour and authenticity in the writing of history. In this respect, these two manga present a sharp contrast with the historical accounts of manga examined in chapter one, in terms of the depth and scope of their historical inquiry. Anno's *Sakuran* provides keen insight in the problem of how we understand experience historically, by at once staging and undermining our tendency of idealize and romanticize the lives of Edo courtesans. In *Futatsu makura*, Sugiura deals with the historicity of the medium (or multimedia formation) of manga, by at once adopting the manner of Edo kibyōshi and explicitly transforming it, to arrive a mode of manga

expression in which readers feel the pressure of history in the form itself. Both approaches demand a high degree of participation on the part of the reader. Instead of resting content with the format in which history presents abstract problems to which the thinker provides equally abstract responses, Anno and Sugiura demonstrate a sense of confidence and trust in readers to draw their own conclusions, but not too easily, and not too hastily. In both instances, it is the pressure of historical forms that becomes palpable to readers.

If there is, as Itō Gō argues, a need to apprehend history of manga differently, then surely the medium or media of manga is an important point of reference and maybe the ideal point of departure for thinking manga historically. But we may need to look at manga differently. Instead of seeing a sort of illustrated text, that is, an abstract narrative illustrated with pictures, we will need to attend to something that is neither image nor text and yet both at the same time, a rhythmic sort of perceptual fusion and experiential synthesis. Historicizing this synthesis will be a challenging task, demanding that we think at once synthetically and historically about manga. But it is only in this way that we will be able to embark on a history of manga that will produce new kinds of historical knowledge rather than fitting manga into paradigms that currently suit our needs.

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